

Policies and Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Illinois and Wisconsin

(Adopted by the Regional Board, May 16, 1987)
(Revised by the Committee on Ministry, October 8, 2011)
(Revised policy by Committee on Ministry, Feb. 2012)

The Ministry Committee of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin has been formed in response to the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada (Indianapolis Assembly, July, 2009) Each Region has the responsibility to work out the procedures to implement that policy. The Ministry Committee expresses the judgment of, and acts on behalf of, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin in matters of the care and nurture of ministerial candidates and certification for ordination, commissioning, and ministerial standing.

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

(II. P & C. A. 1 & 2)

A. The Order of Ministry.

The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.

B. Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry.

The church expects to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry personal fitness sufficient to the demands of the office:

1. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;
2. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
3. An understanding of pastoral identity;
4. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
5. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
6. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
7. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
8. Responsible personal financial management;
9. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts;
10. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

C. Preparation for Service in the Order of Ministry.

Persons to be inducted into the Order of Ministry are to prepare themselves for the work. That preparation shall include:

1. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
2. 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;
3. Professional study and supervised experience in the work of ministry, with emphasis upon that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve;
 4. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, as both community of faith and institution;
 5. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation, and disciplined commitment to ministry;
 6. Formation of ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct.
- D. The Candidate must be a participating member in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.

II. The Commissioned Ministry

- A. **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.
- B. A Ministerial commission is limited to the particular task and particular place for which the license is given. The commission will be terminated when the person no longer performs that particular ministry.

C. Categories of Ministerial Commissions

1. Annual Commission. Every Commission granted on initial application will be for a period not to exceed one year.
2. Extended Commission. The extended commission may be given in special cases. It is granted at the discretion of the Ministry Committee, only after at least three annual commissions have been completed.
 - a. Need to create a two/three-page paper evaluating the previous year's ministry and goals for the coming year to be submitted annually.
 - b. Every five years, the Candidate shall schedule a personal interview with the Committee (at least 90 days prior to the meeting).

D. Steps to be taken by the Candidate for-commissioning

1. Must be willing to be under the supervision of the Committee.
2. Must acquire ministerial skills through study and growth experiences. During the first four years these expectations annually include:
 - a. Maintain a mentor relationship with an ordained or commissioned Disciple colleague in which there is contact of some kind quarterly; and, participate in regionally sponsored meetings for Commissioned Ministers and Mentors.

- b. Read and discuss with Mentor four books from a recommended reading list.
 - c. Earn three academic credit hours or three continuing education units (CEUs) during each year with courses, seminars, and other experiences.
- 3. Must participate in Cluster, Regional, and/or General Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) events
- 4. The Candidate for initial commissioning shall submit the following documents to the Ministry Committee at least 30 days prior to the interview:
 - a. An Application for Commissioned Minister form, including a description of the particular service for which one wishes to be commissioned.
 - b. Spiritual Autobiography.
 - c. A letter of recommendation from the official board of the congregation or church unit where the commissioned minister will serve.
 - d. Letters of recommendation from at least two ministers acquainted with the Candidate, at least one of whom is a member of the Disciples of Christ.
 - e. Students enrolled in college or seminary shall provide a letter of recommendation from the Dean or other appropriate representative of the school.
 - f. Disclosure Form
 - g. Psychological/Vocational Assessment
 - h. Draft of Search and Call papers with background check
- 5. A representative from the Region can come to a service of recognition and presentation of the commission if requested.

E. Procedure for Annual Renewal of Ministerial Commission.

- 1. The Commissioned Minister will meet with the Ministry Committee annually and shall request an interview for the renewal of the Commission. Failure to do so may result in a loss of the Commission and standing.
- 2. The Commissioned Minister will provide an annual Renewal of Standing Form.
- 3. The Commissioned Minister will provide an eight to ten page, double-spaced, typewritten paper on the following:
 - a. Second visit with Ministry Committee - Concept of Ministry paper
 - b. Third visit with Ministry Committee – Concept of Church Paper
 - c. Fourth visit with Ministry Committee - Reflections on Christian Church History and Polity
 - d. Guidelines for these papers will be provided in a separate document.
- 4. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Disclosure and Release Form
- 5. Three evaluation report forms to be completed at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the Commission. These reports are to be completed by the Commissioned Minister, the Mentor, and a representative of the congregation or sponsoring body.
- 6. The Committee will review the report forms and papers, meet with the Commissioned Minister at their scheduled time, and communicate its action to the Commissioned Minister, the Mentor, and the sponsoring body. If approval is given, a certificate shall be issued.

F. Procedure for Maintenance of Standing related to Extended Commission.

- 1. Provide an annual Renewal of Standing form.

2. Every five years the Candidate shall schedule a personal interview with the Committee (at least 30 days prior to the meeting).
3. Provide the Committee, at least 30 days in advance of renewal appointment, the following documents:
 - a. Updated Biographical Data form
 - b. Copy of current job description
 - c. Self-evaluation and an update on significant activities since last appointment
 - d. Congregational evaluation of the Candidate's Ministry
 - e. Current Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Disclosure and Release Form

G. Right of Appeal

1. Candidates may appeal any decision of the Committee concerning themselves for re-hearing before the Committee.
2. Further appeal of the decision of the Committee can be made to the Executive Committee of the Regional Church Council of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin for final decision.
3. Appeal of decisions by the Regional Church may be made to the General Board Committee on Ministerial Standing, as set forth in section K of Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
4. The regional Committee will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are pending or in process.

