



**THE MANUAL**  
**FOR THE**  
**ORDERING OF MINISTRY**

2011 Edition

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia  
1402 Washington Avenue  
Parkersburg, WV 26101

**CONTENTS**

<i>Procedures for Discernment, Commissioning, Ordination and Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia.....</i>	3
<i>Appendices and Forms.....</i>	13
<i>My Ministerial Code of Ethics.....</i>	29
<i>Guidelines for Review Concerning Ethical Misconduct.....</i>	33
<i>Glossary.....</i>	39
<i>Theological Foundations Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – 2009.....</i>	Attached



**PROCEDURES**  
**FOR**  
**DISCERNMENT, COMMISSIONING, ORDINATION,**  
**AND STANDING OF MINISTERS**  
**IN THE**  
**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**  
**IN**  
**WEST VIRGINIA**



Adopted: November 19, 2011 under the  
**“Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria  
for the Ordering of Ministry  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)”**  
which document is enclosed herewith.

*(Previous Versions given under “Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” dated January, 2007 and April 15, 1999)*



## I. Procedures toward Candidacy

- A. Persons who explore vocation in ministry through conversation with the Regional Minister shall be reported to the Commission on Ministry as “Aspirants.”
- B. Persons who desire to be accepted for candidacy in the Order of Ministry shall be members of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation within the Region, and preferably shall make application to the Region through the official board of that congregation to come under the care of the Commission on Ministry. However, the person may make direct application to the Region by a letter to the Regional Minister stating the same.
- C. Upon receipt of the application, the Commission on Ministry (herein “the Commission”) will begin the process of assessing the spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry according to the design of these documents. Those in this phase of their relationship with the Commission shall be accounted as “Under Care.”
- D. During the time in which a person is Under Care of the Commission, a Pastor-Preceptor shall be appointed, who shall work with them and with the Regional Minister to determine an appropriate approach to vocational fulfillment as described by the *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, and shall maintain adequate communications and schedule of meetings as is deemed necessary for the well-being of the prospective minister and the whole Church.
- E. A background check shall be performed according to the specifications of the Office of Search and Call on each person Under Care at the expense of the Region.
- F. For persons who are engaged in ministry in a Disciples congregation within the Region, a Provisional License for Commissioning may be requested from the Regional Minister, if deemed useful for ministry within that congregation, for the time of their engagement in that congregation.
- G. If it is agreed by the Commission and the person Under Care that they should pursue Commissioning or Ordination in fulfillment of their calling, given the provisions of *Theological Foundations...*, the prospective minister shall make application for candidacy and present a letter of affirmation for ministry from the Board or Elders of the congregation in which they hold membership (or in which they are practicing ministry). Upon approval of the application by the Commission and ratification by the Regional Board, the Region shall admit the applicant to candidacy for Commissioned or Ordained Ministry.

## **II. Procedures for Commissioning**

- A. The Candidate shall file with the Region a written statement which indicates:
  - 1. The reasons the Candidate desires to be commissioned,
  - 2. The Candidate's concept of God and the Christian faith,
  - 3. The Candidate's concept of the Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),
  - 4. The Candidate's commitment to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and
  - 5. The Candidate's concept of the ministry.
  
- B. The Candidate shall have sent to the Region letters from four reliable persons indicating their evaluation of the Candidate's character and fitness for ministry including their appraisal of the Candidate in light of the following qualities:
  - 1. Faith in Jesus Christ and a commitment to a life of Christian discipleship.
  - 2. A definite and informed decision to respond to God to serve in the Order of Ministry.
  - 3. Personally fit to meet the demands of the office.
  - 4. Maturity and standards of morality consonant with the Christian gospel.
  
- C. The Candidate shall provide all educational records and certifications of training and achievement.
  
- D. These materials shall be received and correlated by the Regional minister and presented to the Commission for its attention.
  
- E. The Candidate will appear as many times as deemed necessary before the Commission for the purpose of engaging in conversations about items of interest and importance to the ministry, including the written statement referenced above.
  
- F. When the Commission has made its decision on the application, the Candidate will be notified of the decision which will be made as a recommendation to the Regional Board.
  
