(OPERATIONAL BUSINESS ITEM)

Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria
for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

WHEREAS, the contexts in which the church finds itself call for fresh attention to the theological foundations and the practical protocols for the ordering of ministry; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) does not presently have a formal denominational statement that seeks to state the theological foundations for our ordering of ministry, as understood in light of our history and polity; and

WHEREAS, our ability to be clear about our understandings of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) foundations for the ordering of ministry is crucial for conversations with our ecumenical partners in the Body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the present Licensed constituents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the Nazareth Consensus have responsibly explored with the larger church the manner in which Licensed ministers
   a) might be provided a track whereby those with adequate preparation could seek Ordination; and
   b) might be afforded more mobility for circulation in Search and Call; and
   c) might be designated by a more Biblical nomenclature; and
   d) might be valued as partners within the whole order of ministry; and

WHEREAS, a few Regions are already utilizing processes that allow for Ordination without a full Association of Theological Schools (A.T.S.) accredited seminary preparation; and

WHEREAS, a policy and procedure for ministerial credentialing is necessary to address exceptional life situations, including the diverse needs of clergy in the many new church starts we are celebrating in the life of this Communion; and

WHEREAS, the proposed policy:
   ~ provides a theological foundation for the ordering of ministry that is specific to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
   ~ affords a necessary statement that will serve us well in our ecumenical conversation with other Communions in the Body of Christ;
   ~ responds in an appropriate manner to the Nazareth Consensus by:
       a) designating non-Ordained clergy with the more Biblical nomenclature of Commissioned rather than Licensed;
b) creating an Apprentice Track of preparation leading to Ordination without a Master of Divinity degree;
c) affording mobility through Search and Call for Commissioned Ministers who complete the Apprentice Track and are Ordained; and
d) strengthening the recognition of those who serve the church faithfully with this preparation; and

~ recognizes and expands upon those procedures instituted by Regions with alternative paths to Ordination based upon the exceptional life situations, communities, ministry settings, and cultural and ethnic contexts of their ministry candidates;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 29 to August 2, 2009, adopt the document, Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), replacing the 1971 Policies and Criteria For The Order of Ministry document, which was last revised by the General Assembly in 2003; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the church utilizes the next biennium, August 2009 to August 2011 for a period of implementation. This ordering of ministry will become effective August 1, 2011; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Commission on Ministry convene a task force to develop a template for an Apprentice Track program addressing the competencies in section II. C. 2 of the document; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Commission on Ministry will collaboratively work with Regions to:
- develop their own Apprentice Track (AT) program or one in collaboration with Regional Fellowships [cf. section II.C.3., footnote 12 of the document], theological institutions or ecumenical partners;
- share their program design with other regions for networking, feedback and sharing best practices;
- determine how work done in previous Licensed ministry continuing education applies to the Apprentice Track;
- review the status of each current Licensed minister to determine which category of Commissioned Minister is most appropriate; and
- revise as necessary any Regional policies to facilitate this transition; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the present nomenclature be used for clergy until this policy takes effect on August 1, 2011.

General Commission on Ministry
The General Board recommends that the General Assembly ADOPT Business Item No. 0922. (Debate time: 24 minutes)
Proposed Amendments

Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Preamble "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."

~ from paragraph 2 of The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), revised 2005
Preface


Therefore, it will be advantageous and necessary that a reasonable time frame be adopted. The General Commission on Ministry is offering the following:

**Time Frame**

- **2008**
  - Fall: GCOM circulates Draft 9.5 to General Ministries Presidents, Commissions/Committees on Ministry through Regional Ministers, Council on Theological Education and the Standing Committee on Renewal and Structural Reform for comment by January 30, 2009.

- **2009**
  - February: GCOM considers changes, modifications to Draft 9.5 and prepares Draft 10 to present to the General Board.
  - April: General Board reviews and takes action on Draft 10.

- **July**: General Assembly considers resolution.

- **2009-2011 Period of Implementation**

- **2011**
  - August 1: This ordering of ministry takes effect.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Theological Foundations For The Ordering of Ministry In The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

- A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God 4
- B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry 5
- C. Ministry in the Congregations 9
- D. Order of Ministry 10
  - 1. Commissioned Ministry 11
  - 2. Ordained Ministry 11

II. Policies and Criteria For The Ordering of Ministry

- A. Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 16
- B. The Commissioned Ministry 16
- C. The Ordained Ministry 18
- D. Candidacy for Ordination 21
- E. The Act of Ordination 23
- F. Ministerial Standing 24
- G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries 29
- H. Ministerial Search and Call 33
- I. Ministerial Code of Ethics 36
- J. Misconduct 37
- K. Right of Appeal 38
- L. Amendment Process 39
I. Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

PREFACE

Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) functions interdependently with Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to clarify evolving patterns of ministry as we seek to respond in faithful ways to ever changing contexts of service and witness. It is not a comprehensive theology of ministry nor does it attempt to offer the final word on Disciples’ understanding of ministry.

A. The Ministry of the Whole People of God

God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be God’s people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news are drawn into the fellowship (koinonia) of a new community, the church. In this body, the Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world [ref: I Corinthians 12.12-13; Ephesians 4.4-5; Matthew 28:16-20]. The church’s mission is to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Realm of God. In order to fulfill this mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given ministries of witness, service and reconciliation.

The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. Through baptism they are called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Implicit in the confession of faith and the act of baptism is an acceptance of the vocation of the baptized—the special calling shared by all followers of Christ to witness to the sovereign love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in all of life. The gifts (charisms) of the Holy Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple ways they proclaim the mighty acts of God and mediate God’s loving and reconciling work to and in the world. Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in whatever situation he or she lives—to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

In Christ the individual becomes a member of “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own possession” (1Peter 2:9). Thus it has been common to speak of the
“priesthood of all believers”\(^1\)—the persons who live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the church and in the world. This language highlights the sacramentality of the work of the laity through whose witness and service the grace of God is made manifest.

The ministry of God’s people (the *laos*—the Greek term used in the New Testament for “people,” which is the source of our English words “laity, laywomen, laymen”), taken as a whole and in its diverse individual expressions, is to manifest and so continue the saving ministry of Jesus Christ. This ministry includes all who join together in witness to God’s justice and reconciliation through worship, daily work, sharing the Gospel, pastoral care, relief of human suffering, engagement in the struggle for peace and justice, and realization of the unity of the Church Universal. It is within this context of a shared ministry of the people of God that Commissioned ministry and Ordained ministry is to be understood.

Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive functions. The Commissioned and the Ordained are both of the *laos*, but in recognizing God’s call to particular individuals, the Church designates persons “to re-present to the Church its own identity and calling in Jesus Christ” (*The Nature of the Church, A Word to the Church on Ministry*). Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated in Ordination and Commissioning.

### B. Historical Survey of Disciples Ministry

Alexander Campbell and Barton Warren Stone relied on the Bible, especially the New Testament, as the only rule of faith and practice. This premise shaped their understandings of ministry in its many expressions.

Campbell’s attitudes on ministry progressed as the movement grew and the changing circumstances of the church demanded new approaches to and appropriations of leadership. Conversely, Stone’s attitudes on ministry remained relatively consistent.

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\(^1\) The “priesthood of all believers” refers to the persons who have entered into a covenanted relationship through confession and baptism. It ought not be confused with the role of congregational elders in the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Although in some circumstances anyone can administer the Sacraments/Ordinances of the Church, in Disciples practice it has usually been the duly appointed congregational leaders who administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This practice derives not from the “priesthood of all believers” but from early distinctions between the roles of elder and evangelist/preacher. The evangelist, called from outside the congregation, was restricted to ministries of preaching/teaching. The elder(s), called from within the congregation, bore responsibility for congregational governance, including the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The right and responsibility to preside at the Table is increasingly a role shared by Elders and ministers.
While he promoted freedom from ecclesiastical control, he retained a sense of order in ministry and structure. One notable point of agreement between the two is that both regarded ministry as servanthood even though the forms and functions of that ministry were expressed and authorized in different ways.

