

POLICIES AND
CRITERIA
FOR THE
ORDER OF MINISTRY



CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

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Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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

- A. ***The Ministry of Jesus Christ.*** Within the church the fundamental ministry is that of Jesus Christ whose servanthood, offered to God in behalf of humanity, defines and gives character to all ministry exercised in His name.
- B. ***The Corporate Ministry.*** As head of His body, the church, Christ calls upon His people to participate in His ministry and thus to make known in the life of the world the reality of God as Creator, Lord of History, Judge, Savior, Father. By baptism all Christians are inducted into the corporate ministry of God's people and by sharing in it fulfill their own callings as servants of Christ. This corporate ministry of all Christians is marked by these elements:
1. The praise of God in the church's public worship and by acts of faithful service;
 2. Care for the common life of the whole body within which all members come to know themselves as children of God and find confirmed their gifts and callings for special service;
 3. Mediation of the divine love to the life of all persons, including the society as a whole, through loving service particularly at the points of greatest human need and primarily through the daily work of God's people.
- C. ***The Order of Ministry.*** Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is and has been from the beginning a representative ministry called of God and authorized by the church. While all Christians share in the corporate ministry, the term minister particularly describes a person to whom the church entrusts representative responsibility. Through the centuries this Order of Ministry, in various offices, has been responsible to lead in transmitting the Christian tradition from one generation to another, translating and interpreting the Scriptures, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, administering the sacraments, serving to maintain a company of Christians in continuity with the life and faith of the Apostles, and acting as pioneers and leaders in the church's reconciling mission in the world.
1. ***Personal Qualifications for Admission to the Order.*** In all of its procedures concerning the Order of Ministry the church seeks these qualities in the men and women whom it inducts into office:
 - a. Faith in Christ Jesus and commitment to a life of Christian discipleship
 - b. Definite and informed decision, in response to God, to serve in the Order of Ministry
 - c. Personal fitness sufficient to the demands of the office, including mental and physical capacities, emotional stability and maturity, and standards of morality
 2. ***Preparation for Service in the Order of Ministry.*** Persons to be inducted into the Order of Ministry are to prepare themselves for their work. That preparation shall include:
 - 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, the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the world in theological perspective, and the Christian mission
 - c. Professional study and supervised experience in the work of the ministry, with emphasis upon that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve

- d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both as community of faith and institution
- e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation, and disciplined commitment to ministry
- f. Formation of ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct

D. *Offices within the Order of Ministry.* The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) includes two offices: the office of ordained minister and the office of licensed minister. Each office is authorized to carry out representative ministry according to provisions established by the General Assembly.

II. Candidacy for the Order of Ministry

A. *A Definition: Candidacy.* Candidacy is the initial step for entrance into the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Candidacy is entered into when a man or woman declares the intention to fulfill the requirements for entrance into the Order of Ministry, and the church affirms that intention.

B. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for candidacy to the region of the candidate's choice through the Official Board of that congregation. The applicant shall have acceptance, approval and support of the congregation. In unusual circumstances, the person may make direct application to the region.

It is advisable that the candidate be at least a junior in college or university, or have demonstrated sufficient maturity and competency for potential leadership. Candidacy shall be applied for at least one year prior to ordination and ordinarily at least one year prior to licensing.

Upon receipt of the application, the region will begin the process of assessing (through avenues such as personal interviews, consultation with congregations, appropriate regions and educational institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the application, the region shall admit the applicant to candidacy.

C. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek admission to the Order of Ministry by preparing for ordination or licensing. The candidate shall seek to be responsive to the opportunities for personal and spiritual growth provided during the period of nurture and care by regional and general units of the church. Where possible these opportunities will be developed in consultation and cooperation with either or both the congregation(s) and educational institution(s) to which the candidate is related.

In the exercise of its responsibility, the region shall give continuing counsel and guidance to the candidate's preparation for ministry, and shall provide assistance to the candidate in discovering avenues for continued personal and spiritual growth. This may involve experiences such as supervised field education, internships, apprenticeships and individual or group career assessment.

