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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

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35

36

Preface

37

38

This document, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of*

39

Ministry, 2009, became the policy document for the Christian Church (Disciples of

40

Christ) in the United States and Canada once the General Assembly adopted the

41

document. It will replace the current document, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of*

42

Ministry, 2003 on August 1, 2011.

43

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

77
78 PREFACE

79
80 *Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of*
81 *Christ)* functions interdependently with *Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry*
82 *of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* to clarify evolving patterns of ministry as we
83 seek to respond in faithful ways to ever changing contexts of service and witness. It is
84 not a comprehensive theology of ministry nor does it attempt to offer the final word on
85 Disciples' understanding of ministry.

86
87 **A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God**

88
89 God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be
90 God's people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news are
91 drawn into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of a new community, the church. In this body, the
92 Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the
93 world [ref: I Corinthians 12.12-13; Ephesians 4.4-5; Matthew 28:16-20]. The church's
94 mission is to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Realm of God. In order to
95 fulfill this mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given ministries of
96 witness, service and reconciliation.

97
98 The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. Through baptism they are
99 called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Implicit in the confession of
100 faith and the act of baptism is an acceptance of the vocation of the baptized—the
101 special calling shared by all followers of Christ to witness to the sovereign love of God,
102 the grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in all of life. The gifts
103 (*charisms*) of the Holy Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple
104 ways they proclaim the mighty acts of God and mediate God's loving and reconciling
105 work to and in the world. Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in
106 whatever situation he or she lives—to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

107
108 In Christ the individual becomes a member of "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a
109 people of God's own possession" (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the

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

113

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

123

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

131

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

133

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

137

138 Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing
139 circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of
140 leadership. Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent.

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

141 While he promoted freedom from ecclesiastical control, he retained a sense of order in
142 ministry and structure. One notable point of agreement between the two is that both
143 regarded ministry as servanthood even though the forms and functions of that ministry
144 were expressed and authorized in different ways.

145

146

Alexander Campbell

147

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

155

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

158

1. Establish necessary offices for perpetuity and growth

159

2. Select the best qualified persons for those offices

160

3. Consecrate or set apart those persons for those offices

161

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

163

In *The Christian System* he outlined:

164

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

168

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

172

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

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

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

176

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

180

181

Barton Warren Stone

182

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

189

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

195

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

208

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

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)

215

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

222

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

227

228

Later Views

229

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

236

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

255

256

Origins of Licensed Ministry

257

258 The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:

- 259 1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry
260 2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion
261 3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral
262 qualities, and preaching ability
263 Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded Licenses - a new
264 category of ministry created from the Ordination report.
265

266 Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton
267 Stone was Licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the
268 lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was Licensed to preach at the Brush Run
269 Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, “licensing to preach” was a trial
270 period prior to Ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and
271 the qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy,
272 deceit, or rudiments of the world (*cf Last Will and Testament*).
273

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

283 Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

284
285 Toward the end of the 20th 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
301 election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of
302 certain 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
305 of time which it specifies, such as sharing in the ministration of baptism
306 and the Lord's Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the
307 pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership
308 is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders
309 [more 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*
315 *Christian Church*).

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

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

326 327 **D. Order of Ministry**

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

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

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

343 ❖ the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,

- 344 ❖ the God-given gifts and graces,
345 ❖ the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
346 ❖ the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for
347 effective ministry.

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

349

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

356

357 **1. Commissioned Ministry**

358

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

365

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

374

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

380

381 Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one
382 commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the

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

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

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

389

390 **2. Ordained Ministry**

391

392 **a. The meaning of Ordination**

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

396 The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the
397 bond of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is
398 the risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the
399 church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful
400 proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying
401 on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the
402 ministry was instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding
403 the church to look to him as the source of its commission. (*"Ministry," Baptism*
404 *Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)

405

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

409

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

414 (1) acting in servant obedience to God's commandment of love in self-sacrifice
415 on behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;

416 (2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and
417 preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and by deed
418 (mission and service);

419 (3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,
420 mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy
421 Spirit.

