

POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR THE ORDER OF MINISTRY

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas

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I. MINISTRY IN THE REGION

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 Christian people to participate in ministry and thus to make known in the life of the world the reality of God as Creator, Lord of History, Judge, Savior, Eternal Being. By baptism, all Christians are inducted into the corporate ministry of God's people and by sharing in it, fulfill their 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

1. Within the ministry of the whole people of God, there is and has been from the beginning a particular 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 special 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.
2. Personal Qualifications for Admission to the Order of Ministry.

In all of its procedures concerning the Order of Ministry, the church seeks these qualities in the men and women it inducts:

- 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. Mental and physical fitness sufficient to the demands of the office, emotional stability and maturity, and an appropriate standard of morality.
3. 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. Membership and participation in the life and work of a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - 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 ministry.
 - 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 of ministry.
 - f. Formation of ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct.
4. 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 ministry according to the provisions established by the Regional Ministry Commission and by the General Assembly.

II. THE OFFICE OF ORDAINED MINISTER

A. DESCRIPTION OF OFFICE

- 1. The broadest authorization for 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 the ordained person, in fulfilling his/her calling as a servant of Christ, possesses the abilities, qualities, and preparation needed for the performance of his/her assigned functions, accepts his/her ministry, and grants him/her authority to perform his/her ministry.
- 2. In accepting ordination, the ordained ministry covenants to obey God in caring for the Church, offers his/her gifts of mind and body to that service, and agrees 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, as established by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Region(s) and their related congregation(s) have responsibility to establish procedures to evaluate applicants, admit them to candidacy, care for their nurture, authorize ordination, and supervise the act of ordination.

C. CANDIDACY FOR THE OFFICE OF ORDAINED MINISTER

1. Definition:

Candidacy is a prerequisite step for entrance into the Office of ordained Minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. The Criteria for Candidacy.
 - a. The applicant shall be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for candidacy to the Regional Minister through the Official Board of that congregation. The applicant shall have the acceptance, approval and support of that congregation. In justifiable circumstances, the person may make direct application to the Regional Minister.
 - b. The candidate shall have demonstrated sufficient maturity and competency for potential leadership. Candidacy shall be applied for at least one year prior to ordination.
 - c. Upon receipt of the application, the Regional Minister will bring it to the attention of the Committee on the Order of Ministry which will begin the process of assessing through avenues such as personal interviews, consultation with the congregation(s), appropriate Region(s), 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 Committee on the Order of Ministry shall admit the applicant to Candidacy.
3. Procedures During Candidacy
 - a. The candidate shall:
 1. Seek to be responsive to the opportunities of nurture and care by the Committee on the Order of Ministry of the Region and the various General Units of the Church.
 2. Submit a 2 to 4 page report per year to the Committee on the Order of Ministry regarding his/her progress toward ordination.
 3. Participate in an annual interview with the Committee on the Order of Ministry. The date for this interview will be set by the Committee on the Order of Ministry with the candidate's confirmation.
 - b. The Committee on the Order of Ministry shall:
 1. Give continuing counsel and guidance to the candidate during preparation for ministry.
 2. Provide assistance to the candidate in discovering avenues for continued personal growth.
 3. Hold an annual interview with the candidate as described in the section immediately preceding this.
 4. Advise the theological seminaries, and when appropriate, the under-graduate institutions of higher education in which it has candidates, of the standards relating to candidacy, ordination, and licensing.
 - c. The institution of higher education related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall:

1. Share with the Region in nurture and guidance of enrolled candidates.
2. Assist potential candidates to relate to a Region.
3. Be aware of the standards for licensing and ordination applicable to students in that institution.
4. In Non-Disciple related institutions, the Board of Higher Education shall seek to discover potential candidates, in for the institution and students of procedures for Candidacy in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and seek to relate the students to a Region for care.
5. A candidate for the office of ordained minister may serve in one of the offices of licensed ministry.
6. Candidacy is terminated by one of the following:
 - a. Ordination
 - b. Withdrawal by the candidate
 - c. Decision of the Region through its Committee on the Order of Ministry to remove the candidate from candidacy.

D. Theological and professional study in preparation for ordination includes the securing of a baccalaureate degree and the completion of a seminary degree of at least 60 semester hours from an institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in Canada and the United States or a theological degree program of an equivalent level from a foreign university. This shall apply to those coming into candidacy for ordination after January 1, 1985.