- G. The action of the Regional Board shall be reported to the Candidate and sponsoring congregation(s) or church unit(s).
  
- H. Upon approval of the Candidate for Commissioning, a time will be arranged with the Candidate and the sponsoring congregation for a Service of Commissioning, to be presided over by the Regional Minister.

### **III. Procedures for Ordination**

Preparation for service in the Order of Ministry shall be in accordance with the *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

- A. The West Virginia Region requires that the following documentation shall be on file and that the described actions shall have occurred before it proceeds to ordain a Candidate to the Order of Ministry.
  1. The Congregation of the candidate's membership shall file a letter with the Region, which indicates its recommendation for Ordination.
  2. The congregation or unit of Church being served or to be served by the Candidate, if any, shall file a letter with the Region which indicates its recommendation and support for Ordination.
  3. The Candidate shall prepare and file with the Region an ordination paper which indicates:
    - a. An expression of the Candidate's call and commitment to the ministry and commitment to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
    - b. The Candidate's concept of God and the Christian faith.
    - c. The Candidate's concept of the Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
    - d. The Candidate's concept of the ministry.
  4. Other materials and/or assessments as requested by the Commission.
  5. The Candidate shall have sent to the Region letters from four reliable persons indicating their evaluation of the Candidate's character and fitness for ministry including their appraisal of the Candidate in light of the following qualities:
    - a. Faith in Jesus Christ and a commitment to a life of Christian discipleship.
    - b. A definite and informed decision to respond to God to serve in the Order of Ministry.
    - c. Personally fit to meet the demands of the office.
    - d. Maturity and standards of morality consonant with the Christian gospel.
  6. The Candidate shall provide records of training and achievement from colleges and seminaries attended.
  7. The Candidate shall provide a record of practical experience in the service of God.

8. The Candidate shall provide a completed Ministerial Profile through the Office of Search and Call.
  9. The Candidate shall provide a manuscript or a voice or video recording of a sermon delivered before a congregation.
- B. These and other pertinent materials and information shall be received and correlated by the Regional Minister and presented to the Commission for its consideration.
  - C. The Candidate shall be interviewed at least one time and as many times as deemed necessary by the Commission.
  - D. After the Commission has made its decision on the application, the Candidate will be notified of the decision which will be made as a recommendation to the Regional Board.
  - E. The action of the Regional Board shall be reported to the Candidate and sponsoring congregation(s) or church unit(s).
  - F. Upon approval of the Candidate's application for ordination, the Region will arrange with the sponsoring congregation(s) an appropriate service of ordination at a time when representatives from beyond the congregation can attend, and at a time when the Regional Minister and representatives of the Commission can participate in the service.

#### **IV. Procedures for Considering Standing of Clergy Ordained in Other Denominations**

- A. Ministers of other denominations who seek recognition of their ordination and standing must meet the same standards of preparation and fitness as ministers who are members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They must seek admission to the Order of Ministry through the processes and according to the standards that are specified in *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This will normally include a graduate degree from an accredited theological seminary or institution of higher education, endorsement by the Commission, and sponsorship by the Disciples congregation in which they hold membership.
- B. Ordained ministers of other denominations seeking standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) must:
  1. Read and understand *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, and
  2. Schedule an interview with the Regional Minister. Candidates for transfer of standing must understand that issues of confidentiality

are balanced with concern for collegiality, and data disclosed in this interview may be shared appropriately with the Commission. The content of this interview will include an exploration of motive, need, realistic opportunities for service in a Disciples ministry setting, relationships with judicatory officials in the present denomination, differences of theology, ecclesiology, and methodology in ministry, and any other question or recommendation considered appropriate by the Regional Minister.