422

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

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

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

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

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

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

455 4) *Universal Ministry*: Most appropriately, Ordination is a *rite of the Church*
456 *Universal*. While Ordination is normally done by a particular denomination,
457 and Standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no
458 one is ever Ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly
459 not into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those Ordained are
460 representative ministers of the Church Universal: one, holy, catholic and

461 apostolic. While we serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives
462 with the pain of a divided ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to
463 point out the community of Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of
464 the one universal Church into being, and to search for forms of unity which
465 the divided churches cannot yet express.⁶

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

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

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

478
479 This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the
480 church's life identified as fundamental:⁸

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

489
490 Thus, within a single order of Ordained ministry, there can be three distinct
491 offices that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The

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

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

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

492 recognition of these offices does not carry with it any implications of hierarchical
493 structure. The three-fold Ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents
494 the fundamental characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (*A*
495 *Word to the Church on Ministry*, pp. 3- 4.)
496

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

501 **d. The act of Ordination**

502 A long and early Christian tradition places Ordination in the context of worship
503 and especially of the Lord's Supper. Such a place for the service of Ordination
504 preserves the understanding of Ordination as an act of the whole community.
505 The act of Ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at
506 one and the same time the invocation of the Holy Spirit, a sacramental sign, and
507 an acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.⁹
508

509 In the act of Ordination, the Church Ordains in confidence that God, being
510 faithful to the promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into historical forms of
511 human relationship, and draws upon those relationships for God's purpose.
512 Ordination is thus a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship
513 signified is present in, with, and through the words spoken, the gestures made
514 and the forms employed.¹⁰
515

516 Finally, Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit
517 in the one Ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the Ordinand to
518 the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of Ordination, the
519 Church acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open to these
520 gifts. Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit
521 themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility;
522 at the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.¹¹
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⁹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.

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

¹¹ Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.

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II. Policies and Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry

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

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.

B. The Commissioned Ministry

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.

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2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

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

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

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

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

3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry:

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

- 608 4. Candidacy for Commissioning
609
610 a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has
611 received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region
612 for Commissioning.
613
614 b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized
615 congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized
616 non-congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.
617
618 c. *Steps for Candidacy.* The candidate shall:
619
620 1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;
621 2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the
622 applicant is a member;
623 3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and
624 4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.
625
626 d. The Region shall assess the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and
627 educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This
628 assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal
629 interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and
630 vocational testing, consultation with congregations, and as appropriate,
631 coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and
632 communications with educational institutions.
633
634 e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions
635 her/him for a particular ministry.
636
637 5. Regional Responsibilities: Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities
638 to:
639 a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister,
640 which must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational
641 criminal background check;
642 b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
643 communities whenever considering a person of color;
644 c. bring applicants “under care”;
645 d. provide for their nurture;
646 e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;
647 f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential
648 learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial
649 practice with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in
650 preparation for ministry;
651 g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;

- 652 h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional
653 Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;
654 i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;
655 j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities
656 including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and
657 k. establish additional requirements as desired.
658

659 **C. The Ordained Ministry**
660

- 661 1. *Description.* By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in
662 calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ;
663 accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for
664 the whole body of Christ; covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants
665 authority to perform that ministry as a representative of the church. Ordained
666 ministers are baptized members of a Disciples congregation.
667

668 In accepting Ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for the
669 church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service, agreeing to fulfill
670 the functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the
671 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
672

673 Ordained Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the
674 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordination may or may not meet all the
675 legal requirements for the performance of marriages.
676

677 Historically called a ministry of word and sacrament, among others, this ministry
678 may include pastors, educators, ecumenical leaders, recognized
679 congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministers,
680 chaplains, pastoral counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and
681 Regional church.
682

- 683 2. *Educational Requirements.* There are two educational tracks in preparation for
684 Ordination: an apprentice track (AT) and a seminary track (ST).
685

686 ❖ Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas
687 of ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250
688 contact hours approved by the Region in which they are under care.
689

690 ❖ Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of
691 ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent
692 from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological
693 Schools in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.
694