Alexander Campbell

Although Alexander Campbell was staunchly anti-clerical, he was clearly pro-ministry. This position was elaborated throughout various pages of the *Christian Baptist* in the 1820s to 1830. The clergy of the day represented for Campbell a class that he could only term self-serving and pompous, promoting a specific set of sectarian or denominational tenets in place of the gospel. His opposition was to a professional clergy—independent of the local congregation, and accountable only to itself—not to the exercise of ministry which he considered essential to the life of the Church:

Campbell developed a specific formula for the church’s ministry, quite apart from what others might consider the roles of the clergy:

1. Establish necessary offices for perpetuity and growth
2. Select the best qualified persons for those offices
3. Consecrate or set apart those persons for those offices
4. Give oneself completely to the work and continue growing so that everyone can see the growth.

In *The Christian System* he outlined:

The standing and immutable ministry of the Christian community is composed of Bishops [Elders], Deacons, and Evangelists. Of each of these there is but one order, though possessing great diversities of gifts. There have been bishops, deacons, and evangelists, with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts. (CS, 82-3) Campbell argued from Ephesians 4.12, “the work of ministry [is] for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Bishops, deacons and evangelists each had a distinctive role or function on behalf of the Body: Bishops engaged in ministries of oversight; Deacons in ministries of service; and, Evangelists in ministries of proclamation.

From Campbell’s perspective in this early period, the movement of ministers from church to church was unacceptable. Appointed from a particular congregation, the leader stayed and served in that congregation or lost credentials.³

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² Bishop and Elder are alternate translations of the Greek word *episkopos*.
³ In an 1835 edition of the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell wrote: “The jurisdiction of such bishops [elders] is always circumscribed by the congregation which ordained them. A single church is the largest dioceses (sic) known in the New Testament. Neither does his election and ordination give him a perpetual office. Should he leave the church, which under the direction of the Holy Spirit, created him, and become a member of another church, he enters it as a private member, and so continues until that church elect and ordain him, should they call for his services. The bishops [elders] and deacons of the
As the church grew after the union of the Disciples and Christians in 1832, Campbell was compelled to distinguish between elders of oversight in local congregations and preaching elders who moved from congregation to congregation.

**Barton Warren Stone**

In an 1831 issue of the *Christian Messenger*, Barton Stone wrote that the pastoral office included “bishops, elders, pastors, and evangelists” (*CM*, 5:7/31, 162). For Stone, the pastoral office was one office with multiple functions, such as: to preach and teach, administer the sacraments/ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and, according to his Presbyterian heritage, provide moral oversight within the congregation, but not from outside it.

Not unlike Campbell, the bishops/elders and pastors, were internal to the congregation while the evangelists were traveling preachers/planters. Although Stone did not specifically identify deacons, a description in the *Christian Messenger* is helpful: “The word Diakonos translated deacon but commonly, minister is frequently applied to all those who minister in the word as well as in other matters” (*CM*, IX:2/35, 45).

As early as the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (1804), it was willed that: “the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government – try her candidates for ministry, as to their soundness of faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them.” In an 1827 issue of the *Christian Messenger*, Stone spoke again of candidates for ministry implying that those individuals must have had some sort of standing or recognition in the church. This reaffirmed his position in the *Last Will and Testament* that the church try its candidates. He further argued that only Licensed preachers and Ordained elders were empowered to preach, giving rise to his notion of “pastor.” He evoked a strong Pauline tendency here in that preachers should not wander about the countryside in a freelance manner, but be sent from the churches with letters of commendation (*CM*, 1:2/27, 80).

Stone lifted up the pastoral office by identifying not only the functions but the authorization. He makes a distinction between choosing or appointing to an office and Ordaining to an office. (*CM*, IX: 2/35, 45) Through Acts and the Pastoral Epistles, he contends “...that Ordination to the work of ministry was performed by the [imposition] of the hands of the elders in the New Testament church. – Therefore it appears that no person can be legally inducted into the ministry without this act” (Ibid, 46).

church in Philippi were the bishops [elders] and deacons of the church in Philippi and of no other church; and so of Ephesus, Antioch, Rome, and Jerusalem.”(*MH*, VIII:10/35, 503)
When queried on the form of Ordination, Campbell, like Stone, responded “Imposition of hands, accompanied with fasting and prayer. Thus have persons been consecrated to sacred offices in the Christian church from the beginning.” And then the question, “Who may, or who ought to lay hands on the bishops, or deacons, or messengers elect? I answer, without dubiety, and in a few words, The community, the whole community as may be approved in behalf of the congregation.” (MH, VIII:10/35,498)

A significant departure from Campbell’s position, however, was the authority to Ordain. While Campbell had the congregation appoint and Ordain, Stone had the congregation appoint to the pastoral office but a conference or college of ministers, already Ordained, was the Ordaining body.

**Later Views**

The search for Ordained ministers from outside the congregational membership addressed some of the leadership problems created by the rapid growth of the churches in the 1840s and 50s. There were times when it was determined that qualified persons simply were not available from within the churches. Young men educated in colleges and even seminaries were beginning to be called to settled ministries. The evangelists, too, were well known and seen as a ready and important pool for resident preachers.

The turn of the 20th century saw a variety of new issues for the Disciples that began to shape understandings of the ordering of ministry. At the 1935 San Antonio International Convention, a Commission on Ordination was appointed. In 1939, the Richmond International Convention approved a new system which called for Ordination councils comprising ministers and elders representing three or more congregations to, in Stone’s words, “try her candidates.” Announced still as a local church matter, this new approach more fully satisfied Stone’s system of Ordinations being conducted by a conference or college of ministers. Such a system began to afford broader church ownership and accountability as ministers moved from congregation to congregation. In effect, the convention was following the example of Black Disciples in North Carolina who had already determined in 1886 that Ordination should not be authorized by a local congregation acting alone and had adopted standards for evaluating candidates for ministry. Some local congregations continued to Ordain their candidates without consultation of supporting churches or state societies, but those were becoming more rare in light of emerging covenantal relationships. At the 1964 Detroit International Convention, the church formally recommended a seminary degree prior to Ordination, even though some state societies and congregations had been enforcing that educational requirement for many years.

**Origins of Licensed Ministry**

The 1939 Richmond report commended three criteria for Ordination:
1. Good moral character and personal fitness for ministry
2. A full college course, and if possible, graduate training in religion
3. Experience in Christian work which shows real leadership, vision, pastoral
   qualities, and preaching ability

Persons who fulfilled points 1 and 3 but not point 2 were accorded Licenses - a new
category of ministry created from the Ordination report.

Licensed ministry, as we conceive it today, is fairly recent in Disciples history. Barton
Stone was Licensed by the Orange Presbytery of North Carolina as a missionary to the
lower North Carolina area. Alexander Campbell was Licensed to preach at the Brush Run
Meeting House in 1811. During the Stone-Campbell era, “licensing to preach” was a trial
period prior to Ordination to see if the candidate had the disposition for ministry and
the qualities for preaching the true gospel without any mixture of human philosophy,
deceit, or rudiments of the world (cf Last Will and Testament).

In 1948 the church recognized a licensing process which defined certification for a
limited period of time, primarily for college students in preparation or candidacy and for
“those laymen who desire to serve as part-time ministers” (“License and Ordination of
the Christian Minister,” 1948, para.16). Among the primary beneficiaries were small
churches that were unable to attract or support full-time ministers. This established a
standard of a two-fold office that was incorporated into The Design for the Christian
Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1968 and the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry
in 1971.