The candidate who has not yet fulfilled all the qualifications for ordination or licensing as a congregational minister or commissioned minister may be granted license as a student minister. When a candidate seeks licensing for the practice of ministry in a region other than where the person is a candidate, the licensing region shall consult with the region of candidacy. In the event a candidate from one region seeks ordination or licensing in a region other than the one in which the person is a candidate, that region shall consult with the region of candidacy regarding endorsement and transfer of candidacy.

The region shall advise the theological seminaries and, when appropriate, the undergraduate institutions of higher education in which it has candidates of the standards relating to candidacy, ordination and licensing.

Institutions of higher education related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall: (1) share with the region in the nurture and guidance of enrolled candidates; (2) assist potential candidates to relate to a region; and (3) be aware of standards for licensing and ordination applicable to students in that institution. In non-Disciple-related institutions, the Division of Higher Education shall seek to discover potential candidates, inform the institutions and students of procedures for candidacy in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall seek to relate the students to a region for care.

Candidacy is terminated by: (1) ordination or licensing (2) withdrawal by the candidate; or (3) decision of the region to remove the candidate from candidacy.

III. The Office of Ordained Minister

A. *Description of the Office.* The broadest authorization for representative ministry granted by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is conferred upon men and women whom it inducts into the office of ordained minister. By ordination the church recognizes that ordained persons, in fulfilling their calling as servants of Christ, possess the abilities, qualities and preparation needed for the performance of their assigned functions, accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole body of Christ, covenants to undergird the ministry, and grants authority to perform that ministry as a representative of the church.

In accepting ordination, the ordained minister covenants to obey God by caring for the church, offering gifts of mind and body to that service, and agreeing to fulfill the functions of a minister.

B. *Authorization to Ordain on Behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).* Within these policies and criteria, established by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the regions and their related congregations share responsibility for ordination. Specifically assigned to the regions is the responsibility to establish procedures to evaluate applicants, admit them to candidacy, care for their nurture, authorize ordination, and supervise the act of ordination.

C. *Theological and professional study* in preparation for ordination ordinarily includes the securing of a baccalaureate degree and the completion of a seminary program of study.

D. *The Act of Ordination*

1. The act of ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the region.
2. The candidate shall ordinarily be recommended for ordination by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including the congregation in which the candidate's membership is held.
3. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the region, and, if possible, the general and ecumenical church ordinarily shall participate in the act of ordination.
4. The service ordinarily shall take place in the congregation.
5. The certificate of ordination shall be issued by the region and signed by appropriate officials of the church and participants in the ceremony.

- E. ***The Right of Appeal.*** Applicants and candidates shall have the right of appeal to the General Commission on Ministry within one year of the decision or after prolonged inaction of the region.
- F. ***Ordained ministers with standing are voting members*** of the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

IV. The Office of Licensed Ministers

A. ***Description of the Office.*** Authorization for representative ministry in specific situations and with periodic review is conferred by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) upon men and women whom it inducts into the office of licensed minister. By the act of licensing, the church recognizes that licensed persons, in fulfilling their calling as servants of God, possess abilities, qualities and preparation needed for the performance of their assigned functions; accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole body of Christ; promises to undergird that ministry; and grants authority to perform that ministry in the prescribed area of responsibility as a representative of the church. (State/provincial laws may vary in their recognition of license. The granting of license does not, therefore, necessarily meet all legal requirements for the performance of marriages or other legal functions.)

In accepting this license, licensed ministers affirm their vocation to obey God by caring for the church, offer gifts of mind and body to that service, and agree to fulfill the functions of a minister appropriate to the prescribed area of responsibility.

B. ***Authority to license on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).*** Within these policies and criteria as established by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the regions and their related congregations share responsibility for licensing. Specifically assigned to the regions is the responsibility to establish procedures to evaluate candidates, care for their nurture, define their prescribed area of responsibility, authorize licensing and supervise the act of licensing.

C. ***Classifications within the Office of Licensed Minister.*** The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes classifications within the office of licensed minister, each of which carries its own title and limitations.

