

**The General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
**Executive Search Process**  
**(rev. 04-08-2013)**

**I. Purpose**

- A. All search processes in the church are a matter of spiritual discernment.
- B. This process establishes guidelines for the recruitment and selection of executive leaders in the general and regional expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This document is recommended to the institutions of higher education in covenantal relationship with the church. To develop a church that is faithful to God's call for the unity of the body of Christ, these procedures will assist the church in recruiting and maintaining executive leadership that is reflective of the people of God whom we are called to serve. The church seeks to be a Pro-reconciling/Anti-Racist organization that is working to dismantle institutional racism in its human resource systems, policies and practices.

**II. Scope**

- A. This process is offered as a guiding policy for the calling of executives in all General Ministries, Racial/Ethnic Ministries, Regional Ministries, and the Office of General Minister and President.
- B. Since persons are often called from leadership positions in one part of the church into leadership positions in other parts of the church, it is important to have consistent practices across all ministries of the church. Therefore, this process is to be used as an exemplary framework for executive searches throughout the church.

**III. Background**

- A. According to Paragraph 71 of *The Design*, the General Board is to offer guidelines for the selection of General Ministry Executives.
- B. Given the church's history of racism and a persistent culture of privilege and exclusivity, the church developed the current executive search model in 2000 as GB-00-1676 with the goal of having all ministries and regions adopt an executive search policy based on that model. Implementation of policies based on the model has not been consistent across the church. While a number of searches have closely and successfully followed the model, some searches have not been conducted in line with the current search model and have resulted in outcomes that led to a call to reexamine the model as well as the process of implementation.
- C. For these reasons, in October of 2011, the Administrative Committee authorized the General Minister and President and the Moderator to appoint a task force to revise the current Executive Search Model, giving

attention to the recommendations from the Administrative Committee. The appropriate recommendations have been incorporated into this policy document.

- D. The task force met and followed through with the process of reviewing the instructions from the Administrative Committee; evaluating the existing model; discussing recent successes and challenges with executive search; and mapping out a way forward in establishing a revised process. The taskforce was made up of a diverse cross-section of leadership from the church as well as persons with subject-matter expertise in the area of executive calling and recruitment.
- E. One of the most significant outcomes of the initial discussion was the recognition that, in addition to a revised search process, the church needs a more comprehensive and consistent leadership development strategy that helps cultivate and ensure the availability of qualified under represented racial ethnic candidates for executive positions across the church. Without such a strategy, the executive search process will continue to yield mixed results and the church cannot fully achieve its ultimate goals with respect to Pro Reconciliation/Anti-Racism.

#### IV. Glossary:

- A. **Anti-racism** – A conscious, intentional effort to eradicate racism in organizations and structures by claiming an anti-racist identity This identity involves recognizing and renouncing skin color-based privileges, benefits, attitudes, and rules that govern the life of the institution which produce outcomes that are racist.
- B. **Anti-racist** – The nature of identity change resulting from an intentional and sustained effort to examine structures and policies of the institution toward the end of dismantling inherent racial biases and oppressive practices.
- C. **Applicant pool** – All persons applying for a position.
- D. **Executive leadership** - The senior policy-making positions within an organization, including but not limited to General Minister and President, Regional Minister, President, Vice President, Associate General or Regional Minister, Executive Director, Director and others fitting the role of executive leaders.
- E. **External candidate** – An applicant for a position who is not currently employed by the calling entity.
- F. **Historically Under Represented Groups** – A term that refers to groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination.
- G. **Institutional Racism** – The ways in which institutional policies and practices create disparate outcomes for different racial groups for the benefit of white persons.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.racial equity.org](http://www.racial equity.org)

- H. **Internal candidate** – An applicant for a position who is currently employed by the calling entity, who is a member of the governing board for that entity, or who is an immediate family member of an employee or board member.
- I. **Power** - The collective or individual ability to be or to act in ways that fulfill our potential. Its purpose is to be used for good, but it can be used to control, dominate, hurt and oppress others. Misuse of power is the key that locks the system of racism and any system of oppression in place.<sup>2</sup>
- J. **Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism – The effort to eradicate the sin of racism in the body of Christ as part of the larger effort to be reconciled one to another and all to Jesus Christ as God requires.**
- K. **Racial Ethnic Persons**—Persons including but not limited to: Native Americans/First Nations People, Persons of African Descent, Hispanic Americans (Latinos and Latinas), and Asian Pacific Islander Americans.
- L. **Racism** - Race prejudice plus the misuse of power of systems and institutions. It is a complex system of beliefs and behaviors grounded in a presumed superiority of the white race.
- M. **Race Prejudice** - Any action or attitude, conscious or unconscious, that demeans or subordinates an individual or group based on skin color, race, language, or culture. Race prejudice is sin because it serves to divide the body of Christ and dehumanizes children of God.