695 Candidates for Ordination are expected to follow the seminary track, unless, in
696 consultation with their Region, the Regional Ministry Commission determines
697 that their economic, linguistic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the
698 apprentice track more appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen,
699 the church expects the women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency
700 in the following areas of ministerial practice, listed alphabetically:
701
702 ***Biblical Knowledge:*** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to
703 interpret and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original
704 and contemporary contexts.
705
706 ***Church Administration and Planning:*** Be able to practice the principles of
707 good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals
708 to enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.
709
710 ***Communication:*** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate
711 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.
712
713 ***Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:*** Be sensitive to the different
714 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to
715 confronting and overcoming them.
716
717 ***Ecumenism:*** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and
718 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and
719 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as
720 a starting place for mission.
721
722 ***Education and Leader Development:*** Know the foundations of Christian
723 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in
724 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.
725
726 ***Ethics:*** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of
727 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality
728
729 ***Evangelism:*** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith
730 through word and action.
731
732 ***Mission of the Church in the World:*** Be able to understand and articulate the
733 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be
734 able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to
735 the ends of the earth.
736

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

764
765 3. Regional Responsibilities:

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

770

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

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

785 **D. Candidacy for Ordination**

- 786
787 1. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is under the
788 care of a Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program
789 of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.
790
791 2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man
792 or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian
793 Church (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.
794
795 3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a baptized member of a
796 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for
797 candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where
798 she or he is a student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement
799 between appropriate Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on
800 Ministry, persons may apply for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall
801 have a letter of recommendation from a recognized congregation of the
802 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate’s Region of membership.
803
804 Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing
805 (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background
806 checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of
807 Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational
808 institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational
809 capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the
810 application, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as
811 a candidate, the individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional
812 Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function
813 as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).

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

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

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

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

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

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

861

862 **E. The Act of Ordination**

863

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

868

- 869 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized
870 congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),
871 including the one in which membership is held.
872
- 873 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the
874 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the
875 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.
876
- 877 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.
878
- 879 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the
880 Regional church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church
881 shall participate in the service.
882
- 883 5. After the Ministerial Code of Ethics is signed, the signed Ordination document
884 shall be issued by the Region.
885

885

886 **F. Ministerial Standing**

887

- 888 1. *Definition.* Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing
889 for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to
890 accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both
891 denominationally and ecumenically.
892
- 893 a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently
894 engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or
895 full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a
896 congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General
897 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are
898 listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of*
899 *Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as
900 pastoral care, ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition

- 901 they have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church
902 (Disciples of Christ).
903
- 904 b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call.
905 Candidates for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the
906 discretion of the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care
907 or the Region of their educational setting.
908
- 909 c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual
910 review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the
911 Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry.
912 Nothing in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to
913 preclude a Region from developing additional appropriate statements or
914 procedures pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such
915 statements are consistent with the Order of Ministry.
916
- 917 d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification
918 of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of
919 Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes
920 of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries
921 outside the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and
922 accountable to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of
923 the ecumenical church and with interfaith organizations whose
924 responsibilities extend beyond one Region, whether in North America or
925 abroad, and fulltime military, VA and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All
926 other ministries are hereby defined as Regional as determined by the
927 primary ministry site. The General Commission on Ministry has a
928 credentialing function but is not an Ordaining body; that is the province of
929 Regions in cooperation with congregations. In covenant with the Regions,
930 the General Commission on Ministry will notify Regions about persons who
931 reside in their Region and hold Standing with the General Commission on
932 Ministry.
933
- 934 e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in
935 sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of
936 whole church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the
937 denomination’s mission and vision” (*Marks of a Faithful Regional Church*,
938 August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly
939 lodged with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the
940 General Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will
941 complete Standing forms required by both the Region and the General
942 Commission on Ministry.
943

- 944 2. *Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian*
945 *Church (Disciples of Christ)*
946
- 947 a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of
948 Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes
949 eligible for Standing.
950
 - 951 b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister
952 does and reports the following:
953
 - 954 i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by
955 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the
956 church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church
957 as ministerial in purpose.
958
 - 959 ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.
960
 - 961 iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
962 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the
963 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.
964
 - 965 iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church*
966 *(Disciples of Christ)*.
967
 - 968 v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the
969 Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)
970
 - 971 vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the
972 ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as
973 appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)
974
 - 975 c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General
976 Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships
977 affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.
978
 - 979 d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by
980 which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.
981 Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic
982 communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.
983
 - 984 e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region
985 to a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry
986 is retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must
987 contact that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry

988 position. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned
989 to the Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission
990 on Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional
991 Ministers upon relocation.