- C. Candidates for transfer of standing shall submit a statement of understanding of ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Commission. This statement shall include a description of:
1. The pilgrimage of faith that has resulted in the request for standing among the Disciples,
  2. The candidate's concept of the church,
  3. The nature of the ministry, and
  4. The role and authority of ministers.
  5. The statement should reveal the candidates understanding of Disciples polity, structure, and conception of ministry.
- D. Candidates shall provide documentation of their ordination, a completed Ministerial Profile, official transcripts from institutions of higher education which they have attended, letters of reference from clergy and laity who have observed their ministries, and evidence that they are ministers currently in good standing in their present denomination. Contact and references will be sought from the Candidate's present denomination before standing is approved.
- E. Candidates shall be assigned to an ordained Disciples minister with standing who will offer counsel, support, and guidance during this period of transition between denominations. The evaluation of this Pastor Preceptor shall become part of the data used in determining the Candidate's progress and fitness for ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- F. During a period of at least eighteen months, the Candidate will follow the course of preparation prescribed by the Commission of Ministry, which will include suggested readings reflective of the Areas of Competency, particularly as it concerns Disciples history and polity, interviews with Disciples leaders, and participation in church activities including assemblies, workshops, courses, retreats, etc.
- G. The Search and Call system of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) assigns to congregations the right and responsibility to select their own ministers in accordance with the *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. While the Regional Minister provides consultation and assistance in every way possible, the selection of a pastor is the prerogative of the congregation. However, a call by a

congregation does not, in and of itself, assure recognition of standing nor admission to the Order of Ministry since this function is the prerogative of the Region.

- H. Temporary recognition of the ordination of a minister with standing in another denomination may be granted for not more than two years, to allow the minister to complete the process for full recognition and standing.
- I. Following self-examination, the initial interview with the Regional Minister, and interview with the Commission on Ministry, and a period of directed study and formation, there will be additional interviews with the Commission on Ministry. The progress of the candidate will be evaluated and a recommendation for a granting of standing may be considered.
- J. Upon recommendation by the Commission on Ministry, standing may be granted by the Regional Board. A certificate of Ministerial Recognition shall be presented at a worship celebration.

#### **V. Procedures for Interviewing Candidates**

Interviews are intended to provide opportunities to clarify procedures, to secure appropriate information, to gain insight into the thought and Christian convictions of the persons interviewed, and to discern specific directions for guidance, counsel, and disposition of situations at hand.

- A. Candidates shall meet with the Commission when requested. Arrangements will be made for mutually agreeable times and locations.
- B. The Commission will seek to provide a caring atmosphere for interviews in order that a fruitful conversation may take place among all involved.
- C. The Commission will seek to become acquainted with the Candidate's background, commitment and attitudes in ways that the Candidate will be able to articulate experiences, convictions, and questions as easily and freely as possible.
- D. The Commission will make clear the total process of Candidacy for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- E. The Candidate will be afforded the opportunity to raise any questions he or she may have for the commission.
- F. The interview will be long enough to accomplish its purposes and brief enough to avoid repetition

## **VI. Procedures for Review of Standing in the Order of Ministry**

- A. There will be an annual review of the standing of all ministers in the Order of Ministry.
- B. The review of standing will be made on the basis of *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.
- C. Only ministers who complete and return the proper forms as requested by the Region will be considered for standing in the Order of Ministry



## Appendices

### Table of Contents

Page 15	Appendix A: Letter of Application to be a Candidate for the Order of Ministry
Page 17	Appendix B: Personal Information for those Under Care
Page 19	Appendix C: Progress Report Toward Candidacy
Page 21	Appendix D: Progress Report of a Candidate for Ordination
Page 23	Appendix E: Progress Report of a Candidate for Commissioned Ministry
Page 25	Appendix F: “Seminary Degree or its Equivalent”
Page 27	Appendix G: Application for Recognition of Ordination and Standing in the Order of Ministry
Page 29	<i>My Ministerial Code of Ethics</i>
Page 33	<i>Guidelines for Review Concerning Ethical Misconduct</i>
Page 39	Glossary



Appendix A

**Letter of Application to be a Candidate for the  
ORDER OF MINISTRY**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia  
1402 Washington Avenue  
Parkersburg, West Virginia 26101

To: The Commission on Ministry

Greetings! Reaffirming my confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and Savior of the world, and convinced that all who make confession are called to be servants of Christ in the world, and recognizing the possibility that I may have a further vocation to pursue the office of Commissioned or Ordained Minister, I am announcing my intention to fulfill the requirements for entrance into the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

I agree to participate in the process described in *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and *Procedures for Discernment, Commissioning, Ordination and Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia*.