Emerging Practice at the Turn of the Millennium

Toward the end of the 20th century, the trend toward higher educational standards for
Ordained ministry reached its peak and patterns of preparation began to diversify. Some
Regions determined that a single model of ministerial formation was too restrictive to
serve faithfully the changing contexts of ministry. A few began to utilize criteria that
allowed for the Ordination of ministers without a Master of Divinity degree from an
Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary. The emergence of these
de facto alternate educational tracks led to calls for a review of expectations with an eye
toward developing a new consensus on educational standards for Ordained ministry.

C. Ministry in the Congregation

It is the usual practice among congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
to nominate, elect, and install or in other ways recognize for service deacons and elders.
Women and men serving in these offices manifest various spiritual gifts, including
maturity, prayer, insight, and leadership.
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 to 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
[more than one elder].

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 (paragraph 87, The Design of the
Christian Church).

The role of elders and deacons is most evident in the ways these ministries represent
the congregation in their communities of faith and in the larger community. For
example, elders and deacons are seen visiting persons in hospitals, nursing homes, or
with the home-centered. They may also lead congregations in ministries of outreach and
social justice.

It is, however, at the Table that the ministry of the congregation comes into view for the
gathered community. The pastor and elders as they preside and pray and the deacons
as they serve, re-present the whole ministry of the church.

D. Order of Ministry

“The church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole
people to fulfill their corporate ministry” (Paragraph 86, Design of the Christian Church).

In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a
Commissioned ministry and an Ordained ministry. The church expects the women and
men it Commissions and Ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and
competencies in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a
clear call to and passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant
Congregational and Regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether
Ordained or Commissioned.

The church gives grateful acknowledgment to God who in every age grants to women
and men the spiritual gifts necessary for such ministry. In making decisions about whom
to Commission or Ordain, the church looks to candidates for:

- the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,
the God-given gifts and graces,

- the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
- the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for effective ministry.

By these criteria the church discerns whom it will Commission and/or Ordain.⁴

It bears reiteration that throughout history, Disciples have recognized various methods of preparation for ministry. Over the course of the 20th century, Disciples placed increasing emphasis on a graduate seminary degree as a credential for Ordination, even while recognizing that for some individuals other methods of preparation might be more appropriate in consideration of certain circumstances such as life situation, community, ministry setting, and cultural and ethnic context.

1. Commissioned Ministry

In the development of Disciples understanding of ministry, “Commissioned” ministry is replacing some forms of “Licensed” ministry. Men and women are authorized and Commissioned by their Regions to offer ministry in a particular place for a specified period of time. “The word ‘Commissioned’ means one who is appointed to a position entrusted with a task, or one who is authorized or sent on behalf of another for a task or proclamation” (The Nazareth Consensus, page 8, para.1).⁵

The term “Commissioned” contains the word “mission,” which sets the stage for a spiritual expectation. Paul describes himself as one commissioned to preach the gospel as in Col. 1:25: “I became [the church’s] servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known...” (NRSV). In II Corinthians Paul writes, “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us...” (II Cor. 1:21, RSV) and again, “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word; but as men [and women] of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ” (II Cor. 2:17, RSV).

The word “Commissioned” has been used and continues to be used by the church for people appointed to various positions or sent forth to carry God’s message. Thus, the term has ecclesiastical connotations of being entrusted with the tasks of ministry. The use of the term “commission” or “commissioned” in English translations of Paul’s letters has further shaped our understanding of the concept in the contemporary setting.

Commissioning is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one commissioned, and a commitment by both the Church and the Commissioned to the

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⁴ Adapted from A Word to the Church on Ministry (1985), Commission on Theology, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), p 3.

⁵ A proposal for transformative action by the Dialogue on Licensed Ministry Action Team, July 2004, growing out of the gathering at Barton College in May 2003.
new relationship. Those Commissioned offer their gifts to the Church and commit
themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the
same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers. By receiving the
Commissioned minister in the act of commissioning, the Church acknowledges the
minister’s call and commits itself to be open to it. This liturgical service occurs in the
context of Congregational worship in partnership with the Region.

2. Ordained Ministry

   a. The meaning of Ordination

   In Ordination — through prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of
hands — the Church confirms in women and men the call of God, acknowledges
their gifts and graces, and authorizes this ministry in and for the Church.

   The act of Ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the
bond of the church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is
the risen Lord who is the true Ordainer and bestows the gift. In Ordaining, the
church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful
proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying
on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the
ministry was instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding
the church to look to him as the source of its commission. (“Ministry,” *Baptism
Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC, para. 40.)

   Disciples understand the meaning of Ordination as an action of God and the
community during which the Ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their
task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.

   Ordination sets one apart for leadership in the life and witness of the church.
While the Ordained ministry cannot be reduced to any mere listing of tasks, it
may be identified by leadership with regard to three fundamental aspects of the
church’s life and witness:
(1) acting in servant obedience to God’s commandment of love in self-sacrifice
on behalf of others and in a servant life in the world;
(2) proclaiming the gospel in faithfulness to Jesus Christ by word (teaching and
preaching), by sacrament (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and by deed
(mission and service);
(3) overseeing the life of the community in its worship, education, witness,
mission, fellowship, and pastoral nurture through the leading of the Holy
Spirit.
In selecting men and women for Ordination, the church thus seeks to insure that its ministry of service, proclamation, and oversight shall be constantly upheld by its members.

b. The character of Ordained ministry

Disciples accept Ordination as a gift of the Holy Spirit at work in the community of faith. In every service of Ordination we, therefore, seek to witness to at least four aspects of this ordering of ministry:

1) Apostolic Ministry: The Ordained enter the apostolic ministry. By this we mean they receive their authority and commission from the risen Christ. The first Christian ministers were the apostles in the New Testament, to whom the living Lord revealed himself and sent "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Ministers in every generation preach, celebrate, witness, and gather disciples in continuity with those early apostles.

2) Representative Ministry: Ordination witnesses to a representative ministry. Those who accept the ministry of the Word, sacrament, and mission are responsible for re-presenting (showing forth) to the world and to all baptized Christians the character of Christ's ministry and witness. A central task of such representative ministry is personally and publicly to point the church to its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its faith, mission, and unity.

3) Collegial Ministry: Those who receive Ordination enter a collegial ministry. Ministry is inherently a shared responsibility. No minister is independent or autonomous; all seek to teach and work together to express fellowship (koinonia) in support and care for each other. This collegiality relates Ordained and lay persons in common ministry. The ministries of all members of the believing community are complementary, given to one to be supportive of the other. All are to build up the Body of Christ in love. No differences of vocation, function or education should obscure the fact that the one ministry of Christ is shared by the whole people of God. Lay and Ordained are partners together in governance and witness; together they empower the church for effective participation in discovering God's will for all humanity.

4) Universal Ministry: Most appropriately, Ordination is a rite of the Church Universal. While Ordination is normally done by a particular denomination, and Standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no one is ever Ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly not into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those Ordained are representative ministers of the Church Universal: one, holy, catholic and
apostolic. While we serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives with the pain of a divided ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to point out the community of Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of the one universal Church into being, and to search for forms of unity which the divided churches cannot yet express.  

**c. Offices of the Ordained ministry**

The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In the New Testament there appears rather a variety of forms which existed at different places and times. As the Holy Spirit continued to lead the Church in life, worship and mission, certain elements from this early variety were further developed and became settled into a more universal pattern of ministry (BEM, para. 19).

In 1985, the Commission on Theology commended to the whole Church a single order of Ordained ministry which would include three offices.

This pattern of ministerial leadership corresponds to the three aspects of the church’s life identified as fundamental:

1. the *ministry of service* to church and world (the *diaconate* or *deacons*), where the active witness and mission of the church as servant is advanced;
2. the *ministry of proclamation* by Word and Sacrament (the *presbyterate*, or *pastors*), where preaching, teaching, and the sacraments/ordinances (Table and Baptism) of the church are lifted up; and,
3. the *ministry of oversight* (the *episcopate*, or bishops), where oversight of the community’s life occurs.

