

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.
2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

- 565 In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:
566 ❖ Be baptized members of a Disciples congregation in the commissioning
567 Region and serving in a Congregationally, Regionally or Generally recognized
568 call;
569 ❖ Be recommended for Commissioning by a recognized congregation or
570 congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one
571 in which his/her membership is held;
572 ❖ Meet with the Regional Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that
573 process which serves to function as a Commission on Ministry regardless of
574 the name assigned Regionally) for Commissioning; and
575 ❖ Comply with any other expectations of the Region.
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577 In accepting Commissioning, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for
578 the church, offering gifts of mind, body, and spirit to that service, agreeing to
579 fulfill the functions of a minister, and adhering to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*
580 *of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.
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582 Commissioned Minister Standing authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of
583 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of Commissioning may
584 or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of marriages.
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586 Persons are Commissioned by Regions for ministry in a specific context. Change
587 of ministry context requires Regional re-Commissioning.
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589 3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry: 590

- 591 a. Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination): These are men and women
592 who minister in a particular place for a specified period of time. Their call is
593 context specific and is affirmed by the Region. Expectations for formation and
594 education may be established by the Region, and may be accomplished in
595 consultation with the calling congregation.
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597 b. Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination): These are women and men
598 serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call who are under the
599 care of a Region and involved in a specified program of study and formation in
600 preparation for Ordination.
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602 4. Candidacy for Commissioning 603

- 604 a. *Definition:* Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has
605 received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region
606 for Commissioning.
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608 b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized
609 congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized non-
610 congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.

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

C. The Ordained Ministry

- 1. *Description.* By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ; accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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703 **Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate
704 effective communication within and on behalf of the church.
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706 **Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different
707 manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to
708 confronting and overcoming them.
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710 **Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and
711 denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and
712 service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a
713 starting place for mission.
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715 **Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian
716 education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in
717 teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.
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719 **Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of
720 their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality
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722 **Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith
723 through word and action.
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725 **Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the
726 centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able
727 to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends
728 of the earth.
729

730 **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess
731 situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to
732 culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who
733 suffer.
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735 **Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian
736 preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus
737 Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.
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739 **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to
740 personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.
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742 **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who
743 recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.
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745 **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity in
746 relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations from a
747 perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues in their
748 daily lives.

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

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

3. Regional Responsibilities:

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

Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:

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

D. Candidacy for Ordination

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

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).

784 2. *Application for Candidacy.* Application for candidacy is entered into when a man
785 or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian Church
786 (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.
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788 3. *The Criteria for Candidacy.* The applicant shall be a baptized member of a
789 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for
790 candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where she
791 or he is a student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement between
792 appropriate Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on Ministry, persons
793 may apply for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall have a letter of
794 recommendation from a recognized congregation of the Christian Church
795 (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate's Region of membership.
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797 Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing
798 (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background
799 checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of
800 Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational
801 institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational capacities
802 of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the application, the
803 Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as a candidate, the
804 individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional Commission or
805 Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function as a Commission
806 on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).
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808 4. *The Procedures During Candidacy.* The candidate shall seek Ordination through a
809 discernment process established by the Region. That preparation may include
810 authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate
811 may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a
812 Commissioned Minister.
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814 Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform
815 ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of
816 candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of
817 marriages.
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819 5. *Preparation for Ordination.* A candidate for Ordination is to prepare himself or
820 herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry.
821 The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's chosen
822 ministry:
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- 824 a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
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- 826 b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an
827 understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the
828 history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the
829 formation and function of Christian mission;

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831 c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the
832 work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in
833 which the candidate hopes to serve;
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835 d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both
836 as communities of faith and as institution;
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838 e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation,
839 wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;
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841 f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional
842 relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the *Ministerial Code*
843 *of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.
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845 6. *Conclusion of Candidacy*. Completion of a prescribed program of study
846 (apprentice track) or the receipt of a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent
847 from an institution of higher education accredited by the Association of Theological
848 Schools (seminary track) does not guarantee Ordination.
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850 Candidacy is concluded by Ordination, voluntary withdrawal by the candidate, or
851 decision of the Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within
852 seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the Region.
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854 **E. The Act of Ordination**

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856 Ordination is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the whole
857 church to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the qualifications and
858 have fulfilled the requirements established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
859 for Ordination.
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- 861 1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized congregation
862 or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in
863 which membership is held.
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865 2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the
866 sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the
867 Regional Minister's designee, presiding.
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869 3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.
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871 4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the Regional
872 church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church shall
873 participate in the service.
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