III. The Ordained Ministry

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

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

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

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

B. Educational Requirements. There are two educational tracks in preparation for Ordination:

an **apprentice track (AT)** and a **seminary track (ST)**.

1. Those in the apprentice track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas of ministerial practice by completing a program of study of at least 250 contact hours approved by the Region in which they are under care.
2. Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas (see list in section C below) of ministerial practice by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school accredited by the Association of Theological schools in the United States and Canada or its equivalent.

C. Candidates for Ordination are expected to follow the seminary track, unless, in consultation with their Region, the Regional Ministry Commission determines that their economic, linguistic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more appropriate. Regardless of the educational track chosen, the church expects the women and men it ordains to demonstrate competency in the following areas of ministerial practice, listed alphabetically:

1. **Biblical Knowledge:** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to interpret and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original and contemporary contexts.
2. **Church Administration and Planning:** Be able to practice the principles of good administration, planning and implementing short-- and long--range goals to enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.
3. **Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate effective communication within and on behalf of the church.
4. **Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to confronting and overcoming them.\
5. **Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a starting place for mission.
6. **Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.
7. **Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality
8. **Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith through word and action.
9. **Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.
10. **Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons 737 with empathy and assess situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who suffer.
11. **Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.

12. **Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.
13. **Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.
14. **Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity in relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations from a perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues in their daily lives.
15. **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).
16. **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.

D. Responsibilities Specifically Assigned to the Regions

1. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;
2. 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;
3. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;
4. bring applicants "under care"
5. provide for their nurture;
6. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate's educational setting;
7. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and
8. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and antiracism

E. Candidacy for Ordination

1. **Definition:** Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual is in care with the Regional Commission on Ministry and involved in a specified program of study and formation in preparation for Ordination. It is intended to be at a minimum a two- to three-year process which guides and discerns a candidate's preparation and readiness for ministry. This process preferably begins when a man or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.
2. **The Procedures During Candidacy.** The candidate shall seek Ordination through a discernment process established by the Region in which the candidate is In-Care. That preparation may include authorization as a Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination). The candidate may complete the educational requirements for either track without serving as a Commissioned Minister.

Separate from candidacy, Commissioned Minister status authorizes one to perform ministry on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The granting of

candidacy may or may not meet all legal requirements for the performance of marriages.

3. **Preparation for Ordination.** A candidate for Ordination is to prepare himself or herself spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically for her/his ministry. The following areas support and enhance the performance of an applicant's chosen ministry:
 - a. Participation in the life and work of a congregation of Christians;
 - b. Breadth of theological study so that the candidate shows an understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church universal, the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the formation and function of Christian mission;
 - c. Professional and ecclesiological study plus supervised experience in the work of ministry, exhibiting competencies in that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve;
 - d. Formation of responsible relations with and concern for the church, both as communities of faith and as institution;
 - e. Growth in personal character, Christian insight, spiritual formation, wellness and disciplined commitment to ministry;
 - f. Formation of and adherence to ethical principles to guide professional relationships and personal conduct as outlined in the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

4. Requirements for Entering In-Care Status

- a. The Committee will take In-Care as potential candidates for Ordained Ministry, persons who:
- b. Have formally requested an interview with the Ministry Committee;
- c. Have submitted to the Committee at least 30 days prior to the interview:
 - i. An Application for In-Care Status with basic biographical information;
 - ii. A letter of Endorsement from the applicant's church of membership stating its acceptance, approval, and support of the applicant, and the applicant's personal qualifications for ministry (see section I. B. above); and, if appropriate, an expression of the congregation's willingness to serve as the candidate's sponsoring congregation. See guidelines.
 - iii. A Letter of Support from the candidate's home Regional Minister;
 - iv. An Official Transcript from the Baccalaureate degree granting college or University, if earned;
 - v. A Spiritual Autobiography
 - vi. The Receipt of the Acknowledgement Card for Policies and Criteria and CCIW Guidelines for Sexual Misconduct documents;
 - vii. Psychological/Vocational Assessment
 - viii. Draft of Search and Call papers with background check

5. Requirements for Maintaining In-Care Status

- a. Annual interviews with the Ministry Committee;
- b. Submission to the Committee at least 30 days prior to interview:

- i. A Concept of Ministry paper in the second year, a Concept of Church paper in the third year, and a paper on Disciples history and polity following conclusion of course work on history and polity;
- ii. A written report from the candidate's participation in a Vocational Discernment and Assessment Program approved by the regional, normally at the second year interview;
- iii. A Biographical Update; and
- iv. A report indicating completion of one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education before the Ordination can be approved
- v. The Candidate shall keep the Committee informed of his/her current residence as well as any changes in school or vocational plans.

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

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

F. Right of Appeal

1. Candidates may appeal any decision of the Committee concerning themselves for re-hearing before the Committee.
2. Further appeal of the decision of the Committee can be made to the Executive Committee of the Regional Church Council of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin for final decision.
3. Appeal of decisions by the Regional Church may be made to the General Board Committee on Ministerial Standing, as set forth in section K of Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
4. The regional Committee will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are pending or in process.