Thus, within a single order of Ordained ministry, there can be three distinct offices that are at the same time mutually supportive and interrelated. The

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7 This ordering of ministry appears to be in line with the emerging consensus within the ecumenical movement and is the current pattern accepted by many churches throughout the world, e.g., Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and United Churches, and thus appears to offer a strong possibility for wider ecumenical relationships in the future.

8 The nomenclature of *diakonos*, *presbuteros*, and *episkopos* is drawn from I Timothy, chapters 3 and 5, which is rendered in the NRSV as deacon, elder, and bishop, respectively.
recognition of these offices does not carry with it any implications of hierarchical
structure. The three-fold Ordained ministry, taken as a whole, thus re-presents
the fundamental characteristics of ministry shared by all baptized believers. (A
Word to the Church on Ministry, pp. 3-4.)

Persons are not Ordained into a particular office, but rather into the order of
ministry. The church may call them to a role that emphasizes one of the three
offices. However, these offices are not located exclusively in any particular
ministerial role. Most ministries encompass varying aspects of all three offices.

**d. The act of Ordination**

A long and early Christian tradition places Ordination in the context of worship
and especially of the Lord’s Supper. Such a place for the service of Ordination
preserves the understanding of Ordination as an act of the whole community.
The act of Ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at
one and the same time the invocation of the Holy Spirit, a sacramental sign, and
an acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.  

In the act of Ordination, the Church Ordains in confidence that God, being
faithful to the promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into historical forms of
human relationship, and draws upon those relationships for God’s purpose.
Ordination is thus a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship
signified is present in, with, and through the words spoken, the gestures made
and the forms employed.

Finally, Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit
in the one Ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the Ordinand to
the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of Ordination, the
Church acknowledges the minister’s gifts and commits itself to be open to these
gifts. Likewise those Ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit
themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility;
at the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with all ministers.

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9 Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 41.
10 Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 43.
11 Adapted from *BEM*, Ministry para. 44.
II. Policies and Criteria
For The Ordering Of Ministry

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

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

2. *Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry.* The church expects to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:

   a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;

   b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;

   c. An understanding of pastoral identity;

   d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;

   e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;

   f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;

   g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;

   h. Responsible personal financial management;

   i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God’s gifts;

   j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

B. The Commissioned Ministry

1. Description: Commissioned ministry provides the Church opportunity for creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. These ministries may include: pastors, evangelists, Christian educators, ministers of music, youth ministers, parish nurses, chaplains, bi-vocational ministers, recognized congregationally-based or non-congregationally-based community ministers, or others, where Regional nurture and authorization are deemed appropriate.
2. Common criteria of Commissioned ministry:

In order to be Commissioned ministers persons must:

- Be baptized members of a Disciples congregation in the commissioning Region and serving in a Congregationally, Regionally or Generally recognized call;
- Be recommended for Commissioning by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which his/her membership is held;
- Meet with the Regional Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally) for Commissioning; and
- Comply with any other expectations of the Region.

In accepting Commissioning, 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).*

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

Persons are Commissioned by Regions for ministry in a specific context. Change of ministry context requires Regional re-Commissioning.

3. Categories of Commissioned Ministry:

a. Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination): These are men and women who minister in a particular place for a specified period of time. Their call is context specific and is affirmed by the Region. Expectations for formation and education may be established by the Region, and may be accomplished in consultation with the calling congregation.

b. Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination): These are women and men serving in a Congregationally or Regionally authorized call who are under the care of a Region and involved in a specified program of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.

4. Candidacy for Commissioning
a. **Definition:** Candidacy is that period of time in which the individual who has received a call to serve a particular ministry is in preparation with the Region for Commissioning.

b. Candidacy begins when a person who has received a call from a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or a recognized non-congregational ministry applies to the Region for Commissioning.

c. **Steps for Candidacy.** The candidate shall:

1. be a member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation;
2. have a letter of recommendation from the congregation of which the applicant is a member;
3. complete the *Ministerial Profile*; and
4. meet with the Regional Commission on Ministry.

d. The Region shall assess the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and vocational testing, consultation with congregations, and as appropriate, coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions.

e. Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and Commissions her/him for a particular ministry.

5. **Regional Responsibilities:** Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:

a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Commissioned minister, which must include the *Ministerial Profile* and a current denominational criminal background check;

b. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities whenever considering a person of color;

c. bring applicants “under care”;

d. provide for their nurture;

e. provide opportunities for building collegiality with other ministers;

f. make available appropriate programs of study (such as readings, experiential learning, intensive weekend seminars, guided reflection on ministerial practice with a mentor-companion, and distance learning, etc.) in preparation for ministry;

g. authorize the designation of an applicant as a Commissioned Minister;

h. offer resources and presence of the Regional Minister or the Regional Minister’s designee for services of Commissioning;
i. oversee formation processes for candidates for Ordination;
j. encourage lifelong learning through continuing education opportunities
   including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism; and
k. establish additional requirements as desired.

C. The Ordained Ministry

1. Description. By Ordination the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in
calling particular persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ;
accepts their ministry in and for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for
the whole 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
class, 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 non-congregationally-based community ministers,
chaplains, pastoral counselors, and ministers who serve in the General and
Regional church.

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

- 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.

- Those in the seminary track will demonstrate competency in the 16 areas 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.

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:

**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.

**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.

**Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate effective communication within and on behalf of the church.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality.

**Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith through word and action.

**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.

**Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons 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.
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.

Spiritual Development: Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to personal growth and help others develop a rich spiritual life.

Stewardship: Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who recognize and share generously God’s abundant gifts for all creation.

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.

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

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

3. Regional Responsibilities:

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

Specifically assigned to Regions are the responsibilities to:

a. establish procedures to evaluate applicants for Ordination;

b. evaluate the educational experience of candidates for an AT program which would include a high school diploma or its equivalent and some post secondary educational experience;

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12 Regional Fellowships (Clusters) are gatherings of Regions in geographical proximity. They include:

- ROSES (Regions Of the Sun Equipping and Serving: Oklahoma, Southwest, and Great River);
- WRIM (Western Regions In Ministry: Arizona, Pacific Southwest, Northern California-Nevada, Oregon, Northwest, South Idaho, Montana, Central Rocky Mountain);
- SERF (SouthEast Regional Fellowship: Florida, Alabama-Northwest Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee);
- NIRF (Northeast Inter-Regional Fellowship: Canada, Northeast, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Capital Area, West Virginia and Michigan);
- HEARTLAND (Heartland Regional Fellowship: Nebraska, Kansas, Greater Kansas City, Mid-America, Upper Midwest, Illinois-Wisconsin, and Indiana).
c. consult with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities whenever considering a racial/ethnic applicant;
d. bring applicants “under care” (See II.D.3.);
e. provide for their nurture;
f. be in relationship with the sponsoring congregation and the candidate’s educational setting;
g. authorize and supervise the act of Ordination; and
h. facilitate continuing education including training in healthy boundaries and anti-racism.

D. Candidacy for Ordination

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

2. Application for Candidacy. Application for candidacy is entered into when a man or woman declares the intention to seek Ordination through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and their congregation affirms that intention.

3. The Criteria for Candidacy. The applicant shall be a baptized member of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and shall make application for candidacy to the Region of the candidate's membership or to the Region where she or he is a student. In special circumstances and subject to agreement between appropriate Regional Ministers and/or Regional Commissions on Ministry, persons may apply for candidacy in another Region. The applicant shall have a letter of recommendation from a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the candidate’s Region of membership.

Upon receipt of the application, the Region will begin the process of assessing (through avenues such as personal interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological testing, consultation with congregations, coordination of Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions), the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual, and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. Upon approval of the application, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy. Once accepted as a candidate, the individual comes under the care and direction of the Regional Commission or Committee on Ministry (or that process which serves to function as a Commission on Ministry regardless of the name assigned Regionally).