E. PROCEDURES FOR ORDINATION

1. The act of ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the Region's Committee on the Order of Ministry.
2. The candidate ordinarily shall be recommended for ordination by:
 - a. The Official Board of a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which he/she holds membership.
 - b. The faculty of the seminary where the applicant completed the program of study.
 - c. At least two ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - d. At least two lay persons of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
3. The recommendation is to be considered and acted upon by the Committee on the Order of Ministry of the Region, based upon a personal interview with the candidate at least three months prior to the ordination, and on written materials submitted by the candidate at least four weeks prior to that interview. The interview is not a test of orthodoxy but is to determine the candidate's abilities and potentials for ministry.
4. The written material submitted to the Committee on the Order of Ministry shall include the following:
 - a. A written statement from the candidate detailing religious background and personal commitment to the ministry; concepts of the Church in its local, denominational and ecumenical aspects; understanding of the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); cooperative intent in both denominational and ecumenical contexts; and general theological positions.
 - b. Letters of recommendation addressing the candidate's character, ability, and preparedness for ministry from the sources listed in Section II, E, 2 of this policy.
 - c. Minister's Information Schedule.

- d. Sermon.
 - e. Seminary transcript(s).
5. Representatives from the recommending congregation or congregations, the Committee on the Order of ministry, and, if possible, higher education and the General and ecumenical church should participate in the act of ordination.
 6. The service ordinarily shall take place in the congregation of the candidate's choice with the service arranged by that congregation in consultation with the Regional Minister and the Committee on the Order of Ministry.
 7. A certificate of ordination shall be issued and signed by the appropriate officials of the Church and participants in the ceremony.

F. THE RIGHT OF APPEAL

Candidates shall have the right of appeal from decisions or prolonged inaction of the Committee on the Order of Ministry to the Regional Board and ultimately to the General Board of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ).

- G. Ordained ministers with standing are voting members of the Regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

III. THE OFFICE OF LICENSED MINISTER

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE OFFICE

1. Authorization for 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 recognized that the licensee, in fulfilling his/her calling as a servant of God, possesses the abilities, qualities, and preparation needed for the performance of assigned functions, accepts his/her ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole Body of Christ, promises to undergird that ministry, and grants him/her authority to perform this ministry in the prescribed area of responsibility
2. In accepting this license, the licensed minister affirms his/her vocation to obey God in caring for the Church, offers personal gifts of mind and body to that service, and agrees 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)

Specifically assigned to the Region is the responsibility to establish procedures to evaluate candidates, care for their nurture, define their prescribed areas of responsibility, authorize licensing and supervise the act of licensing.

C. CLASSIFICATION WITHIN THE OFFICE OF LICENSED MINISTER

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the region recognized classifications within the office of licensed minister, each of which carries its own title and limitations. The term of service is to be stated on the license and shall be determined by the candidate's vocational intention, the kind of service authorized, and the recommendation of the Committee on Licensed Ministry of the Committee on the Order of the Ministry.

1. The Commissioned Church Worker

Men and women licensed as commissioned church workers are authorized to perform specialized functions, as stated in the license, under supervision of the Committee on Licensed Ministry. These functions ordinarily will be ministerial in purpose, although under some circumstances, the work authorized by the license may be of some other type.

2. The Licensed Minister

- a. Licensed ministers are those persons who are not intending to be ordained, but who have the desire and ability to serve a church in a special capacity as a minister or in another leadership position.
- b. Men and women licensed as ministers are authorized to perform general ministerial functions under supervision in the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) granting the license.
- c. A recommended program of study under the direction of the Committee on Licensed Ministry shall be worked out for each minister.
- d. The geographical area within which the licensed minister may function and the term of service will be stated on the license.

3. The Licensed Theological Student

Men and women licensed while enrolled as theological students are authorized to perform general ministerial functions under the supervision of the educational institution and the Committee on the Order of Ministry granting the license. This license shall be for one year, subject to renewal.

4. Licensed Minister Emeritus

- a. Criteria
 1. A person must be at least 65 years of age.
 2. A person must have been a licensed minister at least five (5) years under the care of the Committee on Licensed Ministry - Christian Church in Kansas, or an equivalent committee of another Region, or another denomination.
 3. A person who meets the above criteria would make a formal request to the Committee on Licensed Ministry to be granted "Licensed Minister Emeritus" status.
- b. Accompanying Privileges
 1. An LME would no longer need to meet with the Committee on Licensed Ministry annually.
 2. An LME would be granted a "permanent license."
 3. An LME would be granted standing each year, upon completion of the "Annual Ministerial Standing Review" form and upon the approval of the Regional Minister/Committee on Standing. (It would be continued so long as the individual met

the criteria for standing as outlined in the “Policy and Criteria for the Order of Ministry.”)