992

993 f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves
994 from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer
995 engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for
996 up to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and
997 subsequent certification is granted by the Region into which the minister
998 has moved. The Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both
999 the former and new Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.

1000

1001 3. *Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the*
1002 *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

1003

1004 a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Ministers retain Standing if they continue
1005 serving in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned
1006 Ministers may be granted at the discretion of the Region.

1007

1008 b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of
1009 retirement.

1010

1011 i. A retired minister who intends to continue practice of ministry, whether
1012 on an occasional, part-time or full time basis must continue to seek annual
1013 certification of Standing as requested by the Region where the ministry
1014 site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate.
1015 (See II.F.1.c.)

1016

1017 ii. When Standing is granted, the active retired minister will be listed in the
1018 *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as active retired. (aR)

1019

1020 iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister

1021

1022 a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by
1023 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by
1024 the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the
1025 church as ministerial in purpose.

1026

1027 b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.

1028

1029 c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1030 including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the
1031 community of residence or active ministry where feasible.

1032

- 1033 d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the
- 1034 Order of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of*
- 1035 *Ethics*
- 1036
- 1037 iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on
- 1038 an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive
- 1039 retired ministers.
- 1040
- 1041 a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be
- 1042 listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as
- 1043 inactive, retired ministers (iR).
- 1044
- 1045 b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of
- 1046 Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.
- 1047
- 1048 c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must
- 1049 continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold
- 1050 participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the
- 1051 community of residence where feasible.
- 1052
- 1053 v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of
- 1054 ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired
- 1055 minister. (See 3.c.i-iv)
- 1056

1057 4. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

- 1058
- 1059 a. Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the
- 1060 minister, the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or
- 1061 more of the following conditions are present:
- 1062
- 1063 i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either
- 1064 temporarily or permanently.
- 1065
- 1066 ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church
- 1067 (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples
- 1068 congregation.
- 1069
- 1070 iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the
- 1071 church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the
- 1072 functions of the office of a minister.
- 1073
- 1074 iv. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from
- 1075 the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1076

- 1077 v. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission
1078 to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial*
1079 *Code of Ethics*.
1080
1081 vi. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.
1082
1083 b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the
1084 initiative in the review of Standing, the procedures shall include:
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1086 i. Written notice to the minister that Standing is to be reviewed with the
1087 possibility of suspension or termination.
1088
1089 ii. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial
1090 Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the termination of
1091 Standing of persons of color.
1092
1093 iii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General
1094 Commission on Ministry.
1095
1096 c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall
1097 include:
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1099 i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
1100 requesting that Standing be reviewed with the possibility of
1101 termination.
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1103 ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the
1104 General Commission on Ministry.
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1106 d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been
1107 terminated or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on
1108 Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending
1109 body, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

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5. *Surrender of Standing*

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

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6. *Lapsed Standing*

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

G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1158 Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical
1159 authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry
1160 in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1161
1162 i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated
1163 knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of
1164 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission on
1165 Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner
1166 may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian
1167 Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in
1168 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the
1169 process.
1170
1171 ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a
1172 call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained
1173 Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained
1174 minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
1175 Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.
1176
1177 iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial
1178 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when
1179 serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
1180
1181 iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1182 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall
1183 maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.
1184
1185 v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which
1186 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.
1187
1188 vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1189 Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church
1190 (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate
1191 membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1192 congregation in the community.
1193
1194 vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1195 Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General
1196 Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1197
1198 viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial
1199 Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate
1200 to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary support
1201 in Ordained ministry.

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- ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.
 - x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister's Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.
 - xi. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to review and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing by the new Region.
- e. *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.*
- Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.
- i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ is not given at this point in the process.
 - ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained minister's calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial 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

1288 and transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new
1289 Association.

1290
1291 2. *Persons Ordained in Other Churches.* Ministers Ordained by other denominations
1292 or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of Ordination
1293 and the granting of Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1294 Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for
1295 recognition of Ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
1296 Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of
1297 Military Chaplains stationed overseas.

1298
1299 a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the
1300 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1301
1302 i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or
1303 congregation from which the candidate transfers.

1304
1305 ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a
1306 criminal background check.

1307
1308 iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is
1309 applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.