## V. Policy

- A. The General Board's search process is designed to do the following:
  1. Ensure that all applicants are consistently treated with fairness and equity;
  2. Promote the Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism mission priority of the church;
  3. Develop leaders to become potential candidates for executive positions
  4. Create sufficient documentation and verification of the church's selection and decision-making with regard to executive calls in order that the church might recognize when it is living into its goals concerning Pro-reconciliation/Anti-racism and highlight areas where improvement is still needed.
- B. Once an executive search process has been adopted, deviations are strongly discouraged. Whenever deviations are necessary, they should be discussed with the Reconciliation Minister and the General Minister and President to ensure that the planned deviation continues to uphold the guiding principles of this process or makes improvements in accomplishing its stated goals. The deviations should be documented.

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<sup>2</sup> From Crossroads Anti-Racism and UCC.org.

## VI. Procedures

### A. Convening the Search Team

#### 1. Make-up of the team –

- a) One of the first steps in an executive search process is the formation of a search team. Given the importance of the task at hand, the success of the search team will help secure a successful future for the organization. Additionally the search team is often the first and most memorable encounter an executive will have with the organization. The search team is not only responsible for evaluating candidates, but the team has the additional role of representing the organization to prospective candidates. The search team evaluates the potential fit between a candidate and the organization, with an eye toward seeing the candidate as a successful colleague. It is important to choose a diverse group of search team members.
- b) The recruitment process for executive leadership positions in the general and regional expressions of the church shall be conducted by a team of persons who reflect the many members of the family of God. While demographics of teams may vary, it is expected that the team shall be composed with the following goals in mind:
  - i. When possible, the majority of the members should have experience participating in successful searches. It is important to have team members who have participated in searches that have yield results that are in line with the church's Pro-reconciliation/Anti-Racism goals.
  - ii. All team members should be fair, open-minded, and fully committed to the church's Pro-reconciliation/Anti-Racism goals.
  - iii. Ideally, every search team shall be fifty percent (50%) underrepresented racial ethnic persons. No single ethnic group should make up more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the team. A diverse team is more likely to generate a diverse candidate pool and finalist list
  - iv. Search Committees should consist of men and women with no less than 25% representation of either.
  - v. Team members should be knowledgeable in the area of ministry and/or field of the identified position.
- c) The Team Chair –
  - i. The chair of the team is chosen by the calling person or board and may help appoint the members of the team.
  - ii. The chair sets the tone for the team, is responsible for coordinating training, if needed, and holding the members of the team accountable.
  - iii. Ideally, the chair should not be the calling person. This helps reduce the undue influence that the chair might have over the selection process.

- iv. The chair should be someone who has participated in the introductory Anti-racism training as recommended by Reconciliation Ministry.
  - v. The chair or other designee is the primary point of contact for the calling individual or board, the search team, and the candidates. Ultimately, the chair insures that the search process follows the approved process and that it is documented appropriately.
2. Responsibilities of every member of the Search Team
- a) Engage in appropriate spiritual practices related to discerning call.
  - b) Protect the confidentiality of all applicants and participants in the process.
  - c) Follow the agreed upon decision-making process.
  - d) Draw upon various network connections in support of recruitment efforts, especially in seeking qualified historically under represented racial ethnic persons.
  - e) Participate fully and consistently in all meetings and deliberations.
  - f) Give fair consideration to all candidates and treat all persons with respect.
  - g) Concerns that cannot be resolved by directly addressing them with the chair and the committee should be immediately reported to the General Minister President. If the position is located in the Office of the General Minister and President, then the report would be made to the Moderator of the General Assembly.
3. Training of the Search Team
- a) General Training – The chair of the search team is generally responsible for coordinating any training that is necessary for the search team to do its work. At a minimum, this should include reviewing the formalized executive search process and procedures manual.
  - b) Anti-Racism Training – As part of the team building component, search committees should engage Reconciliation Ministry's 2-hour module. Expenses for this program should be considered as part of the search committee budget.
4. Decision-making process and capacity of the Search Team
- a. The search team and the calling individual or the responsible board should establish a decision making process (majority vote, consensus, etc.) before the team begins its work.
  - b. When the search team is expected to present more than one finalist to the calling individual or to the responsible board, this must be communicated to the search team at the beginning of the process.
  - c. The calling individual or the responsible board should also inform the team if their decision will require a subsequent vote from the board or confirmation by the calling individual.