4. The Procedures During Candidacy. The candidate shall seek Ordination through a discernment process established by the Region. 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.

5. **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).*

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 Region to terminate candidacy. Completion of candidacy within seven years is recommended, but may be extended at the discretion of the Region.
E. The Act of Ordination

Ordination is a process of the Congregational and Regional Church on behalf of the whole church to commend to Christians everywhere individuals who meet the qualifications and have fulfilled the requirements established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for Ordination.

1. The candidate shall be recommended for Ordination by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which membership is held.

2. The act of Ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the sponsoring congregation and the Region, with the Regional Minister, or the Regional Minister’s designee, presiding.

3. The service ordinarily shall be held in a sponsoring congregation.

4. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the Regional church, the ecumenical church and, where possible, the General church shall participate in the service.

5. After the Ministerial Code of Ethics is signed, the signed Ordination document shall be issued by the Region.

F. Ministerial Standing

1. Definition. Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both denominationally and ecumenically.

   a. Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a congregation, related organization or institution, Region, or General Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as pastoral care, ecclesiastical endorsement, and scholarship aid. In addition they have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

   b. Ordained ministers with Standing have access to Search and Call. Candidates for Ordination may be granted access to Search and Call at the
discretion of the Regional Minister of the Region where they are under care or the Region of their educational setting.

c. Responsibility for certification of Standing of ministers and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry. Nothing in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry is intended to preclude a Region from developing additional appropriate statements or procedures pertaining to Standing within that Region as long as such statements are consistent with the Order of Ministry.

d. For those engaged in non-Regional ministries responsibility for certification of Standing and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the General Commission on Ministry. For purposes of this document, non-Regional ministries are defined as all ministries outside the United States and Canada, those ministries engaged by and accountable to one of the General Ministries of the church, ministries of the ecumenical church and with interfaith organizations whose responsibilities extend beyond one Region, whether in North America or abroad, and fulltime military, VA and Federal Correctional chaplaincies. All other ministries are hereby defined as Regional as determined by the primary ministry site. The General Commission on Ministry has a credentialing function but is not an Ordaining body; that is the province of Regions in cooperation with congregations. In covenant with the Regions, the General Commission on Ministry will notify Regions about persons who reside in their Region and hold Standing with the General Commission on Ministry.

e. Since Regional Ministers “serve as a sign of the ministry of the church in sacrament and service” and lead Regions in promoting “the concept of whole church, and have a primary role in advocating and supporting the denomination’s mission and vision” (Marks of a Faithful Regional Church, August, 2006), the responsibility for certification of Standing is jointly lodged with the Region where the Regional Minister serves and with the General Commission on Ministry. Annually, the Regional Minister will complete Standing forms required by both the Region and the General Commission on Ministry.

2. Certification of Standing of those Commissioned and Ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

a. By virtue of Commissioning or Ordination according to the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the minister becomes eligible for Standing.
b. Standing for ministers in active service continues so long as the minister does and reports the following:

i. Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.

ii. Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.

iii. Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.

iv. Adheres to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).*

v. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)

vi. Seeks annual certification as requested by the Region where the ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)

c. Standing may be continued at the discretion of the Region or the General Commission on Ministry in cases of disability or other special hardships affecting ministerial service, so long as other criteria for Standing are met.

d. The Region or the General Commission on Ministry will provide means by which the Standing of all ministers in its care will be reviewed annually. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the Standing of persons of color.

e. When an Ordained Minister moves from a ministry position in one Region to a ministry position in another Region, Standing in the Order of Ministry is retained. Commissioned Ministers who move to another Region must contact that Regional Minister to establish Standing in the new ministry position. Responsibility for review and subsequent certification is assigned to the Region in which the minister functions or to the General Commission on Ministry. The minister shall notify both the former and new Regional Ministers upon relocation.
f. When an Ordained Minister who is not actively seeking relocation moves from a ministry position in one Region to another Region and is no longer engaged in ministry, ministerial Standing will be provisionally retained for up to one year, except in the case of retirement, until review and subsequent certification is granted by the Region into which the minister has moved. The Ordained Minister is required to initiate contact with both the former and new Regional Ministers regarding his or her status.

3. Certification of Standing of Retired Ministers, Commissioned or Ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

a. Upon retirement, Commissioned Ministers retain Standing if they continue serving in an approved ministry site. Standing of inactive retired Commissioned Ministers may be granted at the discretion of the Region.

b. Ordained Ministers with Standing retain this Standing at the time of retirement.

i. A retired minister who intends to continue practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or full time basis must continue to seek annual certification of Standing as requested by the Region where the ministry site is located or by the General Commission on Ministry, as appropriate. (See II.F.1.c.)

ii. When Standing is granted, the active retired minister will be listed in the Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as active retired. (aR)

iii. To be eligible for such Standing, the active retired minister

a) Performs faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.

b) Participates regularly in programs of study, growth, and renewal.

c) Maintains relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of residence or active ministry where feasible.

d) Continues to meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2) and to adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics
iv. Retired ministers who are no longer engaging in the practice of ministry on an occasional, part-time or full time basis may seek Standing as inactive retired ministers.

a) Retired ministers who are granted inactive status will continue to be listed in the *Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* as inactive, retired ministers (iR).

b) Inactive retired ministers must continue to seek annual certification of Standing as requested by the Region where they reside.

c) To be eligible for such Standing, the inactive retired minister must continue to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics* and must hold participating membership in a recognized Disciples congregation in the community of residence where feasible.

v. If an inactive retired minister decides to once again take up the practice of ministry, that minister must once again seek status as an active retired minister. (See 3.c.i-iv)

4. *Suspension or Termination of Ministerial Standing.*

a. Procedures leading to a review of Standing may be initiated by the minister, the Region, or the General Commission on Ministry when one or more of the following conditions are present:

i. The minister desires to be released from the practice of ministry, either temporarily or permanently.

ii. The minister requests transfer of credentials from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to another denomination or non-Disciples congregation.

iii. The minister enters into a full-time occupation not recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose and/or no longer performs the functions of the office of a minister.

iv. The minister fails to respond to a request for annual certification from the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

v. The minister no longer meets the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry (II.A.2.) or fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*.

vi. The retired minister fails to adhere to the *Ministerial Code of Ethics*. 
b. When the Region or the General Commission on Ministry takes the initiative in the review of Standing, the procedures shall include:

i. Written notice to the minister that Standing is to be reviewed with the possibility of suspension or termination.

ii. Consultation with the appropriate National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities is encouraged regarding the termination of Standing of persons of color.

iii. A hearing by a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

c. When the minister takes the initiative in the review, the procedures shall include:

i. Written notice to the Region or the General Commission on Ministry requesting that Standing be reviewed with the possibility of termination.

ii. A consultation with a committee appointed by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

d. Standing may be granted to a minister whose Standing has been terminated or suspended by another Region or the General Commission on Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending body, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

5. Surrender of Standing

When a minister surrenders Standing, Standing can be granted again only upon the recommendation of the body to which Standing was surrendered, whether that is a Region or the General Commission on Ministry. The Region or General Commission on Ministry shall address any outstanding allegations of misconduct before reinstating Standing.

6. Lapsed Standing

When a minister’s Standing has lapsed, Standing may only be granted after consultation with the body where the Standing was previously held, whether the Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

G. Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries
1. *Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ*

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ recognize the Ordained ministries of the other church to be efficacious ministries of grace within that church and these ministries to be valid and full ministries of the one Church of Jesus Christ.

The Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ are reconciled. An Ordained minister with Ordained ministerial Standing in one church may function, whenever invited, and as established procedures permit, as an Ordained minister of the other.

