

# ***THE DESIGN***

for the

Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

Produced By

The Office of General Minister and President

**Revision Approved by the General Assembly  
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
July 2017**

## ***THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)***

### **PREAMBLE**

As members of the Christian Church,  
We confess that Jesus is the Christ,  
the Son of the living God,  
and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.  
In Christ's name and by his grace  
we accept our mission of witness  
and service to all people.  
We rejoice in God,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
and in God's covenant of love  
which binds us to God and to one another.  
Through baptism into Christ  
we enter into newness of life  
and are made one with the whole people of God.  
In the communion of the Holy Spirit  
we are joined together in discipleship  
and in obedience to Christ.  
At the Table of the Lord  
we celebrate with thanksgiving  
the saving acts and presence of Christ.  
Within the universal church  
we receive the gift of ministry  
and the light of scripture.  
In the bonds of Christian faith  
we yield ourselves to God  
that we may serve the One  
whose kingdom has no end.  
Blessing, glory, and honor  
be to God forever. Amen.

1. Within the whole family of God on earth, the church appears wherever believers in Jesus the Christ are gathered in His name. Transcending all barriers within the human family, the one church manifests itself in ordered communities bound together for worship, fellowship, and service; in varied structures for mission, witness, and mutual accountability; and for the nurture and renewal of its members. The nature of the church, given by Christ, remains constant through the generations, yet in faithfulness to its nature, it continues to discern God's vision and to adapt its mission and structures to the needs of a changing world. All dominion in the church belongs to Jesus, its Lord and head, and any exercise of authority in the church on earth stands under His judgment.

2. Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is identifiable by its testimony, tradition, name, institutions, and relationships. Across national boundaries, this church expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations, regions, and general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by God's covenant of love. Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority, rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal manner, to the end that all expressions will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission. We are committed to mutual

accountability. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and constantly seeks in all of its actions to be obedient to his authority.

3. We commit ourselves to one another and to God in adopting this *Design* for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in order that we may faithfully express the ministry of Christ, made known through scripture; provide Christian witness, mission, evangelism, and service from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth; furnish means by which all expressions of the church may fulfill their ministries with faithful Christian stewardship; assure unity in Christ while respecting diversity; and work as partners in ecumenical and global relationships.

4. In keeping with this *Design*, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall establish, receive, and nurture congregational ministries; provide for regional and general ministries and such other organizations as may be required; have a General Assembly, a General Board, and an Administrative Committee of the General Board; define policies and criteria for its Order of Ministry; develop or recognize new forms of ministries for mission and witness; maintain appropriate relationships with institutions of higher education historically related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); provide appropriate consultation and procedures whereby existing organizations may make any necessary transition within the provisions of this covenant; and engage in continuing renewal, reformation, and adaptation as necessary to minister in the world.

#### **NAME**

5. The name of this body shall be the CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST).

#### **MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION**

6. As a member of the whole Body of Christ, every person who is or shall become a member of a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) thereby holds membership in the region in which that congregation is located and in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

7. Regions and general ministries may develop procedures of recognition whereby other persons and groups who support the purposes of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) can participate in regional and general work.

#### **CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES**

8. Congregations constitute the primary expression of the community of faith within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Through congregations, individuals are brought to the saving grace of Christ, baptized into the Body of Christ, nurtured in their faith, and gather at the Lord's Table. Joined in discipleship, congregations partner with their regions and the general ministries of the church to share the good news from their doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

#### **RECOGNIZED CONGREGATIONS**

9. All congregations listed in the latest *Year Book and Directory* of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be recognized congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Other congregations desiring recognition and congregations desiring to withdraw from recognition in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall follow established procedures for

*Year Book and Directory* listing. Congregations that follow the procedures for listing after the publication of the latest *Year Book and Directory* and that are recorded in the *Year Book and Directory* office shall also be recognized congregations.

- a. A congregation seeking recognition takes congregational action expressing its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and be listed in the *Year Book and Directory*.

The congregation then provides its regional office with a copy of a document containing the declaration of its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The document may be the congregation's charter, constitution, bylaws, or a notarized statement of the congregation's action.

Regional endorsement of the congregation's request for recognition and listing, attested by the regional minister, is sent to the Office of General Minister and President for filing with the *Year Book and Directory*.