---

*Date*

---

*Signature*



Appendix B

**Personal Information from those Under Care**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia  
1402 Washington Avenue, Parkersburg, West Virginia 26101

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M F  
Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Work/School Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Congregational Membership: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Year Completed \_\_\_\_\_  
College \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Degree and Year \_\_\_\_\_  
Seminary \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Year / Anticipated Year of Completion \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Current Employment or Educational Institutional \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ Children  
Name(s) Age (s)  
Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use  
Date Received \_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate for:  
Commissioning \_\_\_\_\_  
Ordination \_\_\_\_\_  
Transfer \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix C

**Progress Report Toward Candidacy**

Commission on Ministry

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia

*To the Applicant for Ministry:*

*This form is provided to assist you in recording the various steps taken in your candidacy as they are completed. A copy of this form will be placed in your file and the Regional Minister will indicate when each of the assignments is received in the Regional Office.*

**Date Completed**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Initial interview or correspondence with the Regional Minister.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Filing of a "Letter of Application to be a Candidate" (cf. App. A) and "Personal Information for those Under Care" (cf. App. B) with the Regional Minister.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Initial interview with Commission on Ministry.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Appointment of a Pastor-Preceptor by the Commission.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Additional interview(s) with Commission  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Completion of background check.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Other materials or assessments as required by the Commission:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Letter of support from the congregational board of the church of membership.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Letter of support from congregation or church unit being served if applicable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Recommendation of Commission on Ministry for Candidacy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Admitted to Candidacy by the Regional Board.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Notification by Region to the Candidate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Notification by the Region to Candidate's church of membership.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Notification by the Region to other appropriate Regions.

Appendix D

**Progress Report of a Candidate for Ordination**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Received:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Admission to Candidacy by the Regional Board
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Letter from the congregation in which the Candidate holds membership indicating its recognition and support for ordination.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Interviews
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Reports from Pastor-Preceptor
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Assessments as required:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Ordination Paper
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Sermon
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Transcripts from all institutions of higher learning
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Other Materials as required:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Completion of seminary degree or equivalent  
*Attach assessment tool concerning 16 Areas of Competency*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. 4 Letters of Recommendation: 1.\_\_\_\_ 2.\_\_\_\_ 3.\_\_\_\_ 4.\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Commission on Ministry recommendation for Ordination
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Regional Board approval of Ordination
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Ordination Date



Appendix E

**Progress Report for a Candidate for Commissioned Ministry**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Received:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Admission to Candidacy by the Regional Board
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Letter from the congregation in which the Candidate holds membership indicating its recognition and support for ordination.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Interviews
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Reports from Pastor-Preceptor
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Assessments as required:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Written Statement
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Other Materials as required:
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Educational records and certifications of training or achievement
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Attach assessment tool for "16 Areas of Competency" as described in the Ordering Document.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. 4 Letters of Recommendation: 1.\_\_\_\_ 2.\_\_\_\_ 3.\_\_\_\_ 4.\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Commission on Ministry recommendation for Commissioning
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Regional Board approval of Commissioning
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Commissioning Date



## Appendix F

### “Seminary Degree or Its Equivalent”

The West Virginia Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands the phrase “seminary degree or its equivalent” to include the following characteristics:

1. Having earned a bachelor’s degree from a recognized and accredited college.
2. Having qualified and served at least five years as a commissioned minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
3. Having served a congregation successfully for a period of not less than five years with the evidence of ability and personal progress in ministerial skills.
4. Having a good record of attendance at regular continuing education experiences in the areas of competency described in *Theological Foundations...* (such as workshops for ministers, pastor’s schools, minister’s retreats), and attendance at Regional and General Assemblies.
5. Exhibiting evidence of regular reading of professional journals.



**Appendix G**

**Application for Recognition of Ordination and Standing  
in the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
by a Person Ordained in Another Tradition**

Name of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Church by Whom Ordained: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Ordination: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Ordination: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Congregation of Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ministry Settings served in Your Present Denomination**

Ministry Setting	Position Held	City and State	Beginning (Mo, Yr)	Ending (Mo, Yr)

List other significant activities and organizations (community and Church) in which you have participated in recent years: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

References: List names and addresses of five people who know you well, who have recent knowledge of your work, and from whom a reference may be secured. Include ministers, lay persons, seminary faculty, and the officer in your present denomination who has oversight of your ministry.