1. The Licensed Congregational Minister

- a. Men and women who are *Licensed Congregational Ministers* are authorized to perform representative ministerial functions in a congregation, under the oversight of the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) granting the license.
- b. The geographical area within which the *Licensed Congregational Minister* may function, and the term of service, are stated on the license.
- c. The *Licensed Congregational Minister* typically serves in such roles as an organizer and guide for worship; a proclaimer of the Gospel; a leader in ministries of intercession and reconciliation; a minister of the Eucharistic bread and wine; a servant in pastoral care - especially among the ill, shut-in and bereaved; a leader in mission and public witness; a partner in congregational governance and oversight; and an embodiment of the unity of Christ's church.
- d. *Licensed Congregational Ministers* commit themselves to on-going education and equipment for ministry, and are accountable to the licensing Region for a program of continual formation for ministry.

2. The Licensed Student Minister

- a. Men and women who are *Licensed Student Ministers* are authorized to perform representative ministerial functions under the oversight of the educational institution and the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) granting the license.
- b. The geographical areas within which the *Licensed Student Minister* may function is stated on the license, which is issued for one year, subject to renewal.
- c. The *Licensed Student Minister* is a student in preparation for ministry who can serve in a variety of ministries. These ministries typically provide not only a venue in which to exercise their gifts for ministry, but also a locale where the student's formation for ministry may be assessed and strengthened by the educational institution and/or the Region under whose care they are being shaped for the church's service.
- d. The *Licensed Student Minister* covenants to support the commitments of the ministry to which they are called, and promises to enhance denominational connections to the best of their ability.

3. The Licensed Commissioned Minister

- a. Men and women who are *Licensed Commissioned Ministers* are authorized to perform specialized functions as stated in the license. These functions ordinarily will be ministerial in purpose, although under some circumstances, the work authorized by the license may be of some other type.
- b. The term of service for the *Licensed Commissioned Minister* is stated on the license and is determined by the candidate's vocational intention, the kind of service authorized, and the recommendation of the Region granting the license.
- c. The designation *Licensed Commissioned Minister* authenticates a variety of ministries as being within the purview of the church's mission and allows the Regional church latitude for creativity and imagination in endorsing and certifying the fresh work of God's Holy Spirit in our midst. Among others, these ministries may include Christian education, music, youth ministry, parish nursing, congregationally based or non-congregationally-based community ministries of justice and reconciliation, where Regional nurture and certification are deemed appropriate.
- d. The *Licensed Commissioned Minister* covenants to support the commitments of the ministry to which they are called, and promises to serve as a faithful representative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

D. *The Act of Licensing*

1. The act of licensing shall be under the authorization and guidance of the region.
2. The candidate shall ordinarily be recommended for licensing by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which membership is held.
3. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the region, and, if possible, the general and ecumenical church, ordinarily shall participate in the act of licensing.
4. The service shall ordinarily take place in the congregation.
5. The certificate of licensing shall be issued by the region and signed by appropriate officials of the church and participants in the ceremony.

E. ***The Right of Appeal.*** Applicants and candidates shall have the right of appeal to the General Commission on Ministry within one year of the decision or after prolonged inaction of the region.

F. ***Licensed ministers with standing are voting members*** of the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

V. Ministerial Standing

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

1. Standing affirms that the ordained or licensed minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional part-time or full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a congregation, organization, related institution or regional or general unit of the *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. Such ministers are listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as search and call assistance, ecclesiastical endorsement, scholarship aid; and have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. Responsibility for certification of standing of ministers and for periodic review of that standing within these policies and criteria is lodged with the regions where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry, except in the case of those engaged in non-regional ministries for which these responsibilities concerning standing are lodged with the General Commission on Ministry.

For purposes of this policy statement, non-regional ministries are defined as all ministries outside the United States and Canada and those ministries engaged by and accountable to one of the general administrative units of the church. All other ministries are hereby defined as regional as determined by the primary work location of the minister.

B. ***Standing of those Ordained or Licensed*** by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

1. By virtue of ordination or licensing according to the criteria and procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible for standing in the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. Standing is granted initially by the region in which the minister's service begins or by the General Commission on Ministry.
3. Standing continues so long as the minister does the following:
 - a. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by ordination or licensing, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose. A person will not be continued in standing who is neither employed by, nor actively seeking employment in, nor accountable to a congregation, organization, related institution or regional or general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - b. Participates in programs of study, research, growth and renewal.
 - c. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community where feasible.
 - d. Continues to meet the personal qualification for admission to the Order of Ministry (see Section IC1).