- b. Once a congregation has been listed, it can be omitted from the *Year Book and Directory* if:
  - i. The congregation has taken action to withdraw as a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Office of General Minister and President has received a notarized statement from the congregation of its action, which the regional minister has certified; or
  - ii. There has been no congregational activity reported in the *Year Book and Directory* of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for a period of five (5) consecutive years and the regional minister certifies that the congregation does not participate in or contribute to area, regional or general church program(s), including participation in Disciples Mission Fund.
  - iii. A congregation may also be omitted from the *Year Book and Directory* by action of a region if the region can demonstrate actions or statements on the part of the congregation that are deemed detrimental to the covenantal relationship with all expressions of the church. When a region takes action to omit a congregation for either of the above stated reasons, the region will send notification of the intent to remove the congregation's listing to the congregation via certified letter. If within thirty (30) days of the notification, the congregation makes no objection to its removal from the listing, then the removal will be final.
  - iv. Regardless of which entity initiates the action, reasonable attempts will be made to renew the relationship between the congregation and the region before removal is finalized. Once the removal is final, the region will notify the congregation that it has been removed from the *Year Book and Directory*. A congregation may appeal the region's action in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 66 of this *Design*.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

10. In adopting this *Design*, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affirms that congregations in their freedom in Christ have both rights and responsibilities. As part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), congregations share creatively in the church's total

mission of witness and service. Equally, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its general and regional ministries sustains congregations through commitment to their welfare and needs. Thus, concern for the integrity of each expression is shared and witness is given to the interrelatedness of the whole church.

11. Among the rights recognized and safeguarded to congregations are the rights to manage their affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; to adopt or retain their names, corporate documents, and organization of ministry; to determine, in faithfulness to the gospel, their practices; to own, control, and encumber their property; to organize for carrying out the mission and witness of the church; to establish their budgets and financial policies; to call their ministers; and to participate through voting representatives in forming the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

12. Among the responsibilities by which congregations demonstrate their mutual concern for the mission and witness of the whole church are the responsibilities to proclaim the gospel and administer baptism and the Lord's Supper; to provide for the spiritual nurture of their members and families; to grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship, transcending all barriers within the human family, working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines; to engage in evangelism; to sustain their ministers in faithfulness and honor and, in matters pertaining to relationships with them, to seek counsel from the regional minister; to be faithful in Christian stewardship, striving to share proportionately in providing the resources for the total life, work, and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to choose voting representatives to the General and Regional Assemblies; to share with other ministries of the church in the establishment and nurture of new congregations; and to seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other congregations and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

13. While congregations are responsive to the needs of general and regional ministries, as established through the participation of the congregations' representatives in the General and Regional Assemblies, all financial support of the general and regional programs of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by congregations and individuals is voluntary.

## **REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLIES**

14. Congregations are represented in the General Assembly by voting representatives of their choosing. Each congregation is entitled to be represented in the General Assembly by two voting representatives, plus one additional voting representative for each 100 participating members or major fraction thereof over the first 100. These voting representatives shall be in addition to the congregation's ordained and licensed ministers, who are voting members as provided in paragraph 38c.

15. Congregations may submit items of business for consideration by the General Assembly by filing such items with the General Board through the Office of the General Minister and President at least 180 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly. Congregations will receive from the Office of the General Minister and President a copy of all items of business to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance.

16. Congregations are represented in their Regional Assemblies according to the provisions of the corporate documents and organization of their respective regions.

17. Congregations and individuals exercise their rights and responsibilities by participating through their voting representatives in the General and Regional Assemblies, of which they are a part. In the fulfillment of their ministries, congregations are encouraged to hold in high regard the actions, decisions, and recommendations of these Assemblies, expressing in love any dissent from such actions or positions. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by congregations and individual members through the Office of General Minister and President to the Administrative Committee, as provided in paragraph 66.

## **REGIONAL MINISTRIES**

18. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) also expresses itself in geographic ministries called regions. The following principles shall guide the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the development of its regions.

## **NATURE AND PURPOSE**

19. The primary nature of regions is drawn from the Acts of the Apostles in Paul's desire to nurture, support, and engage congregations as unique entities and as gatherings of congregations related to one another in their mission. Regions should embody the character of the ministry to which Christ calls His people in their mutual commitment to Him and to one another.