	Name	Address	Position
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**MY  
MINISTERIAL  
CODE  
OF  
ETHICS**

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

## **FORWARD**

In 1944 a ministerial code of ethics for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was published by the Division of Homeland Ministries. That code was developed over a period of several years through the efforts of a widely diverse church-wide committee. It was reviewed and refined as dozens of ministers' associations and fellowships and hundreds of individuals responded to the committee's request for evaluation of the document.

The code of ethics has been periodically reviewed by a general committee. Occasionally, editorial changes have been made. The General Commission on the Ministry and its predecessor, the General Task Force on Ministry, have worked over the past several years with the Center for Leadership and Ministry, Homeland Ministries, to update the code of ethics. Proposed changes have been reviewed by the regional commission on ministry as well as by many individuals.

The revised code of ethics maintains much of the language of the original; the principles which guide ministry must remain from generation to generation. The ministerial code of ethics has withstood the test of time and is commended to be read and followed by all ministers as a high code of professional conduct.

*General Commission on Ministry*

## **CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) 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 an ordained or commissioned 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.
- dedication 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 which I incur
- keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and other abusive behaviors
- using my position, power, and authority in non-exploitive ways
- maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behavior
- regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister impartially

### **Relationship 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 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

- honoring all confidences which come to me in my role as minister and refraining from gossip
- encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and cooperating with the Region in the periodic review of my ministerial standing
- seeking the counsel of the Regional Minister should divisive tension threaten my relationship with those I serve

### **Relationship 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 invitation of the pastor of that congregation
- supporting and at no time speaking maliciously of the ministry of my predecessor, successor, or another minister in the congregation in which I hold membership
- 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

### **Relationship 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, working toward a just and morally responsible society
- participating faithfully in the life and work of all manifestations 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 one Church of Jesus Christ and participating in activities which strengthen its unity, witness, and mission

**GUIDELINES**

**FOR THE**

**REVIEW**

**OF**

**QUESTIONS**

**CONCERNING**

**ETHICAL MISCONDUCT**

**BY ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED MINISTERS**

**OF THE**

**CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

**IN**

**WEST VIRGINIA**

**GUIDELINES  
FOR THE REVIEW OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING  
ETHICAL MISCONDUCT  
BY ORDAINED AND COMMISSIONED MINISTERS  
OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
IN WEST VIRGINIA**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

There are many situations within the life of the church that can lead to occasions for the abuse/harassment, misconduct, violations of confidentiality and trust on the part of Clergy. The church in all of its manifestations must try faithfully to minister to those individuals and congregations that find themselves in a potentially harmful situation.

The purpose of this document is to provide the Clergy, their congregations, and the Region a consistent way of reviewing their unethical behavior within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia.

With the acceptance of this document as a policy of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia, the Regional Board establishes and grants power to the Commission on Ministry to implement this policy.

**II. AUTHORITY AND ORGANIZATION**

The Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia shall appoint a Committee on Ethics comprised of five members and the Regional Minister as ex-officio member without vote. The chairperson of the Commission shall also serve as Chair of the Committee. At least two members shall be from the Commission. The other members may be appointed at-large. The make-up of the committee should reflect the demographic of the Region and the Order of Ministry. Members of the Committee will serve terms of two years with no more than four continuous years of service on the Committee.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

**CLERGY** – refers to all ordained and commissioned ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in West Virginia.

**COMPLAINT** – refers to a written allegation of misconduct requesting action, as opposed to a verbal or informal expression of concern.

**STANDING** – refers to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the Order of Ministry including access to the relocation system, voting at General Assemblies, and listing in the Yearbook and directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT** – occurs when clergy take advantage of persons in vulnerable situations or relationships. It includes but is not limited to overt or covert sexual advances, contact, or activity; mental abuse (risqué jokes, innuendos, unacceptable visual contact, solicitous or seductive behavior, insults or verbal intimidations) and physical abuse (fondling, genital contact, unwelcome hugs and kisses, assault, molestation, exploitation).