1310
1311 iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either
1312 the granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1313
1314 b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be
1315 granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon
1316 fulfillment of the following requirements:

1317
1318 i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church
1319 (Disciples of Christ).

1320
1321 ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and
1322 practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

1323
1324 iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational
1325 attainment, for the Order of Ministry.

1326
1327 iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a
1328 Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

1329
1330 v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as
1331 listed in item II.A.2.

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- 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, within 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 Search and Call. Primary responsibility for Search and Call 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.
 - 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.

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- d. Ordained Ministerial Partners in the United Church of Christ will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call 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 be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
3. *Responsibilities*. It is expected that all parties using Search and Call will abide by the established procedures of the Office of Search and Call.
- a. Ministers. Commissioned and Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have the responsibility to seek the advice and counsel of the Region within which they hold Standing and to avail themselves of the resources of the Office of Search and Call. They have the freedom to accept or reject any call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service seem appropriate. In all matters, ministers will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - i. Ministers will provide information for a permanent file to the Office of Search and Call upon entry into the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and maintain current data in that file.
 - ii. For purposes of Search and Call, the minister will update the *Ministerial Profile* and complete reference requests, the *Ministerial Disclosure*

- 1419 *Form* and criminal background check. The Search and Call forms will be
1420 circulated as prepared and submitted by the minister.
- 1421 iii. Ordained ministers seeking a call shall utilize the process provided by
1422 the Office of Search and Call.
- 1423 iv. Commissioned ministers (seeking ordination and not seeking
1424 ordination) who desire to relocate shall request the assistance of the
1425 appropriate Regional or Area Ministers.
- 1426 v. Ministers will be as specific and honest as possible about any limiting
1427 factors in relocation, such as geographical preferences and salary
1428 requirements.
- 1429 vi. Ministers will instruct the Office of Search and Call to send reference
1430 forms to the persons whom they have identified as references. It is the
1431 responsibility of the minister to ensure that these persons complete
1432 and submit the reference forms. Once received, references will be held
1433 in confidence from the minister if a waiver has been signed by the
1434 minister.
- 1435 vii. Ministers will negotiate with only one congregation at a time. A search
1436 committee and candidate are “in negotiation” when both agree that
1437 they will not discuss relocation with any other search committee or
1438 candidate until either party declares negotiations ended. It is the
1439 obligation of ministers to be specific with congregations about their
1440 degree of interest.
- 1441 viii. Ministers will stay in communication with search committees who
1442 have indicated interest, especially informing a congregation
1443 **immediately** when a decision has been made not to consider accepting
1444 a call to that particular congregation.
- 1445 ix. Ministers will contact the appropriate Region if they wish to be a
1446 candidate for a specific congregation in that Region and request that
1447 their name be submitted to the search committee.
- 1448 x. Ministers will not initiate Search and Call by contacting a congregation
1449 directly.
- 1450 xi. Ministers will advise the Region, if contacted directly by a congregation,
1451 should mutual interest in exploring a possible call be determined.
- 1452 xii. Ministers will advise the Region where currently located, the Region
1453 where moving, the Office of Search and Call, and the Pension Fund, as
1454 soon as a call has been accepted.
- 1455
- 1456 b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of
1457 Christ) and according to *The Design*, congregations have the right and
1458 responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms
1459 of call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their
1460 own procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the
1461 covenantal relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek
1462 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.
 - 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 the obligation of the search committee to be specific with the minister about its degree of interest.
 - ix. Congregations will issue a Letter of Call providing copies of the call for the congregation, the minister, the Region, and the Office of Search and Call.
 - x. Congregations will reimburse the called candidate for the Criminal Background Check.
 - xi. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including housing allowance – parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing education, vacation, sabbatical and Social Security offset).