20. The primary purpose of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in regions is twofold:

1) to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region; and

2) to establish, receive, and nurture congregations in the region, providing help, counsel, and pastoral care to members, ministers, and congregations in their mutual relationships, and relating them to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church.

## **MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION**

21. As a member of the whole Body of Christ, every person who is or shall become a member of a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) thereby holds membership in the region in which that congregation is located.

## **FUNCTION**

22. Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) perform within their established boundaries the function of the church related to their two-fold purpose of mission and nurture:

23. *Mission.* In fulfilling the mission of the church, regions are sensitive to the needs of the world about them and lead their members in identifying and serving such human needs. Regions take initiative in developing new forms of ministries in mission, witness, and service, and in dealing creatively with their roles in the whole task of the church. Wherever ecumenical

action is possible to fulfill their mission, regions should join with similar geographic units of other religious bodies and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

24. *Nurture.* Regions are concerned for the continuing renewal of the life of congregations, members, and ministers, and offer leadership in matters of mutual concern. Within policies developed by the General Assembly, regions provide help, counsel, and pastoral care to ministers and congregations in such matters as standing and credentialing of ministers, ministerial search and call, ordination, licensing, establishment and dissolution of pastoral relationships, and installations of ministers. Regions seek to supply ministry for congregations without full-time pastoral services and to offer counsel and assistance in cases of difficulties between ministers and congregations.

25. As an integral part of the whole church, regions witness to the unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by calling congregations to an awareness of their opportunities and responsibilities beyond local concerns. They also help to relate congregations to the total ministry of the whole church including working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines. By calling the general expression of the church to an awareness of the needs both of congregations and of regions, the regions help to relate the general expression to the life and work of congregations.

26. Governing and enabling documents of regions shall be in harmony with this *Design*. Updated copies should be filed with the Office of General Minister and President.

## **SHAPE AND BOUNDARIES**

27. Identifiable geographic, cultural, sociological, and political factors provide boundaries, which the church may use to establish its own regional structures

- (1) by which the church carries out regionally its ministry of mission and nurture;
- (2) in which congregations and ministers find their primary relationships of mutual support and encouragement;
- (3) which provide opportunities for regional fellowship, worship, and assembly for the consideration of matters of mutual concern; and
- (4) which help to relate the three expressions of the church — congregational, regional, and general — to one another in the functioning of the whole church.

Regions may vary in size and shape. It is recognized that, in response to the changing imperatives of mission and the conditions of human life, new expressions of the church may emerge in the process of developing the shape and boundaries of the regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

28. The General Board shall provide procedures for the continuing modification of the shape and boundaries of existing regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in keeping with the principles set forth in this *Design*.

29. In the development of any new regional boundaries, existing regional organizations shall remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the regions involved, in the light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Assembly. The process of reshaping regional boundaries (even if only one

congregation is affected) includes the participation and approval of the parties involved, the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the General Assembly.

## **STRUCTURE AND STAFF**

30. Regions develop their particular structures and organization for the most effective fulfillment of their ministry and mission. Regions may establish or recognize area or district organizations within their boundaries. Regions secure or retain their own governing documents and formulate their declarations of covenantal relationship, consistent with the principles of this *Design*. With due regard for the welfare of the other expressions of the church as a whole, regions exercise rights and responsibilities as they share creatively in the total mission of witness and service. Regions own and manage their property, determine their budgets, and administer regional finances within the limits of resources available. Through their Assemblies, regions provide for worship, for the education of their members, for fellowship, and for the transaction of business by voting representatives from the congregations.

31. Regions call regional ministers as their spiritual and administrative leaders serving as the chief executive officers of the regions. Each region develops stated processes for nominating and electing its regional minister, including procedures for seeking counsel from the Office of the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Regions are encouraged to use current Disciples search processes and safeguards, as established by the General Board so that all qualified ministers might be considered. Regions employ other regional staff as required to meet their responsibilities in mission and nurture and so the whole church's commitment to be a pro-reconciling/anti-racism body can be fully honored in each region.

32. Regions are represented in the General Assembly as provided in paragraph 38. Regions may submit items of business for consideration by the General Assembly, filing such items with the General Board through the Office of the General Minister and President at least 180 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly. Regions will receive from the Office of the General Minister and President a copy of all items of business to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance of the opening of the Assembly.

33. Regions are responsible for electing members to the General Board as provided in paragraph 56b: Each region elects from that region one member of the General Board. In addition, the regional minister shall be a member *ex officio*, without vote, of the General Board.