- e. Seeks annual certification upon retirement.
- 4. The region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by which the standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed periodically.
- 5. When an ordained minister moves from a ministry position in one region to a ministry position in another, standing in the Order of Ministry is retained. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on Ministry. When an ordained minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves from a ministry position in one region to another region and is no longer engaged in ministry, ministerial standing will lapse in six months, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent certification is granted by the region into which the minister has moved. The standing of licensed ministers is removed when they no longer serve in the region which granted the license.
- 6. Ministers with standing at the time of retirement retain this standing except when the minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (see Section IC1).
 - a. Upon retirement standing is certified annually by the region in which the minister holds participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community when feasible.
 - b. When actively engaged in the practice of ministry, standing is certified by the region where the minister is so engaged.

C. *Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ*

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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).
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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.

7. *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 ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ who has a call to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This recognition is based upon demonstrating knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

- a. A United Church of Christ minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.
- b. Once a United Church of Christ minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), that Ordained Ministerial Partner may seek a call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- c. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the region in which the minister's congregational membership is held.
- d. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall maintain ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministerial standing shall be held in the association in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) membership is held.
- e. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community where feasible.
- f. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in a region has voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- g. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his or her primary support and accountability in ordained ministry.
- h. When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) accepts a call in another region, they shall be subject to review and subsequent certification by that region.
- i. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to a 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.

8. *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 ordained ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has a call to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ. This recognition is based upon demonstrating knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

- a. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when serving a United Church of Christ calling body.
- b. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the United Church of Christ, that Ordained Ministerial Partner may seek a call in the United Church of Christ.
- c. 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 minister's congregational membership is held.
- d. 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). Ordained ministerial standing shall be held in the region in which the United Church of Christ membership is held.
- e. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall hold local church membership in the United Church of Christ.
- f. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ is eligible for election as a delegate to a Conference or General Synod or election as a member of any instrumentality board.
- g. 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 or her primary support and accountability in ordained ministry.
- h. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ is subject to periodic review by the region in which ordained ministerial standing is maintained.
- i. When a disciplinary procedure is instituted by an association in relation to a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) region in which standing is held shall be informed and invited to participate. The region may accept the procedures and outcome of the association or utilize its own procedures to determine the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister's ongoing standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

D. Admission to Standing of Persons Ordained or Licensed by Other Churches.

Ministers ordained or licensed by other churches may be received into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and granted standing as ordained or licensed ministers. Responsibility for this process is lodged with the region or the General Commission on Ministry.

1. Temporary recognition of applicants shall be granted upon the fulfillment of the following requirements:
 - a. Consultation, whenever possible, with appropriate officials of the church from which the candidate transfers.
 - b. Investigation of personal and ministerial references.

- c. Filing of the Ministerial Record Form with the appropriate offices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Temporary recognition does not constitute standing in the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Temporary recognition shall be reviewed annually by the body granting it; either the region or the General Commission on Ministry.
2. A Certificate of Ministerial Recognition and admission to ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be granted by the region or the General Commission on Ministry upon fulfillment of the following requirements:
 - a. Membership in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or recognition by a region of the applicant's participation in the life and work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - b. Acquaintance with the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - c. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation for the Order of Ministry.
- E. *Termination of Ministerial Standing.*** The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall develop policies and criteria by which ministerial standing can be terminated. Until such a time as these policies and criteria are developed, the following shall apply:
1. Procedures leading to a review of standing may be initiated by the minister or the region when one or more of the following conditions are present:
 - a. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either temporarily or permanently.
 - b. The minister requests transfer into the Order of Ministry of another church.
 - c. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose and no longer performs normal functions of a minister.
 - d. The minister discontinues active relationships with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - e. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (see Section IC1).
 2. When the region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the initiative in the review of standing, the procedures shall include:
 - a. Written notice to the minister that standing is to be reviewed with the possibility of termination.
 - b. A hearing by a committee appointed by the region or the General Commission on Ministry.
 3. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall include:
 - a. Written notice to the regional minister or the General Commission on Ministry requesting that standing be reviewed with the possibility of termination.
 - b. A consultation with a committee if appropriate.
 4. Standing may be granted to a minister whose standing has been terminated or suspended by another region or church only after thorough investigation of the reasons for the termination or suspension.