The designations "Ordained Ministerial Partner" and "Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing" manifest the corporate and individual nature of the recognition and reconciliation of the Ordained ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

a. Each member of the United Church of Christ who holds Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b. Each member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who holds Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is an Ordained Ministerial Partner of the United Church of Christ.

c. When a person no longer has Ordained ministerial Standing in either the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ, that person is no longer an Ordained Ministerial Partner and Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is nullified.

d. *United Church of Christ ministers with Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained minister with Standing in the United Church of Christ who has been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

i. Once a United Church of Christ Ordained minister has demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Regional Commission on
Ministry where the minister resides, that Ordained Ministerial Partner may be granted access to the Search and Call process in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is not given at this point in the process.

ii. A United Church of Christ Ordained Ministerial Partner who secures a call in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) applies for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the Region in which the Ordained minister’s calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is reviewed by the Region for certification annually.

iii. A United Church of Christ Ordained minister has Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) only when serving a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body.

iv. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall maintain Ordained ministerial Standing in the United Church of Christ.

v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the association in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calling body is located.

vi. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including (where feasible) holding associate membership in a recognized Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation in the community.

vii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in a Region has voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

viii. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for his/her primary support in Ordained ministry.

ix. A United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be accountable to the Region for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the United Church of Christ for Ordained ministerial Standing.
When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the United Church
of Christ minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the association of the United
Church of Christ in which the United Church of Christ minister’s
Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and
invited to participate in the procedures.

When a United Church of Christ minister who holds Ordained
Ministerial Partner Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of
Christ) accepts a call in another Region, he/she shall be subject to
review and subsequent annual certification of Ordained Ministerial
Partner Standing by the new Region.

e. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministers with Ordained Ministerial
Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an Ordained
minister with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who has
been called to an Ordained ministry setting in the United Church of Christ.
Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing provides ongoing ecclesiastical
authorization to exercise the rights and responsibilities of Ordained ministry in
the United Church of Christ.

i. Once a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has
demonstrated knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, and
practices of the United Church of Christ to the Association Committee
where the minister resides, that Ordained ministerial partner may be
granted access to the Search and Call process in the United Church of
Christ. Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of
Christ is not given at this point in the process.

ii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained Ministerial Partner who
secures a call in the United Church of Christ applies for Ordained
Ministerial Partner Standing to the Association in which the Ordained
minister’s calling body is located. Once granted, Ordained Ministerial
Partner Standing is reviewed by the Association annually.

iii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Ordained minister has Ordained
Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ only when
serving a United Church of Christ calling body.

iv. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained
Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall maintain
Ordained ministerial Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
v. Ordained ministerial Standing shall be held in the Region in which the United Church of Christ calling body is located.

vi. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing shall maintain relations with the United Church of Christ including (where feasible) holding associate membership in a recognized United Church of Christ congregation in the community.

vii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in an Association has voting privileges in the Association and Conference and is eligible for election as a delegate to General Synod or election as a member of any Covenanted Ministry Board in the United Church of Christ.

viii. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall relate to the United Church of Christ for his/her primary support in Ordained ministry.

ix. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ shall be accountable to the Association for Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing and to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for Ordained ministerial Standing.

x. When a disciplinary review is instituted in relation to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ, the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister’s Ordained ministerial Standing is maintained, shall be informed and invited to participate in the procedures.

xi. When a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) minister who holds Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing with the United Church of Christ accepts a call in another Association, he/she shall be subject to review and transfer of the Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing to the new Association.

2. **Persons Ordained in Other Churches.** Ministers Ordained by other denominations or non-Disciples congregations may be considered for recognition of Ordination and the granting of Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Provisional or temporary Standing may be granted to individuals applying for recognition of Ordination by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
Responsibility for this process is lodged in the Region except in the case of Military Chaplains stationed overseas.

a. Provisional or temporary Standing of applicants may be granted upon the fulfillment of the following requirements:

i. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or congregation from which the candidate transfers.

ii. Satisfactory investigation of personal and ministerial references and a criminal background check.

iii. Filing of appropriate forms with the Region to which the applicant is applying or with the General Commission on Ministry.

iv. Provisional or temporary Standing shall be reviewed annually by either the granting Region or the General Commission on Ministry.

b. Removal of the provisional or temporary conditions for Standing may be granted by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry upon fulfillment of the following requirements:

i. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

ii. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity, and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

iii. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation, including educational attainment, for the Order of Ministry.

iv. One year minimum service under the supervision or mentoring of a Disciples of Christ minister with Standing.

v. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the order of ministry as listed in item II.A.2.

vi. Commitment to adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

H. Ministerial Search and Call

1. The General Principles. Ministerial Search and Call is the term applied to the process developed to facilitate the calling of Ordained ministers who hold
Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It provides a covenantal framework within which ministers and Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church can serve to build up the whole church of Jesus Christ. The Order of Ministry identifies general principles for Search and Call. The Office of Search and Call (Disciples Home Missions) administers these procedures of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

a. Freedom and responsibility are inherent in the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Congregations, Regions, and General Ministries of the church are accorded full freedom to issue ministerial calls within their own established or constitutional provisions. Ministers, likewise, are accorded full freedom to accept or reject a call to any particular service. All, however, covenant to work within the Order of Ministry in the interest of assuring an orderly and responsible system of Search and Call.

b. The Church is best served when Regional Ministers and National Pastors/Leaders of Racial Ethnic communities work together covenantally in the Search and Call process. Primary responsibility for the Search and Call process is lodged with the Regions. Regions are encouraged to consult the National Pastors/Leaders. National Pastors/Leaders may offer their counsel to the Regional Minister in Search and Call with the understanding that the primary responsibility for Search and Call lies with the Region.

2. Operating Principles.

a. Ordained ministers with Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church.

b. Ordained Ministerial Partners with Standing in the United Church of Christ will have complete and unhindered access to Search and Call of the church once they have been qualified by a Region to seek a call.

c. Congregations, Regions, institutions, and General Ministries of the church will be provided assistance from the Office of Search and Call.

d. Any Ministerial Profile in the Office of Search and Call will be open to the minister concerned except for confidential references for which a waiver has been signed.

e. Confidentiality, when assured to the persons completing the reference forms, will not be violated.
f. At the discretion of the Region of care candidates for Ordination may be
granted authorized access to Search and Call.

g. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
Ordained Ministers with Standing may be considered for any ministerial
position.

h. All candidates for Ordination with authorized access to Search and Call and
Ordained Ministers with Standing shall have access to information
regarding available ministerial openings in the church.

i. Every congregation, Region, educational or related institution, and General
Ministry will strive to be open to the ministry of all persons putting aside
prejudice and considering candidates based on gifts and skills for ministry.

3. Responsibilities. It is expected that all parties using Search and Call will abide
by the established procedures of the Office of Search and Call,

a. Ministers. Commissioned and Ordained ministers with Standing in the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have the responsibility to seek the
advice and counsel of the Region and to avail themselves of the resources
of the Office of Search and Call. They have the freedom to accept or reject
any call offered to them, and to negotiate whatever terms of call or service
seem appropriate. In all matters, ministers will function within the
covenantal relationship of the whole church.

b. Congregations. Within the tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of
Christ) and according to The Design, congregations have the right and
responsibility to seek and call their own leadership, to establish the terms
of call, to undergird the ministry, and to effect terminations within their
own procedures. In all matters, congregations will function within the
covenantal relationship of the whole church and are encouraged to seek
the advice and counsel of the Region/Area.

c. Regions. Regions bear the primary responsibility for providing advice and
counsel to both congregations and ministers in Search and Call. Regions
may delegate or share this responsibility with their areas, districts or other
subdivisions. In all matters, Regions will function within the covenantal
relationship of the whole church.

d. Disciples Home Missions. The Office of Search and Call at Disciples Home
Missions is the primary locus of the ministerial records of the Christian
Church (Disciples of Christ) related to Search and Call and is responsible for
coordinating the Search and Call process of the church. In all matters,
Disciples Home Missions will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

e. General Ministries. In all matters, General Ministries will function within the covenantal relationship of the whole church.