34. In the selection of the General Nominating Committee, as provided in paragraph 79, regions may submit to the Administrative Committee each biennium names of persons for possible membership on the General Nominating Committee.

35. As provided in paragraph 65, the budgetary procedures for financing the various regions, general ministries, and institutions of higher education shall have regular review and evaluation by the Administrative Committee.

36. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by regions through the General Minister and President to the Administrative Committee, as provided in paragraph 66.



## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

37. The general representative body of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be the General Assembly. In all of its worship, deliberation, and ministries, the General Assembly shall seek to manifest the wholeness and unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) within the one Body of Christ.

38. All members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who register for the General Assembly shall have all privileges of the Assembly, except that voting privileges shall be limited to the following:

a. *Voting representatives from congregations.* Each congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be entitled to have two voting representatives, plus one additional voting representative for each 100 participating members, or major fraction thereof, over the first 100. These voting representatives from congregations shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry.

b. *Voting representatives from regions.* Each region shall be entitled to have a minimum of three voting representatives for the first 1,000 members, as stated in the most recent *Yearbook*. In addition, each region may have an additional representative for each 1,000 participating members, or major fraction thereof, within the region. These voting representatives from regions shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry. The voting representatives from each region shall include women and men, persons of varied racial or ethnic backgrounds, young adults ages 18 to 30, and youth under the age of 18.

c. *Ministers.* Persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in accordance with the policies and criteria established by the General Assembly through its General Commission on Ministry.

d. *Exceptions.* Members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) not otherwise voting members, who are the chief administrative officers of institutions of higher education and general ministries that are recognized by the General Assembly; members of the General Board not otherwise voting members; and former Moderators and Vice Moderators not otherwise voting members.

39. Voting members of the General Assembly shall serve from the beginning of one General Assembly to the beginning of the next General Assembly. No person shall have more than one vote in the General Assembly, and no person shall vote *in absentia* or by proxy. Congregations and regions may name alternates to replace voting representatives provided for by paragraphs 38(a) and 39(b) who are unable to attend.

40. Members of churches ecumenically or historically related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), upon invitation of the Chair, may have the privileges of the floor of the General Assembly, except the vote.

41. The General Assembly shall: plan and conduct Assembly programs for worship, education of its members, and transaction of business; receive and act upon proposed policy and program, reports and resolutions, and other items of business duly referred to it as hereinafter provided; elect officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); elect the

General Board members for which it is responsible; make provision and approve procedures for the financial support of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including its regions, general ministries, and institutions of higher education; be a place of accountability for the church's work toward racial justice and inclusion; determine the basis of cooperative relationships of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with other religious bodies, organizations, and agencies; be responsible for authorizing unity and union conversations, consultations, and negotiations with other Christian communions; and maintain appropriate national ecumenical relationships in both Canada and the United States. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada, which is related to the General Assembly both through congregations and through the All-Canada Committee, shall be responsible for matters pertaining to the ecumenical and Christian unity concerns of national bodies in Canada, and may take the initiative in relating itself to any and all Canadian and world ecumenical bodies.

42. Regular meetings of the General Assembly shall be held every second year at a time and place to be fixed by the General Assembly upon recommendation of the General Board. The General Board shall maintain an appropriate process for making such a recommendation. Under extraordinary circumstances the General Board may call special meetings of the General Assembly.

43. The General Assembly shall have such committees as it may deem necessary, including Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall serve as the business committee during the General Assembly and Assembly Program and Arrangements Committee. Committee membership where the election procedures are not further defined by *The Design* or the Special Rules of the General Assembly shall be elected by the Administrative Committee and reported to the General Board.

44. All items of business to be considered by the General Assembly, except in cases of emergency, shall be received by or originate with the General Board. Items of business may be filed with the General Board by any congregation, region, institution of higher education, general ministry, or organization with recognized relationships with the general expression of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or by the governing board of any such body. Such items of business must be filed through the office of the General Minister and President at least 180 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly in order to allow sufficient time for the General Board to review and refer them with appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly. All items of business shall be circulated among the congregations, regions, and general ministries by the Office of the General Minister and President at least 60 days in advance of the General Assembly meeting.