**VIOLATION OF TRUST/CONFIDENTIALITY** – occurs when clergy knowingly or willfully divulge information either publicly or privately that was initially shared with them confidentially as clergypersons. The exception shall be when clergypersons, to the best of their professional opinion, believe that physical harm would result in their failure to divulge this confidential information.

**MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS** – occurs when clergy knowingly or willfully use or misuse congregational funds in an inappropriate or unintended manner.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES**

##### Initiating a Complaint

When a written complaint is brought by an aggrieved person, it shall be the responsibility of any of those named below to bring the Complaint to the attention of the Regional Minister.

The five sources for Complaints are:

1. Pastoral Relations committees
2. Chair/Moderator of the Board
3. Chair of the Elders
4. The Aggrieved
5. The Counsel of the Aggrieved

When the written complaint is received by the Region from any of the above named, the Regional Minister shall log all conversations concerning the Complaint and make an initial pastoral investigation of the Complaint. This pastoral investigation shall be simply to acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and to inform the accused and the aggrieved of the process to be used in the investigation. The Regional Minister shall inform the Chair of the Commission on Ministry of the charge and request that an informal hearing be held on the matter, and provide the Chair with a confidential written report.

In the event that charges are brought against the Regional Minister or for some reason he or she should be excused from his or her regular responsibilities in the case of the lodging of a Complaint the Chairperson of the Commission on Ministry shall appoint another person to perform only the specific responsibilities related to the misconduct proceeding which are normally assigned to the Regional Minister.

### Informal Hearing

An informal hearing shall be held within two weeks of the receipt of the documents concerning the Complaint. Three of the five members of the Commission on Ethics shall be required for an informal hearing. The accused and the aggrieved shall be notified of the time and date of the hearing. The possible results of the informal hearing are.

1. Recommendation of a formal hearing
2. Recommendation that the aggrieved drop the Complaint
3. Pursue the Complaint at the request of the aggrieved or if the accused believes the charge has no merit a formal hearing may be requested that his/her innocence may be upheld.

### Formal Hearing

If there is to be a formal hearing concerning the Complaint, the Regional Minister shall meet with the accused, the aggrieved, and with the leadership of the congregation to inform each of the process and assure them of the Region's concern.

A formal hearing shall be held within (30) days of the informal hearing with all parties being notified of the time, date, and place. The Committee on Ethics shall request the accused to prepare a written response to the Complaint. Four of the five members of the Committee on Ethics shall be required to conduct a formal hearing.

The Complaint and response shall be sent to both the aggrieved and the accused. The Committee will seek to determine if this is a single complaint or whether others have been allegedly injured by the accused and in what way.

If the accused desires he/she may seek the use of an advocate, at no cost to the Region.

The Committee on Ethics may interview such witnesses as it requires, including those suggested by the accused and the aggrieved. The committee may receive from them written or other documentation. After all the witnesses have been heard, the Committee shall prepare a Summary Report which shall include copies of the Regional Minister's log, the Complaint and the Response, summation of statements by witnesses, disposition of the Complaint, and a clear statement of the outcome of the proceedings.

As a result of a formal hearing, the following actions are possible:

**EXONERATION** – A public statement may be issued by the Commission on Ministry if the accused so chooses.

**EDUCATIVE ADVISORY** – The findings show not necessarily unethical behavior but poor professional judgment which can be corrected by clear guidance. This action shall be handled confidentially between the Committee on Ethics and the accused.

**EDUCATIVE WARNING** – The findings indicate unquestionable inappropriate and unwise behavior, but not necessarily unethical behavior (misconduct), for which a warning will be issued for the cessation of the behavior. This action shall be handled confidentially between the Committee on Ethics and the accused.

**THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION** – The findings indicate the need for a plan of growth and development through professional intervention with a final disposition at the conclusion of the therapy. To enter a program of therapeutic intervention, the accused shall agree to allow the Committee on Ethics access to the professional evaluation and progress of the therapy.