F. *Standing in Regions.* Nothing in these statements of policy and criteria is intended to preclude a region from developing further appropriate statements pertaining to recognition and/or standing within that region. However, only those persons meeting the specific criteria established by the policies of this document should be recognized as holding standing in the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

G. *Right of Appeal.* Decisions with an adverse effect on standing may be appealed to the General Commission on Ministry within one year from the date on which regional decisions were final.

The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal, described in paragraphs III. E., IV. E., and V. G., extend to persons who, at the time of their appeal are subject to a decision with adverse effect regarding licensing, ordination, and/or standing.

VI. Ministerial Search and Call

A. *The General Principle.* Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the process developed to facilitate the employment of ordained and licensed ministers who hold standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It provides a covenantal framework within which ministers and the general, regional and congregational manifestations of the church can serve to upbuild the whole church of Jesus Christ.

Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). General, regional and congregational manifestations 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 these policies in the interest of assuring an orderly and responsible system of ministerial search and call.

B. *Operating Principles.*

1. Ordained ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to the ministerial search and call process of the church.
2. Ordained Ministerial Partners with standing in the United Church of Christ will have complete and unhindered access to the ministerial search and call process of the church once they have been qualified to seek a call by a region.
3. Licensed ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have access to the ministerial search and call process in the region for which their ministry is licensed.
4. Congregations, regions, institutions and general units of the church will be provided assistance when so desired in their search for ministerial leadership.
5. Any minister's personnel file in Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, will be open to the minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver has been signed.
6. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference forms, will not be violated.
7. All ordained ministers with authorized access to the ministerial search and call process may have their names considered for any ministerial position for which they are qualified, following the selection processes used for the position.
8. All ordained ministers with authorized access to the ministerial search and call process shall also have access to information regarding available ministerial openings in the church.

9. Every congregation, region, institution and general unit will strive to be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry rather than such givens as race, ethnic origin, sex, age or physical disability.

C. Responsibilities.

1. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), congregations have the right and responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms of employment, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their own procedures. In the ministerial search and call process, congregations will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - a. Congregations will advise regions of impending vacancies and work within regional procedures to receive advice and counsel in seeking ministerial leadership.
 - b. Congregations will have freedom to consider any ordained 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Congregations will strive to be fair and open in the consideration of all candidates putting aside prejudice based on race, ethnic origin, sex, age or physical disability.
 - e. Congregations 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 regional office for reasons of safe keeping and confidentiality. All records relating to other candidates in the search process shall be destroyed.
 - f. Congregations will stay in communication with candidates whom the search committee has contacted, especially informing candidates who are no longer being considered for the position.
 - g. Congregations may talk with a number of ministers concurrently but will negotiate with only one minister 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 the expiration of a mutually agreed upon date. It is the obligation of the search committee to be specific with the minister about its degree of interest.
 - h. Congregations will issue a written call providing copies of the call for the congregation, the minister, and the region.
 - i. Congregations will provide a fair salary (including parsonage provision) within the capabilities of the congregation, as well as adequate benefits (pension, health insurance, continuing education and Social Security offset).
 - j. Congregations will provide for the reimbursement of church-related expenses to cover actual expenses of accomplishing ministry.

2. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and counsel to both congregations and ministers in matters of ministerial search and call. Regions may delegate or share this responsibility with their subdivisions, e.g., areas or districts. In the ministerial search and call process, regions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - a. Each region will provide advice and counsel to congregations either at the request of the congregation or at the initiation of the region when it is known that new ministerial leadership is being or will be sought.
 - b. Each region will receive and review all ministerial search and call materials from Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, giving special attention to those persons who have indicated an interest in their region.
 - c. Each region will refer all ministers within the region who wish to seek relocation outside the region to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call for entry into the search and call process.
 - d. Each region will share with search committees biographical and reference materials on candidates who appear to meet the requirements of the congregations and institutions with whom the region is working.
 - e. Each region will encourage congregations to give fair and equal consideration to candidates regardless of their race, ethnic origin, sex, age or physical disability.
 - f. Each region will share with specific search committees biographical and reference materials on any minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or any Ordained Ministerial Partner qualified by a region to seek a call, who requests consideration in that congregation.
 - g. Each region will maintain a list of churches seeking ministerial leadership in the region and make it available upon request to ministers who are seeking a call.
 - h. Each region will secure permission from any minister not actively seeking a call before releasing references to a search committee. The minister has the right to know the name and location of the interested congregation.
 - i. Each region will provide, upon request of ministers seeking a call, a list of congregations which have received their biographical and reference material.
 - j. Each region will treat with confidentiality all confidential material reported on the Search and Call Form.
 - k. Each region will communicate to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, and to other regions any official action by its commissions on the ministry concerning the conduct of a minister. The minister shall be informed and given a copy of the report which will also be placed in the minister's file.
 - l. Each region will refer all requests for assistance from congregations outside the region to the appropriate regional office.
 - m. Each region will notify Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, monthly of all relocations occurring within, to, or from the region.