45. An item of business may be considered an emergency item if its content is of such nature that it could not have been regularly filed 180 days prior to the Assembly. Such items of business may be filed with the General Minister and President when submitted by 10 or more voting members of the General Assembly from not fewer than five congregations. The General Minister and President will see that the items get to the Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall decide whether such items are emergencies and, if so, make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly as to their disposition.

46. A quorum for the transaction of business by the General Assembly shall be the voting members present and voting at each business session of the Assembly.

## OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

47. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall have two kinds of officers: non-salaried officers of the General Assembly and salaried general officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

48. *Non-salaried officers of the General Assembly.* The non-salaried officers of the General Assembly shall be a Moderator, a Moderator-Elect, a First Vice Moderator, a Second Vice Moderator, and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. These officers shall be nominated by the General Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly for terms of two years, unless otherwise noted.

a. The Moderator shall preside at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

b. The Vice Moderators shall assist the Moderator in presiding at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

c. The Moderator-Elect shall serve for two years and then serve as Moderator for two years. The Moderator-Elect shall assume other responsibilities as may be assigned by the General Board or Administrative Committee.

d. The Moderator, Vice Moderators and Moderator-Elect shall be active members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall include at least one woman, one man, one lay leader and one minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The moderators shall include persons from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. These officers shall take office upon the adjournment of the regular meeting of the General Assembly in which they are elected, and shall hold office through the next regular meeting or until their successors have been elected and installed.

e. A Parliamentarian shall be appointed by the Moderator with the approval of the Administrative Committee. The Parliamentarian shall serve during the business sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, advising on parliamentary questions that may arise. Unless otherwise provided, all proceedings shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised*.

49. *Salaried officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).* The salaried officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be a General Minister and President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be designated from the Office of the General Minister and President. The Secretary shall keep the record of the proceedings of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee; shall serve as the Corporation Secretary as may be required by law; and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to this office. The Treasurer shall be the Corporation Financial Officer and shall perform such duties as may be assigned to this office. The Secretary and the Treasurer shall be elected by the Administrative Committee on nomination by the General Minister and President for terms of two years and may be re-elected.

50. The General Minister and President shall be recognized as pastor to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and president of the organization.

51. As pastor to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the roles for the General Minister and President are to:

- a. Provide spiritual leadership to the church in all of its diverse manifestations and exercise pastoral authority over concerns of the church in times of crisis.
- b. Embody the spirit of *The Design*.
- c. Articulate and interpret *The Design*.
- d. Serve as the primary ecumenical representative for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- e. Lead and give oversight to the continual discernment of God's vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),
- f. Give oversight to mutual accountability among all expressions of the church.
- g. Represent the whole church in collegial leadership in gatherings of regional, general, and congregational ministries.
- h. Offer advice and counsel to commissions, committees, and task groups of General Board and regional bodies.
- i. Convene various congregational, regional, educational, and general church executives and pastors for dialogue and reflection on the whole life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

52. As chief executive officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the presidential roles of the General Minister and President are to:

- a. Have full access to boards of general ministries, racial ethnic ministries, and regions with voice and vote, as appropriate.
- b. Hold fiduciary responsibility for the Office of the General Minister and President's finances.
- c. Give oversight of Office of General Minister and President in all of its functions.
- d. Serve as primary spokesperson for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- e. Sign official documents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- f. Serve as corporate Resident Agent for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- g. Designate Office of General Minister and President executive staff to serve in representative capacities, as appropriate.

53. Qualifications and accountability for the General Minister and President are:
- a. The General Minister and President shall be an ordained minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
  - b. The General Minister and President shall be elected and called to this ministry by the General Assembly upon nomination by the Administrative Committee through the General Board, for a term of six years and may be elected to one additional term.
  - c. The General Minister and President is accountable to the Administrative Committee, General Board, and General Assembly.
  - d. The General Minister and President may be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Board upon recommendation of the Administrative Committee.
  - e. In the nomination and election of the General Minister and President, a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the General Assembly shall be required. In the event of a vacancy in the position of General Minister and President, the Administrative Committee shall name the person to fill the vacancy until the next General Assembly.