**CENSURE** – The findings warrant an official admonishment or warning concerning unethical behavior in writing that the clergy has engaged in unethical conduct. A proposal for remedial action shall accompany a censure. Relocation forms may be circulated during this time. In addition to the written censure being included in the clergy's permanent file, any summary of remedial experiences may be placed in the file by the clergy.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING** – The findings result in the withdrawal of standing for a specific period during which corrective action can occur. While suspended, the minister cannot function as a member of the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The action to suspend will be reported to the accused, the congregation and to Disciples Home Missions.

## **V. APPEALS AND FOLLOW-UP**

An appeal by either party will proceed from the Committee on Ethics to the Commission on Ministry and then to the Regional Board for a decision. In case of further appeal of the decision, the Committee shall proceed according to the *Theological Foundations, Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*.

Situations involving the abuse of the pastoral office are difficult, painful, and stress-producing experiences for all involved. The Regional Minister shall continue to give pastoral oversight and be a support to all those involved. In the event that the clergy

leaves the congregation a minister with specialized skills for such cases shall be sought to care for the congregation and attend to the matters of healing.

In the event that the clergy does not leave the congregation, it is recommended that the Elders, and/or Pastoral Relations Committee, in conjunction with the Pastor and Regional Minister arrange a “plan of nurture” dealing with the ramifications of the painful experience.

Revised 04/05/11

## GLOSSARY

**Apprentice Track** refers to the process through which a Commissioned Minister may work toward Ordination over a prolonged period of time through specialized study, rather than completing a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree in preparation for Ordained Ministry.

**Aspirant** is a person who is in conversation with the Regional Minister, exploring the possibility of following their vocation toward professional ministry.

**Candidacy** is the period during which a person seeking Ordination or Commissioning completes their preparation for being received into the Order of Ministry.

**Clergy** refers to persons who serve in professional forms of ministry with standing.

**Commission on Ministry** is the body of person appointed to give care and oversight to persons in all stages of ministry.

**Commissioned Minister** is a person who has been called, trained, and set apart by the Church for a specific ministry. A Commissioned Minister generally works within a given region for service as a pastor or specialized minister within a specific congregation or institution. When the relationship of the minister with the calling body comes to an end, the commission ends. The access of a Commissioned Minister to openings for placement in other regions must be carried out by direct contact between the Regional Ministers.

**Commissioning** is the rite in which a person is set apart for service as a Commissioned Minister. The term is also appropriately used in the church to refer to other acts of “sending for a purpose,” such as the deployment of missionaries and other persons who embody the gospel.

**Laity** refers to all persons who receive the grace of Christian Baptism.

**Order of Ministry** is the body of ministers who are in good standing with the Regional Church.

**Ordinand** is a person whose Candidacy has been completed and is awaiting the celebration of the church’s Rite of Ordination.

**Ordination** is the sacramental act in which a person is set apart for ministry of Word and Sacrament for the whole Church. This is accomplished during a festive celebration of the Regional Church in which the Regional Minister, other ministers, and elders offer prayers for the Ordinand with the laying-on of hands.

**Ordained Minister** is a person who has been called, trained, and set apart through ordination by the Church for ministry to the whole Church. The educational training of an Ordained Minister has usually been the completion of a Masters of Divinity degree (or its equivalent).

**Seminary Track** is the normative path of preparation for Ordained Ministry. This process generally refers to completing the Masters of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary as a portion of the fulfillment of requirements for Ordination.

**Standing** refers to the status of an Ordained or Commissioned Minister with the judicatory body to which he or she relates (for Disciples, it is the Regional Church). A minister must annually apply for standing in our tradition, and maintain communications with the Regional Church concerning their ministry, including continuing education and other needs for effective service.

**Under Care** is the term used to describe a person who has been received by the Commission on Ministry for ongoing nurture during the process of preparation for ministry.

**Vocation** simply refers to “calling.” All persons receive a vocation toward faithful Christian living through their Baptism. Some are called to special fields of service in the life of the Church through pastoral and other forms of professional ministry. Vocational fulfillment of Christian believers, in any walk of life, is key to the Church’s success in “building up the body of Christ” as described in Ephesians 4. Encouraging the vocations of God’s people should be a primary focus for every congregation.