I. Ministerial Code of Ethics

Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister. Through dedication and discipline I will lead and serve with integrity. Relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the following:

Personal Conduct

• Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
• Dedicating time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry
• Growing in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through the spiritual disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
• Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for privacy and time together
• Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
• Being a faithful steward of God’s gifts to me by managing time, talents, and financial resources responsibly and generously
• Accepting responsibility for all debts that I incur
• Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and other abusive behaviors
• Using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitative ways
• Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
• Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister impartially

Relationships to the Church which I Serve

• Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church
• Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church
• Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in love
• Administering the sacraments/ordinances and services of the church with integrity and not for financial gain
• Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called
• Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity
• Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church’s ministry
• Protecting confidences; covenanting to only tell those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it
• Acting to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect
• Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and cooperating with the Region in the annual review of my ministerial Standing
• Seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those I serve

Relationships to Ministry Colleagues

• Engaging in covenantal relationships with colleagues which involve nurture, discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and spiritual formation
• Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families while not exploiting their problems or crises
• Performing pastoral services within another congregation or for a member of another congregation only at the request of that congregation’s elders and current pastor
• Supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my predecessors or another minister
• Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or other departure from a ministry position, without interfering or intruding and by making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their pastor, nor will I perform any pastoral services unless requested by the congregation’s elders and current pastor

Relationships to the Community and the Wider Church

• Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working towards a just and morally responsible society
• Participating faithfully in the life and work of all expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
• Seeking to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
• Being a responsible representative of the one church of Jesus Christ and participating in activities which strengthen its ministry, witness, and mission

J. Misconduct

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands ministerial misconduct to be activity which violates the covenantal character of the ministerial office as expressed in
the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Investigation and adjudication of violations of the
Ministerial Code of Ethics shall be the responsibility of the Region through the
committee or Commission on Ministry or the General Commission on Ministry.

1. Reporting

Regions or the General Commission on Ministry will report formal actions and
decisions to remove Standing for misconduct to the Office of Search and Call,
Disciples Home Missions, and these actions will be communicated to all Regions.

2. Suspension of Standing

In extreme situations of alleged misconduct, ministerial Standing may be
temporarily suspended by the Region or the General Commission on Ministry
during the period of investigation and adjudication.

3. Sexual Misconduct

   a. It is the responsibility of each Region to have specific definitions of sexual
   misconduct and procedures for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating
   sexual misconduct charges of ministers with Standing in the Region. Each
   Region will periodically and systematically review its definitions and
   procedures. It is the responsibility of the Region to communicate such
   definitions and procedures to ministers and congregations within the
   Region.

   b. It is the responsibility of the General Commission on Ministry to have
   specific definitions of sexual misconduct and procedures for receiving,
   investigating, and adjudicating sexual misconduct charges of ministers
   engaged in non-Regional ministries. The General Commission on Ministry
   will periodically and systematically review its definitions and procedures. It
   is the responsibility of the General Commission on the Ministry to
   communicate such definitions and procedures to ministers, ministries, and
   other organizations in the General and ecumenical church.

K. Right of Appeal

The General Commission on Ministry understands that the Right to Appeal extends to
persons who, at the time of their appeal, are subject to a decision with adverse effect
regarding Ordination, Commissioning, transfer of credentials, and/or Standing. The
General Commission on Ministry will not consider any appeal if legal proceedings are
pending or in process.

L. Amendment Process
The Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may be amended two ways:

1. By a two-thirds vote of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting, providing such amendments shall have been regularly filed 180 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated among the congregations and Regions 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.

2. By a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) present and voting, providing such amendments shall have been mailed to the members of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

Basic Policy Approved Louisville General Assembly 1971
Section II on Candidacy approved Kansas City General Assembly 1977
Section V on Ministerial Standing amended Anaheim General Assembly 1981
Section VI on Ministerial Relocation amended Des Moines General Assembly 1985
Section VII on Amendment Process amended Louisville General Assembly 1987
Section V.C. on Recognition and Reconciliation of the Ordained Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
Section VIII on Sexual Misconduct amended Pittsburgh General Assembly 1995
New Theological Foundations and Revised Policies and Criteria approved Indianapolis General Assembly 2009


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130 E. Washington Street, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-1986
Phone: 888/346-2631; Fax: 317/635-4426
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON

Theological Foundation and
Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

[For purposes of brevity throughout the following resource
the above title will be referred to as the “Ordering Document.”]

WHY HAS THIS PROPOSAL COME ABOUT? (SIX REASONS.)

a. Because we lack, and are needful of, a denominational statement concerning the theological and historical underpinnings for the "ordering of ministry" - as we understand it - one that sets-forth our own "Disciples" understanding of how the order of ministry has evolved in our particular history and polity.

b. Because "unity is our polar star," clarity about our Disciples' ordering of ministry, and the beliefs that undergird it, are important elements in ecumenical conversation with sister communions across the life of the Church.

c. Because of the Licensed Minister's appeal through the Nazareth Consensus we acknowledge that:
- they desire a means by which those adequately prepared might be ordained;
- they desire a means by which they might enjoy mobility in the circulating of their papers and references in the church's "search and call" system;
- they desire to replace the secular term of "licensed" with a Biblical-based concept of "commissioned;" and
- they desire to be more highly valued as partners alongside ordained clergy within the whole order of ministry.

d. Because some Regions already provide an alternative track to ordination, other than the requisite Association of Theological School-accredited M.Div. criterion for ordination which is fully recognized and accepted across the life of this denomination, there is a need for Disciples to have a common understanding about alternative ordination processes for which allowances are made, and to provide common standards for such.

e. Because in the current milieu, we Disciples are facing many exceptional situations (e.g. the number of rural and urban congregations who can no longer afford full-time seminary-trained clergy; the number of licensed ministers who are going the second mile in their preparation/formation to provide quality leadership; the number of individuals who are by either linguistic, economic, vocational, or familial circumstances constrained from pulling-up roots and relocating for seminary - which includes a number of our effective new church pastors) we recognize the need to provide different pathways leading to ordination.

f. Because of new questions needing address and new circumstances needing our attention in this unique historical moment for the church early in the 21st century, this is an opportune time to do so in a wholistic approach to the Disciples understanding about the Order of Ministry.

WHAT IS NEW IN THIS "ORDERING" DOCUMENT?

~ A statement of "theological foundations" about our ordering of ministry - one growing out of our Disciples history and polity. (The entirety of Section One)

[PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT MEANT TO BE A COMPLETE THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT ON MINISTRY, BUT ONLY THE IDENTIFICATION OF THOSE PARTICULAR THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS WHICH INFORM OUR DISCIPLES PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE "ORDERING OF MINISTRY."
 Especially significant is our ability to identify the manner in which our threefold offices of ministry (serving, proclaiming, over-seeing) have a clear relationship to the three distinct offices of ministry in the New Testament (diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate). (I.D.2.a & I.D.2.c.)

~ Updated language about personal qualifications for the Order of Ministry. (II.A.2.)

~ A change of language from the use of “Licensed” to “Commissioned.” (I.D.1 & II.B.1.)
~ The description of and criteria for Commissioned Ministry. (II.B.2.)
~ Two categories of Commissioned Ministers - those seeking ordination, and those not seeking ordination. (II.B.3.)
~ Outline of the Candidacy process for Commissioned Ministers (for the candidate and for the Region) [II.B.4-5]

~ The processes and procedures for Ordination. (II.C.1.)
~ The delineation of the “Apprentice Track” [AT] and the “Seminary Track” [ST] as preparation for ordination. (II.C.2)
~ The educational requirements - competencies in 16 different areas of ministerial practice - are alphabetically listed for the ordination of candidates for ministry in both educational tracks - AT and ST. (The content of each of these areas will be fleshed out by a task force appointed by the General Commission on Ministry in consultation with General Minister and President) [II.C.2]
~ The itemization of Regional responsibilities in working with those seeking ordination. (II.C.3.)
~ A freshly reworked section on Candidacy for Ordination (including definition, application, criteria, procedures during candidacy and preparations for ordination) [II.D.]