#### **THE GENERAL BOARD**

54. The General Assembly shall establish a smaller deliberative body responsible to the General Assembly that shall be called the General Board. Under broad policies determined by the General Assembly, the General Board shall:
- a. Receive, review, and refer to the General Assembly with appropriate recommendations all items of business presented, as provided in paragraph 41.
  - b. Establish the procedures whereby the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may engage in planning its total program of work and witness.
  - c. Receive, review, and approve the financial objective of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
  - d. Review and evaluate the program of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in accordance with its recognized mission, and make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly.
  - e. Receive and initiate proposed policy to be referred with recommendation to the General Assembly for action.
  - f. Establish procedures for continual renewal and structural reform.
  - g. Consult and confer with staff members in consideration of matters under review and evaluation.
  - h. Elect or confirm the governing bodies of general ministries for which it is responsible.

i. Elect the committees of the General Assembly.

j. Assume and discharge such other responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Assembly.

55. Between meetings of the General Assembly, the General Board may take interim action within established policy of the General Assembly on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), subject in all matters to a review of its action by the subsequent General Assembly.

56. The General Board shall consist of members elected for terms of four years. Such elected members shall include laymen, laywomen, and ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), not more than one-half nor less than one-third of whom shall be ministers. They shall be elected in the following manner:

a. The General Nominating Committee shall nominate, with attention to the full diversity of the church, and the General Assembly shall elect 17 members representing congregations, at least two of whom are between the ages of 18 and 23 at the time of election.

b. The governing body of each Region shall elect one of its members to serve on the General Board.

c. The governing body of each General Ministry shall elect one of its members to serve on the General Board.

d. The governing bodies of the National Bi-Lingual Hispanic Fellowship, North American Pacific Asian Disciples and the National Convocation shall each elect one of its members to serve on the General Board.

The following shall be members *ex officio*: the Moderators; General Minister and President; two ecumenical members, each from a different North American communion; and the former General Minister and Presidents. The following shall be members *ex officio* without vote: the Secretary, Treasurer, Parliamentarian, the Chief Administrative Officer of each general ministry; each regional minister; two Chief Administrative Officers of institutions of higher education designated by Higher Education and Leadership Ministries as representatives of liberal arts education and seminary education.

57. Terms on the General Board begin and end at the close of the General Assembly. Elected members of the General Board who have served two full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until one biennium has elapsed.

58. Regular meeting of the General Board shall ordinarily be held annually at a time and place to be fixed by the General Board, except that the meeting in the year in which the General Assembly shall convene shall be held not more than 90 days nor less than 60 days

prior to the beginning of the regular meeting of the General Assembly. One-half of the voting membership of the General Board shall constitute a quorum. The meeting of the full General Board in a year in which a General Assembly is not held may be canceled by majority vote of the General Board, being secured by mail ballot, online form, or other appropriate communication means by which a reply can be verified. The Moderator may call special meetings of the General Board under extraordinary circumstances.

59. The General Board shall appoint committees as necessary to facilitate the work of the General Board. General Board committees, when used, will be assigned to reinforce the wholeness of the General Board's job and so as never to interfere with interaction between the General Board and its constituencies.

- a. General Board committees ordinarily will assist the board by preparing policy alternatives and implications for board deliberation.
- b. General Board committees may not speak or act for the General Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes.
- c. The General Board shall maintain Standing Rules that guide and govern its work as assigned in *The Design*.

### **THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL BOARD**

60. There shall be an Administrative Committee of the General board elected by the General Board. This Administrative Committee shall consist of 21 persons; 9 members from the voting membership of the General Board; 5 members as *ex-officio* (The General Minister and President; the Moderator; the Moderator-elect; and the 2 Vice Moderators of the General Assembly); and 7 members as *ex-officio* without vote (the Secretary, Treasurer, and Parliamentarian of the General Assembly; 2 representative from the Council of General Ministries; and 2 representative from the College of Regional Ministers.)

61. Administrative Committee members shall be elected to a term of two years, beginning at the first meeting of the Administrative Committee following their election to the position. A member may be elected to one consecutive term to the Administrative Committee, but not to extend beyond the member's service on the General Board. Members of the Administrative Committee who have served two full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until one biennium has elapsed.

62. The Administrative Committee shall meet at least two times each year and shall be organized to carry out its work and to implement policies and actions of the General Board,

serve as the board of directors for the Office of General Minister and President, and handle grievances filed against the General Minister and President, and shall assume and discharge such other duties and responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Board. The officers of the General Assembly, in consultation with the General Minister and President, shall have the authority to cancel one meeting of the Administrative Committee in any year in which there is not a General Assembly. Specific reason for the cancellation shall be furnished to the members of the Administrative Committee, and a unanimous affirmative vote of the Administrative Committee shall be secured by mail ballot, online form, or other verifiable means of communication as required by Indiana law. The Administrative Committee may call on additional members of the General Board to serve on subcommittees and task forces needed to accomplish its work.