4. An LME would be formally recognized at the next Regional Assembly following the granting of the new status.

D. PROCEDURES FOR LICENSING

1. The applicant shall be a member of, and shall be recommended by a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. The recommendation is to be considered and acted upon by the Committee on Licensed Ministry or the Committee on the Order of Ministry based upon a personal interview with the applicant and on written materials submitted by the applicant at least four weeks prior to that interview.
3. The written material submitted to the Committee on Licensed Ministry or the Committee on the Order of Ministry shall include:
 - a. The applicant’s religious background and personal commitment to the ministry.
 - b. Concepts of the Church in its local, denominational, and ecumenical aspects.
 - c. Understanding of the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - d. General theological position.
 - e. A statement of educational background.
 - f. Willingness to pursue continued educational guidance as suggested by the Committee on Licensed Ministry or the Committee on the Order of Ministry and the Regional Minister.
4. If the Committee approves the candidate, the credentials will be presented first to the Regional Minister and then to the Regional Board.
5. In general, licenses shall be issued for one year and shall be reviewed annually.
6. Renewal of the license at each review period shall be contingent upon the licensee fulfilling the requirements of the Committee and the Regional Minister.
7. Licenses issued by other regions which are valid may be re-issued under the above standards and requirements.
8. A service of recognition in the congregation is encouraged.
9. The Certificate of Licensing shall be issued by the Region and signed by the Regional Minister and the chairperson of the Committee.

D. RIGHT OF APPEAL

Applicants shall have the right of appeal from decisions or prolonged inactivity of the Committee to the Regional Board and ultimately to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

- E.** Licensed ministers with standing are voting members of the Regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

IV. MINISTERIAL STANDING

A. STANDING IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

1. Standing affirms that the ordained or licensed minister is presently 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 units 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 relocation assistance, ecclesiastical endorsement, scholarship aid, and have voting privileges in the Regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2.
 - a. Responsibility for certification of standing of ministers and for periodic review of that standing within these policies and criteria is lodged with the Region.
 - b. There is a distinction between standing and ordination. The conferring of ministerial standing is the organized Church's act recognizing those ordained or licensed who have the status or position of minister within that church. Ordination is normally conferred for life, but standing is reviewed with established criteria and procedures.

B. PROCEDURES REGARDING STANDING

1. By virtues 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 Committee on Standing of the Region upon completion of the act of ordination or granting of license.
3. That standing continues so long as the minister does the following:
 - a. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by ordination or licensing, or serves in an occupation recognized by the Church as ministerial in purpose. (A person 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) will not be continued in standing).
 - b. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry. (See Section 1, C2)
4. The Committee on Standing will provide means by which the standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually.
5. When a minister moves from one Region to another, standing in the Order of Ministry is retained, except in the case of licensed ministers whose license limits their practice to a specific Region. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the Ministry Committee.
6. Ministers with standing at the time of retirement shall retain that standing.

7. When those who have not recently exercised the office of ministry desire to have standing reactivated, the Committee on Standing shall be consulted and shall make recommendations in accordance with this document.
8. A temporary conditional standing may be granted by the Regional Minister in consultation with the Committee on Standing based on special circumstances not clearly defined in this policy statement as long as the minister is working toward the fulfillment of the requirements for standing.

C. SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF MINISTERIAL STANDING

1. Procedures leading to a review of standing may be initiated by the minister, or by the Committee on Standing 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 denomination.
 - c. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the Committee on Standing as ministerial in purpose.
 - d. The minister discontinues active relationships with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
 - e. The minister fails to participate in programs of continuing education, or fails to participate in the annual process of review as required under Section IV,B,4.
 - f. The minister fails to measure up to such standards of professional competence, moral, ethical, and financial responsibility as deemed necessary by the Clergy Care Ministry.
2. Whenever a review of standing is initiated written notice shall be given to the Regional Minister, the Committee on Standing, and the Minister involved.
3. Notice shall include specific reasons for the proposed review of standing.
4. Standing may not be withdrawn by the Committee on Standing without the minister involved being given opportunity for written or personal input.
5. 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.