- 1507 xii. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related
1508 expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.
1509
- 1510 c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and
1511 counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions will
1512 work collaboratively with General Racial Ethnic Ministries to address
1513 ministerial vacancies among their constituencies. Regions may delegate or
1514 share Search and Call responsibility with their areas, districts or other
1515 subdivisions. In all matters, Regions will function within the covenantal
1516 relationship of the whole church.
- 1517 i. Each Region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either at
1518 the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the Region when
1519 it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be sought.
- 1520 ii. Each Region will receive and review all ministerial search and call
1521 materials from the Office of Search and Call, giving special attention to
1522 those persons who have indicated an interest in their Region.
- 1523 iii. Each Region will refer all ministers within the Region who wish to seek
1524 relocation to the Office of Search and Call for entry into Search and Call.
- 1525 iv. Each Region will share with search committees Search and Call forms of
1526 a selection of candidates who appear to meet the requirements of the
1527 congregations and institutions with whom the Region is working.
- 1528 v. Each Region will encourage congregations to give fair and equal
1529 consideration to candidates putting aside prejudice and considering
1530 candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.
- 1531 vi. Each Region will share with specific search committees Search and Call
1532 forms of any minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1533 Christ), or any Ordained Ministerial Partner qualified by a Region to
1534 seek a call, who requests consideration in that congregation.
- 1535 vii. Each Region will maintain a list of churches seeking ministerial
1536 leadership in the Region and make it available upon request to
1537 ministers with Standing.
- 1538 viii. If a Region is contacted by a search committee about a minister not
1539 actively seeking a call, the Region will inquire about that minister's
1540 interest. The minister has the right to know the name and location of
1541 the interested congregation. If said minister is interested, the Region
1542 will direct said minister to Search and Call.
- 1543 ix. Each Region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a list
1544 of congregations which have received their *Ministerial Profile*.
- 1545 x. Each Region will treat all Search and Call forms with strict
1546 confidentiality.
- 1547 xi. Each Region will communicate to the Office of Search and Call any
1548 formal actions and decisions to remove Standing for misconduct of a
1549 minister. The minister shall be informed and given a copy of the report
1550 which will also be placed in the minister's file. (See also J. 1. below.)

- 1551 xii. Each Region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations
1552 outside the Region to the appropriate Regional office.
- 1553 xiii. Each Region will regularly notify the Office of Search and Call of all
1554 relocations occurring within, to, or from the Region.
- 1555 xiv. Each Region will authorize access to Search and Call to
1556 a. candidates for ordination whose ordinations have been authorized
1557 in their Region and
1558 b. ordained ministers from other denominations who have been given
1559 temporary recognition and who are in the process of transferring
1560 Standing to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 1561 xv. Each Region will make information available about Regional staff
1562 vacancies through such channels as denominational websites, Regional
1563 publications, Disciples Home Missions, and other publications.
- 1564
- 1565 d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home
1566 Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian
1567 Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for
1568 coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters,
1569 Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of
1570 the whole church.
- 1571 i. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the permanent files of all
1572 ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 1573 ii. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the Ministers Directory of
1574 the Year Book and Directory reflecting the current listing of ministers
1575 with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as reported by
1576 the Regions and the General Commission on Ministry.
- 1577 iii. The Office of Search and Call will receive, process and make available
1578 Search and Call materials of ministers with Standing in the Christian
1579 Church (Disciples of Christ), Qualified Ordained Ministerial Partners,
1580 and others authorized by Regions to Regions and General Ministries.
1581 The Search and Call forms will be circulated as prepared and submitted
1582 by the minister.
- 1583 iv. The Office of Search and Call will collect and release reference material
1584 to Regions or General Ministries upon permission of the minister
1585 applying for Search and Call assistance.
- 1586 v. The Office of Search and Call will protect the confidentiality of
1587 references when confidentiality has been promised.
- 1588 vi. The Office of Search and Call will secure permission from any minister
1589 not actively seeking a call before releasing references to Regions or
1590 General Ministries. The minister has the right to know the name and
1591 location of the interested congregation. Information in the permanent
1592 file may be released without permission to Regional Ministers or to the
1593 Chair of the General Commission on Ministry in regard to ethical and
1594 conduct matters.

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- 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.
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- 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 of congregations in which pre-theological and theological students may be serving. The theological institutions have responsibility for relating their graduating students who are candidates for Standing as Ordained ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to Search and Call. In Search and Call, educational institutions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - i. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by students in partnership with the Region in matters pertaining to the employment of students during their pre-theological and theological education.
 - ii. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for search and call assistance that is outside the student field placement process to the appropriate Region.
 - iii. Educational institutions will cooperate with Regions in orienting students to the Search and Call process of the church.
- 1623
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- f. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - i. General Ministries will refer all requests for Search and Call assistance to the Office of Search and Call and the appropriate Regional Minister. They will refer requests for candidates' names to the appropriate Region.
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1639 ii. General racial/ethnic ministries will work collaboratively with Regions
1640 to address ministerial vacancies among their constituencies.