63. The Administrative Committee shall provide for long-range planning for the work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and shall forward all resulting proposals for review and evaluation by the General Board and disposition by the General Assembly. It shall promote and

coordinate the activities of the several general ministries to assure that such actions conform to the policies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

64. The Administrative Committee shall fill vacancies in offices elected by the General Assembly, subject to ratification by the General Assembly at its next regular meeting. It shall submit to the General Assembly through the General Board any recommendations it may deem useful for the development of the effectiveness and efficiency of the life, mission, work, and organization of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

65. The Administrative Committee shall be responsible for regular review and evaluation of the budgetary and promotional procedures for financing the various regions, general ministries, and institutions of higher education of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Administrative Committee shall act on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to maintain 501(c)(3) tax status with the Internal Revenue Service on behalf of the General Assembly, congregations, regional ministries, and general ministries in good standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Upon the dissolution of any organization under this section, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

66. The Administrative Committee shall prepare the business agenda for the meetings of the General Assembly and the General Board, and appoint committees not otherwise provided for. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by individual members, ministers, congregations, regions, or general ministries to the Administrative Committee for final decision.

67. Two-thirds of the voting members of the Administrative Committee shall constitute a quorum.

## **GENERAL MINISTRIES**

68. The General Assembly, upon recommendation of the General Board, shall establish or recognize general ministries for broad areas of work, central administrative functions, and specialized study and service to meet responsibilities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its mission of witness and service to the world. It is an imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that general ministries are created to strengthen congregational life for the church's mission.

69. The National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship and the North American Pacific Asian Disciples witness to the diversity within the church. These ministries, with their unique historical relationships within the Christian Church and the rich cultural gifts they share, are empowered to speak to particular cultural contexts within the ecclesial needs of Disciples in the US and Canada and are charged with the development of their particular ministries.

These ministries make reports and are represented in places where general ministries are called upon to serve the life of the church through reports and representation. Their executive ministers shall serve in partnership and collaboration with regional ministers and other leadership groups throughout the church.

70. The General Board shall approve the purpose and function of each general ministry and shall elect or confirm the members of the governing body of each. The responsibilities, manner of selection, and tenure of office for the members of the governing body of a general ministry



shall be determined with reference to its purpose and function and shall be specified in its bylaws or rules of procedure, which shall be filed with the Office of General Minister and President.

71. Each general ministry shall select its officers and staff using the current Disciples search processes, as established by the General Board. Each board shall be called upon to enter into an agreement with the General Board or to include in its bylaws or rules of procedure a provision for any new chief administrative officer to be elected by its board following consultation with the General Minister and President, as provided for in paragraph 52, and with the advice and counsel of the Administrative Committee of the General Board. Following election, recognition by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be bestowed upon a new Chief Administrative Officer by the General Board in an appropriate act.

72. A general ministry may be incorporated and shall administer its program and financial affairs and establish or retain its bylaws or rules of procedure in accordance with provisions established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the General Assembly.

73. Each general ministry shall facilitate policy decisions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), accounting for its work through regular reports of its plans and actions to the General Board, which shall refer them to the General Assembly with recommendations for appropriate action. General ministries shall provide interim summary reports to the Administrative Committee to enable it to exercise its responsibility for promoting and coordinating the activities of the several general ministries to assure that such actions conform to the policies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

## **RECOGNIZED MINISTRY PARTNERS**

74. The Administrative Committee may recommend to the General Board relationships of ministry partners and other organizations whose mission and ministry support the overall mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The General Assembly, as coordinated by the Office of the General Minister and President and the Ministry Partner's sponsor(s), shall appropriately celebrate newly recognized ministry partners.

75. A ministry desiring such recognition shall request such a relationship through an appropriate general ministry. Each General Ministry shall establish evaluation criteria for recommending ministry partners to the Administrative Committee, but shall include at a minimum action by the General Ministry's governing board.

76. The Administrative Committee shall maintain the criteria by which Ministry Partners are evaluated for recognition beyond the process of a sponsoring General Ministry.