- n. Each region will grant provisional standing, for the purpose of entering the search and call process, to senior theological students whose ordinations have been authorized in their region and to ordained ministers from other denominations who have been given temporary recognition and are in the process of transferring standing to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - o. Each region will make information available about vacancies to be filled on the regional staff through such channels as *Disciples World* magazine, Disciples.org web site, regional publications and Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call.
3. 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 employed. 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 the search and call processes of the church. In the ministerial search and call process, educational institutions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
- a. Educational institutions will relate to congregations served by students upon approval of the region in matters pertaining to the employment of students during their pre-theological and theological education.
 - b. Educational institutions will refer requests from congregations for search and call assistance to the appropriate regional office when the congregation is one that is not a student congregation.
 - c. Educational institutions will cooperate with regions seeking candidates by announcing position vacancies when received. Any nominations or applications for such positions shall be made through the appropriate regional office.
 - d. Educational institutions will cooperate with regions in orienting seminary students to the search and call process of the church.
4. General units. Except for those units with assigned responsibilities, i.e., The Pension Fund, the Division of Higher Education and Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, general units and their staffs will not engage in programs or practices related to ministerial search and call. In the ministerial search and call process, general units will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
- a. General units will call their own staff, establish the terms of employment, undergird their staff and effect terminations within their own procedures.
 - b. General units will refer all requests for search and call assistance to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call.
 - c. General units will refrain from making nominations to congregations for ministerial vacancies. They will refer requests for candidates' names to the appropriate region.
 - d. General units will make information available about vacancies to be filled within the general units through such channels as *Disciples World* magazine, Disciples.org web site, regional publications and Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call.
 - e. General units will notify Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, of vacancies in ecumenical and experimental ministries, when known, so the information can be made available to clergy seeking such positions.

5. The Pension Fund. The Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is charged with responsibility for coordinating the employment of retired clergy in interim and supply ministries. In the ministerial search and call process, The Pension Fund will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - a. The Pension Fund will maintain current lists and appropriate biographical data on clergy with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who desire to be considered for interim or supply work and periodically make such lists available to the regions.
 - b. The Pension Fund will refer requests from congregations seeking interim or supply leadership to the regions.
 - c. The Pension Fund will refer requests from ministers seeking search and call assistance to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call.
6. The Division of Higher Education. The Division of Higher Education is charged with responsibility for coordinating a referral system of both academic and administrative leadership in institutions of higher education related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and notification of openings in campus ministries in related institutions and in United Campus Ministries. In the ministerial search and call process, the Division of Higher Education will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - a. The Division of Higher Education will compile and maintain appropriate personnel and academic dossiers on persons who desire employment in higher education ministries.
 - b. The Division of Higher Education will refer all requests from congregations for candidates' names to appropriate regions.
 - c. The Division of Higher Education will refer all clergy who are seeking search and call assistance in ministries other than higher to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call.
7. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home Missions (DHM) is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and is responsible for coordinating the search and call process of the church. In the ministerial search and call process Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
 - a. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the personnel files of all ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - b. The Office of Search and Call will maintain the Ministers Directory of the *Year Book and Directory* reflecting the current listing of ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as reported by the regions and the General Commission on Ministry.
 - c. The Office of Search and Call will receive, reproduce and make available search and call assistance materials of ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to regions and general units. The Search and Call Form will be reproduced as prepared and submitted by the minister.
 - d. The Office of Search and Call will collect and release reference material to regions or general units upon permission of the minister applying for search and call assistance.
 - e. The Office of Search and Call will protect the confidentiality of references when confidentiality has been promised.