V. PROCEDURES FOR TRANSFER OF CREDENTIALS OF PERSONS ORDAINED OR LICENSED BY OTHER DENOMINATIONS.

- A.** Any minister from another denomination seeking recognition of ordination and standing must meet the same standards of preparation and fitness as ministers who are members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and seek ordination and standing through the processes of nurture and certification. These standards are specified in the "Policy and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ)", and include a degree from an accredited theological seminary of at least 60 semester hours; endorsement by the regional Committee on Standing; and sponsorship by a Disciples congregation.
- B.** Ordained ministers of other denominations seeking standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) need to:

1. Read the "Policy and Criteria for the Order of Ministry" to identify the procedures for seeking standing in the Disciples of Christ; and
 2. Schedule an interview with a Regional Minister and the Associate Minister who works with the Committee on Standing.
 - a. The candidate must understand that issues of confidentiality are balanced with concerns of collegiality, and data learned in this interview process may be shared appropriately with the Committee on Standing.
 - b. The content of this interview will include an exploration of motive, need, realistic opportunities for placement with a Disciple congregation and/or institution; relationships with the judicatory officials of the present denomination; difference of theology, ecclesiology, and/or methodologies in ministry; and any other questions or recommendations considered appropriate by the Regional Ministers.
- C.** The Candidate shall submit a statement concerning his/her understanding of ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This statement should include a description of the pilgrimage of faith that has resulted in the request for standing among Disciples; the meaning of "Church"; the meaning of "Ministry" and the role and authority of ministers. It should also reveal the candidate's understanding of Disciple polity, structure, and concepts of ministry.
- D.** The Candidate shall submit documentation of his/her ordination, Ministerial Record Form and Relocation Assistance Form, a Background Disclosure Form, official transcripts from college(s) and seminary, references from clergy and laity who have observed the candidate's ministry, and evidence that s/he is a minister with standing in the present denomination. References will be sought from the candidate's present denomination before standing is approved.
- E.** Ordinarily, the candidate shall be asked to submit a recent psychological evaluation or a career assessment from a person or agency approved by the Committee on Standing. This will be at the candidate's expense, and done with care and respect for confidentiality. Such a career assessment should be done by a church related agency when such services are available. At this time the Region of Kansas recommends the Midwest Career Development Center which has an office in Kansas City
- F.** The Candidate shall be assigned to an ordained Disciple Minister with standing to offer counsel, support and guidance during this period of transition between denominations. The evaluation of this "Mentor" shall become part of the data to determine the Candidate's progress and fitness for ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- G.** In a time frame of not less than twenty-four months, the Candidate will follow the course of action proposed by the Committee on Standing, which should include suggested readings (see attached list); interviews with established Disciple leaders; studies in Disciple history and polity, participation in events, such as Assemblies, workshops, and/or leaderships labs; etc.
- H.** Completing the process for recognition of standing does not, in itself, assure a position in ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The "call" system of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) leaves to congregations the right to select their own minister within the policies and criteria of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). While the Regional Minister provides consultation and assistance in every way possible, the selection of a pastor is within the authority of the congregation. Nor does a call by a congregation, in itself, assure recognition of

standing, since this function is delegated to the Region. Temporary recognition of Ordination in another denomination may be granted for not more than two years, to allow a minister to complete the process for full recognition and standing.

- I. Following self-examination, the initial interview with a Regional Minister, an interview with the Committee on Standing, and a period of directed study, there will be a second interview with the Committee on Standing. The process of the Candidate will be evaluated, and a recommendation for the granting of standing may be considered.
- J. Upon recommendation by the Committee on Standing, standing may be granted with the recognition of the Ordination in another denomination. A Certificate of Recognition shall be presented at a worship celebration.

VI. EXCEPTIONS

Any Committee of the Clergy Care Ministry may recommend exceptions to this document under extenuating circumstances with the agreement of the Regional Board and the Regional Minister.

VII. RIGHT OF APPEAL

All procedures and decision with respect to this document may be appealed to the Regional Board and ultimately to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Appeal from the decision of the General Board may be made to the Administrative Committee of the General Board for a final decision.

VIII. STANDING IN THE REGION

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 the Region. However, only those persons meeting the specific criteria established by the policies of this document will be recognized as holding standing in the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).