77. The plans and activities of such an organization will be reported to the General Board through the sponsoring general ministry. A review of such reports and the action of the General Board shall be included in the report of the General Board to the General Assembly. Ministry partners failing to report for three consecutive board meetings will be removed from status as a Recognized Ministry Partner.

78. The contact information for the ministry partners shall be listed with the sponsoring ministry of the Year Book and Directory.

## **CONTINUAL RENEWAL AND STRUCTURAL REFORM**

79. The General Board shall maintain procedures for continual renewal and structural reform under policies approved by the General Assembly, taking into account implications for racial and ethnic congregations and clergy. To further the process, existing general ministries may be called upon to reassign staff, budget, and functions for this purpose. In any inter-unit adjustment, as well as in development of any new general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), existing organizations remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the organizations involved in light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Assembly. Full protection shall be given to all legal and contractual relationships, including trust funds and pension funds.

## **NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

80. There shall be a General Nominating Committee consisting of 10-members elected by the General Assembly. The General Nominating Committee shall be widely representative by gender, age race and ethnicity, and not more than one member shall be from any one region except as may be necessary to ensure representation from National Convocation, National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship, North American Pacific Asian Disciples and other such ministries that may be recommended by the General Board and recognized by the General Assembly. One-half of the members at the time of their election shall be from the membership of the General Board, and not more than one-half nor less than one-third shall be ministers. Each biennium the Administrative Committee shall nominate five persons for election by the General Assembly to a term of four years on the General Nominating Committee. A member of the General Nominating Committee may serve only one full term.

81. The General Nominating Committee shall accept suggestions from throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall maintain records of suggested nominees and their qualifications. When selecting candidates for offices, the General Nominating Committee shall consider, but not be limited to, all names suggested.

82. The General Nominating Committee shall select one nominee for each of the following offices to be elected by the General Assembly: Moderator, First Vice Moderator, Second Vice Moderator, Moderator-Elect and members of the General Board whose election is vested in the General Assembly, as provided in paragraph 41.

83. The report of the General Nominating Committee on these nominations shall be sent to the congregations and regions at least 60 days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly. Provision shall be made for nominations from the floor of the General Assembly. A simple majority is needed for approval.

84. The General Nominating Committee also shall present to the General Board the nominees for positions whose election or confirmation is vested in the General Board, as provided in paragraph 41, including the members of the governing bodies of the various general ministries, members of the Administrative Committee, and members of committees and commissions, noting terms of service and status (elected, *ex-officio*, *ex-officio* without vote, etc.). The Office of the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall provide staff and counsel for the General Nominating Committee.

## MINISTRY

85. The fundamental ministry within the church is that of Jesus Christ. He calls His church to participate in His ministry.

86. By virtue of baptism in the church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people. Within the corporate ministry, each Christian fulfills her or his own calling as a servant of Christ sent into the world to minister. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall seek to provide all of its members with opportunities to exercise this ministry.

87. In addition, the church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole people to fulfill their corporate ministry. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), through the General Assembly, shall approve general policies and criteria for the order of the ministries, within policies developed by the General Assembly; regions certify the standing of ministers and provide help, counsel, and pastoral care to ministers and congregations.

88. The offices of elder and deacon are ordered by the congregations, through election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of certain functions of ministry appropriate to the offices.

a. A person elected elder is authorized to exercise within the congregation which elects her or him the ministerial functions it assigns for periods of time which it specifies, such as sharing in the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders.

b. A person elected deacon is authorized to serve in the congregation which elects her or him for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the conduct of worship, and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The diaconate is a voluntary ministry.

## REVISION AND AMENDMENTS

89. Revisions and amendments to this *Design* may be made by a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting, providing such revision or 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.

## ASCRIPTION

Now to God, who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen

— Ephesians 3:20-21

i. The general ministries now recognized are:

Christian Board of Publication  
Christian Church Foundation, Inc.  
Church Extension Financial & Missional Resources, Inc.  
Council on Christian Unity, Inc.

Disciples of Christ Historical Society  
Division of Homeland Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc. dba  
Disciples Home Missions  
Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc.  
Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc.  
The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

ii. The racial and ethnic ministries now recognized are:

National Convocation of the Christian Church  
North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, Executive Council  
Pastoral Commission for Hispanic Ministries and Hispanic Caucus