1. In general, there is much more specificity throughout the “ordering document” to provide assistance to Regional Commissions on Ministry
2. Regions will have the option about whether to utilize the alternative pathway to ordination for Commissioned Ministers - the Apprentice Track. The policy assumes that most all will do so, but does not make it a mandatory requirement for every Region to do so. (II.C.3. uses “encourage” language.)

In the section on Standing (II.F.) there is more clarity about
- Protocol and clarification regarding jurisdictions for certifying Regional Standing (making clear which Regions have the responsibility under what circumstances): [II.F.1.c. and II.F.2.e & f]
- Clarifications regarding certification for Standing by the General Church: (II.F.1.d.)
- Good protocol in Regional and General communications with each other when working with a person of color (good two-way consultation between the Region and the National Pastor/Leader of Racial Ethnic communities); [II.F.2.d. also at lines 670, 803, 1006, 1114 and 1381]
- A new section pertaining only to retired ministry - particularly delineating the status and requirement for active retirements (serving in retirement) and inactive retirement (retired and no longer serving); [II.F.3.] and
- New wording that differentiates what happens when Standing is removed, surrendered or lapsed. (II.F.4-6)

Nothing has been altered in Section G on “Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries” since that is language which has been mutually adopted by previous General Assemblies of our partner denominations - the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Ministerial Code of Ethics which once stood apart from the Ordering document, is now incorporated in Section I of the Ordering document.
DOES ORDAINING THE NON-SEMINARY TRAINED LEAD TO A LESS COMPETENT MINISTRY?

Some have opposed the ordination of licensed ministers believing that ordination has only/mostly to do with a level of education and skill development characterized by a certain period of time and work accomplished in a particular kind of educational setting. While that is certainly part of the criteria for ministry, it is clear that throughout the centuries persons with diverse levels of education in varied kinds of educational settings have been enormously effective in God's service as ordained clergy. Years and hours of preparation have not been the only criteria.

While the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will always place a premium on an informed and prepared clergy leadership, the times in which we find ourselves are clearly leading us to broaden our sense of where and how that formation for leadership can happen. In the "ordering document" there is a clear and preferential option for seminary trained leadership - wherever and however that is possible. Note the references in section II.C.2. lines 722-724.

In the historical life of the church there has always been the ordination of well-respected, broadly-authenticated and spiritually-effective persons who did not necessarily have seminary training as we know it today. The premise behind this "ordering document" is trust - faith that God can well-utilize both a SEMINARY approach and an APPRENTICE approach for ordination in this church today. A truly inclusive church must begin to live its way into ever more inclusive ways of calling forth and setting apart its ordained leadership. It is our sense that this church will actually be enlivened and blessed by providing these two tracks to ordination.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE ENVISIONED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY?

Prior to the General Assembly the General Board directed that the "ordering document," the resolution for its adoption, and the accompanying "Frequently Asked Questions" be circulated across the church for reading and study.

In July 2009 the General Assembly will provide a forum on this "ordering document" for discussion and clarification.

In July 2009 the General Assembly will vote on the adoption of this "ordering document."

If the resolution "to adopt" is affirmed:

- The church will embark on a period of time for the transitions necessary for its implementation.
- The date for implementation - the day on which the new policy becomes effective - is August 1, 2011.

During the period of transition:

- The General Commission on Ministry in consultation with the General Minister and President will immediately appoint a task group to flesh out the content expectations for the 16 areas of ministerial competency and to develop a template or model curriculum for Apprentice Track educational programs.
- The General Commission on Ministry will work with the General Church office of ministry to effect procedures to identify Ordination AT (Apprentice Track) and Ordination ST - (Seminary Track) designations on paperwork for Regions and congregations in the Search and Call process.
- Each Region will make intentional efforts to inform their ministry commission in regard to the implications of the new "ordering document" for their work and oversight of ministry.
- Regions will decide whether they (alone or in concert with other entities - II.C.3., footnote 12) will develop a Commissioned Minister Apprentice Track for Ordination. But all Regions will come under all of the other guidelines, prerequisites and implications of the "ordering document" on August 1, 2011.
- Regions will utilize the present nomenclature for clergy ("Licensed" instead of "Commissioned") until this policy takes effect on August 1, 2011.
Regions developing an Apprentice Track will submit their specific program design to the General Commission on Ministry for evaluation and feedback.

Regions (after the completed work of the GCOM’s Task Force to develop a template for the Apprentice Track program addressing the 16 competency areas) will determine how work done in previous Licensed Ministry Continuing Education applies to any of their present Licensed Ministers who either might be considered for grand-parenting in, or might be seeking the Apprentice Track for Ordination.

Regions will then review the status of each current Licensed minister to determine which category of Commissioned Minister is most appropriate for their designation.

The Region would revise as necessary any Regional policies to facilitate this transition.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT THE CURRENT PRACTICE?

~ All Licensed Ministers will become Commissioned Ministers in August of 2011.
  If they are serving with Standing, without intent of completing the required AT competencies, they will be designated Commissioned Ministers, not seeking ordination.
  If they are serving with Standing and working on accomplishing the Apprentice Track requirements they will be designated Commissioned Ministers, seeking ordination.
  If they are serving with Standing, and working toward the seminary requirements for ordination, they will be designated Commissioned Ministers, seeking ordination.
~ Candidates for ordination will be designated as AT if they are working on accomplishing the Apprentice Track requirements of the Region, and ST if they are working toward a Master of Divinity degree at an ATS accredited seminary.
~ Ordained Clergy will be designated Ordained (AT) or Ordained (ST).
~ Search Committees will have the appropriate designations clearly indicated on the clergy’s Ministerial Profile.

WHAT KIND OF PREPARATION HAS PRECEDED THIS RECOMMENDATION?

What you have before you is the composite outcome of six years of work. Literally thousands of man and woman hours of effort have culminated in the “ordering document” that is coming before you. This copy is Draft 11.1. Many drafts have preceded this one, none of which made their way to the General Board and then to the General Assembly. That should indicate some thing of the massive effort of research, study, writing, re-writing, prayer, deliberation and worshipful work that have gone into it.

In the last two meetings prior to the accomplishment of this final recommended draft, over 300 different pieces of feedback were received from laity, clergy (licensed and ordained), Regional ministry commissions, General church leadership and higher education bodies. Every single piece of feedback has been carefully considered, and for the most part incorporated into this final rewrite. Then your General Board gave it one last bit of careful scrutiny before sending forward to you, for the consideration of the General Assembly.

Still it is a living document which can, and likely will, be amended in future General Board and Assembly gatherings as new circumstances present the church in a changing time with new issues for consideration. But at the present time this comes to you as a gift - a labor incorporating the finest efforts of hundreds of people who love this church and care about its ministries.

Setting the stage for our work a special Theological Task Force compiled the data which is now reflected in Section One of the “Ordering Document.” Those who served on this Task Group included: Robert Welsh, chair; Carolyn Higginbotham, Newell Williams, Toni Bynum, John Imbler, Tom Jewell, Joyce Knauff, Janice Legg, Rick Spleth, and Carmelo Alvarez. Then the overarching compilation of the “ordering document” was assigned to and developed by the entire General Commission on Ministry comprised of Ben Bohren, Chair, Susanne Blix, Dani Loving Cartwright, Elsie Ferrer, Lari R. Grubbs, Timothy M. James, Saundra Michael-Bowers, Howard M. Ratcliff, Donggook “John” Roh, Don Shelton, Richard O. Sparrow. Sharon Watkins and Howard Bowers are ex-officio. Additional members of the General Commission on Ministry include the drafting team who had the primary task of writing: Richard Guentert, chair, Carolyn Higginbotham, Joyce Knauff, and Sotello Long - plus the chair of the GCOM, Ben Bohren, who met throughout with the draft team, as well.