## B. Recruitment Process

1. The search team should prepare a recruitment plan before the initial job posting is made. In addition to identifying methods for distributing the job posting, the recruitment plan should also highlight what steps will be taken to actively seek historically under represented racial ethnic persons for candidacy.
2. Decisions should be made before the job posting is made about how internal and external candidates will be handled.
3. Current members of a Board with governing responsibility for the /calling entity who decide to apply for the position should recuse themselves from all matters related to the search. This should be done in consultation with the board chair in order to ensure appropriate levels of confidentiality and to maintain the integrity of the overall process.

## C. Evaluation Process

1. An independent evaluator with HR or pertinent field experience should be utilized.
2. The evaluating process for candidates should be done in a way that is consistent for all candidates.
3. Team members are encouraged to review the materials of all interested candidates. Blind independent evaluators are to be used to help the team focus its energy on those candidates who are qualified for the position by ranking candidates as exceeds, meets or below expectations.

## D. Interview Process

1. All team members must be knowledgeable regarding fair hiring practices and should be briefed in best practices for conducting an interview.
2. All interviews shall be conducted in a manner that is equitable for all candidates with similar methods and circumstances.
3. For final candidate interviews, in-person interviewing is the preferred method. If there is a need to deviate from this method for one or more candidates, then all candidates should be given the same options for deviation and should be made aware that in-person interviewing is the preferred method.
4. Once the interview process is complete the team should compile a document that allows a fair comparison of all the candidates interviewed.

## E. Call Process

1. There are a number of options for how the final call decision could ultimately be made. This will vary based on whether it requires a board vote or the final decision rests with an individual hiring manager. The final process for how the decision will ultimately be made should be determined at the beginning of the process and should be communicated to the Search Team at the initial meeting.

2. A decision should also be made up front about the way the final decision will be communicated to all candidates.

## **VII. Responsibilities**

- A. All expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are accountable to the whole church for implementing and exercising the provisions of an executive search process in a manner that will produce systemic change helping to dismantle the existing systems and cultures that perpetuate racism, sexism and other forms of privileged exclusivity. All church organizations are requested to study and reflect on this process, to adopt or incorporate an executive search process, and to report the action of the organization within two years following the final approval by the board.
- B. General ministries, racial ethnic ministries, and regions adopting executive search processes, which differ from this executive search process, are requested to forward a copy of such process to the General Board via the Office of General Minister and President. The organization is requested to supplement its process with written comments identifying how the process adopted by the organization will better meet the Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism position of the church.
- C. Working with the OGMP, the Administrative Committee on behalf of the General Board will conduct periodic assessments of executive searches to ensure they are following the executive search process. As part of the covenantal accountability to the church, when calling a new executive who is elected or recognized by the General Board, general and regional ministries should provide a written report to the General Board regarding the use of an executive search process. The General Minister and President shall appropriately celebrate to the whole church those ministries who adopt and utilize an executive search process.

## **VIII. Recommendations**

- A. Strategy for Leadership Development and Recruitment – There is clear recognition of the connection between the General Board's Disciples Search Process and the urgent need for training and professional development for prospective future leaders throughout the church. Such a strategy is a necessity for the successful recruitment and retention of executive leadership that is reflective of the people of God whom we are called to serve. When completed, this strategy and any subsequent program will be incorporated as an integral part of the General Board's Search Process. Ministries should have a written strategy for leadership development and recruitment.
- B. Search Team Documentation
  1. Search Process Checklist and Verification Document
    - a. Includes a list of board members

- b. Notation of variance in interview practice
- 2. Evaluation Summary Document (attached)