1641
1642 4. *Right of Review and Counsel.* The right to review and counsel is limited to
1643 perceived violations of Search and Call and should be initiated with the
1644 appropriate Region, institution or General Ministry. A request for review and
1645 counsel beyond the Region shall be to the General Commission on Ministry.

1646

1647 **I. Ministerial Code of Ethics**

1648

1649 Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and
1650 Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I
1651 will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the
1652 following:

1653

1654 *Personal Conduct*

- 1655 • Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- 1656 • Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
- 1657 • Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual
1658 disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- 1659 • Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for
1660 privacy and time together
- 1661 • Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- 1662 • Being a faithful steward of God’s gifts to me by managing time, talents, and
1663 financial resources responsibly and generously
- 1664 • Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
- 1665 • Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and
1666 other abusive behaviors
- 1667 • Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- 1668 • Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- 1669 • Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to
1670 minister impartially

1671

1672 *Relationships to the Church which I Serve*

- 1673 • Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
- 1674 • Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts
1675 with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
- 1676 • Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth
1677 in love
- 1678 • Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with
1679 integrity and not for financial gain
- 1680 • Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular
1681 ministry to which I have been called

- 1682 • Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
- 1683 • Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's
- 1684 ministry
- 1685 • Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what
- 1686 they need to know, when they need to know it
- 1687 • Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual
- 1688 abuse or neglect
- 1689 • Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and
- 1690 cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
- 1691 • Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister should divisive tensions threaten
- 1692 my relationship with those I serve
- 1693

1694 *Relationships to Ministry Colleagues*

- 1695 • Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture,
- 1696 discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and
- 1697 spiritual formation
- 1698 • Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their
- 1699 problems or crises
- 1700 • Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of
- 1701 another congregation only at the request of that congregation's elders and
- 1702 current pastor
- 1703 • Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my
- 1704 predecessors or another minister
- 1705 • Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other
- 1706 departure from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by
- 1707 making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor, nor will I
- 1708 perform any pastoral services unless requested by the congregation's elders and
- 1709 current pastor
- 1710

1711 *Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church*

- 1712 • Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing
- 1713 prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and
- 1714 morally responsible society
- 1715 • Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian
- 1716 Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1717 • Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people
- 1718 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1719 • Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and
- 1720 participating in activities which strengthen its ministry, witness, and mission
- 1721

1722 **J. Misconduct**

1723

1724 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be
1725 activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in
1726 the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the
1727 Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the
1728 committee or Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1729

1730 1. *Reporting*

1731

1732 Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and
1733 decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,
1734 Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

1735

1736 2. *Suspension of Standing*

1737

1738 In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be
1739 temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
1740 during the period of investigation and adjudication.

1741

1742 3. *Sexual Misconduct*

1743

1744 a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual
1745 misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating
1746 sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each
1747 Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and
1748 procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such
1749 definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the
1750 Region.

1751

1752 b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have
1753 specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving,
1754 investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers
1755 engaged in non-Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry
1756 will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It
1757 is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to
1758 communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and
1759 other organizations in the General and ecumenical church.

1760

1761 **K. Right of Appeal**

1762

1763 The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to
1764 persons who, at the time of their appeal, are subject to a decision with adverse effect
1765 regarding Ordination, Commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or Standing. The

1766 General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are
1767 pending or in process.

1768

1769 **L. Amendment Process**

1770

1771 The Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of
1772 Christ) may be amended two ways:

1773

1774 1. By a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present
1775 and voting, providing such amendments shall have been regularly filed 180
1776 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated
1777 among the congregations and Regions 60 days in advance of the General
1778 Assembly.

1779

1780 2. By a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian
1781 Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendments
1782 shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian
1783 Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

1784 -----

1785 -----

1786 Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971

1787 Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977

1788 Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981

1789 Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985

1790 Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987

1791 Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the

1792 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended

1793 Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1794 Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

1795 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry approved

1796 Indianapolis General Assembly 2009

1797 Section II.H. on Ministerial Search and Call amended General Board 2009

1798 -----

1799 Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for The Ordering of Ministry, 2009, is
1800 an operating document of the General Commission on Ministry, effective August 2011.

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1802

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