- f. The Office of Search and Call will secure permission from any minister not actively seeking a call before releasing references to regions or general units. The minister has the right to know the name and location of the interested organization. Permission need not be secured for the release of the Ministerial Record Form or biographical information.
 - g. The Office of Search and Call will secure, maintain, and release to regions, and on request, to ministers who have applied for search and call assistance, a list of staff vacancies in regions, general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and ecumenical organizations.
 - h. The Office of Search and Call will make available education and informational materials regarding the search and call system to congregations, regions, institutions and general units.
 - i. The Office of Search and Call will refer all requests from congregations for names of potential candidates to the appropriate regions.
 - j. The Office of Search and Call will refer all theological students seeking student preaching/pastoral positions to the field education office of the appropriate institution or to the region in the case of students in non-related institutions of higher education.
 - k. Disciples Home Missions will refer all persons seeking academic appointments to the Division of Higher Education and all persons seeking interim/supply positions to the Pension Fund of the Christian Church.
 - l. The Office of Search and Call will share with regions, and where appropriate, general units, the record of any official action by a region's commission on the ministry concerning the conduct of a minister who is entering the search and call process.
8. Ministers. Ordained and licensed ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have both freedom and responsibility within these policies and criteria. They have the freedom to accept or reject any call offered to them, to negotiate whatever contracts of employment or service seem appropriate, and to have access to the search and call process of the church. In the ministerial search and call process, the ministers will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.
- a. Ministers will provide information for a personnel file to Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, upon entry into the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and maintain current data in that file. For purposes of search and call, the Ministerial Record Form and the Search and Call Form will be reproduced as prepared and submitted by the minister.
 - b. Ministers will utilize the search and call process of the region in which the minister is located when a move is desired within that region. If relocation is desired beyond the region where the minister is presently serving, search and call assistance may be requested from Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, and the appropriate regions.
 - c. Ministers will strive to be as specific and honest as possible about any limiting factors in relocation, such as geographical preferences and salary requirements.
 - d. Ministers will provide the region or Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, with reference material that will be held in confidence from the minister once received by the region or department if a waiver has been signed by the minister.
 - e. Ministers will negotiate with only one congregation at a time. A search committee and candidate are in negotiation when both agree that they will not discuss relocation with any other search committee or candidate until the expiration of a mutually agreed upon date. It is the obligation of the minister to be specific with the congregation about the degree of interest.

- f. Ministers will stay in communication with search committees who have indicated interest, especially informing a congregation immediately when a decision has been made not to consider accepting a call to that particular congregation.
- g. Ministers will contact the appropriate region if they wish to be a candidate for a specific congregation in that region and request that their name be submitted to the search committee. Ministers will not initiate the search and call process by contacting the congregation directly.
- h. Ministers will advise the region, if contacted directly by a congregation, should mutual interest in exploring a possible call be determined.
- i. Ministers will advise the region where currently located, the region where moving, and Disciples Home Missions, Office of Search and Call, as soon as a call has been accepted.

D. Right of Review and Counsel. The right to review and counsel is limited to perceived violations of Section VI of *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* and should be initiated with the appropriate region, institution or general unit. A request for review and counsel beyond the region shall be to the Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home Missions. If the perceived violation involves D.H.M., the request for review and counsel may be directed to the General Commission on Ministry.

VII. Sexual Misconduct.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial sexual misconduct to be activity of a sexual nature which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in the Ministerial Code of Ethics.

1. Responsibilities.

- a. It is the responsibility of each region to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers with standing in the region. It is the responsibility of the region to communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the region.
- b. It is the responsibility of the General Board to have specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers engaged in non-regional ministries. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, units, and other organizations in the general church.

2. Reporting.

Regions will report formal actions and decisions to remove standing for sexual misconduct to the Office of Search and Call, Disciples Home Missions and these will be communicated to all regions.

3. Temporary Suspension of Standing.

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

VIII. Amendment Process

Amendments to these *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* may be made by a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendment shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

Amendments to the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* may also be amended by a majority vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting, providing such amendment shall have been regularly filed 180 days in advance of the meetings of the General Assembly and circulated among the congregations and regions 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.

Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971

Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977

Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981

Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985

Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987

Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995

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