

2
3 Handbook for
4
5 Candidates
6 Standing
7 Commissioning
8 Ordination
9



10
11 Northern Lights Region
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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13 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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16

17 **Table of Contents**

18 SECTION I. Introduction..... 3

19 SECTION II. Called to Ministry 3

20 Commissioned Ministry 4

21 Ordained Ministry 4

22 Order of Ministry Map..... 5

23 Additional Qualifications..... 5

24 SECTION III. Commissioned Ministry 5

25 Common Criteria of Commissioned Ministry:..... 5

26 SECTION IV. Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination)..... 6

27 Outline of Process: 6

28 SECTION V. Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination)..... 8

29 Outline of Process 8

30 SECTION VI. Ordained Ministry..... 9

31 Apprentice Track..... 9

32 Seminary Track..... 9

33 Outline of Process 9

34 SECTION VII. Ministerial Standing 12

35 Requirements for Ongoing Standing in the Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

36 12

37 United Church of Christ Ministers Seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the

38 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)..... 13

39 Persons Ordained in Other Denominations seeking Standing 14

40 Reinstatement of Standing 16

41 SECTION VII. Appendix.....18

42

43 SECTION I. Introduction

44

45 Preamble: “Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church
46 (Disciples of Christ) is identifiable by its testimony, tradition, name,
47 institutions and relationships. Across national boundaries, this church
48 expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations, Regions, and
49 General ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by
50 God’s covenant of love.

51

52 Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority,
53 rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal
54 manner, to the end that all expressions will seek God’s will and be faithful to
55 God’s mission.” – from paragraph 2 of The Design of the Christian Church
56 (Disciples of Christ), revised. 2005.

57

58 The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God. By virtue of baptism, we are
59 each called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community. Within the Christian
60 Church (Disciples of Christ) we look to the words of I Peter to remind us that in Christ, we
61 are each members of “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God’s own
62 possession.”

63

64 Within the wider body of the faithful however, we have also recognized that some are
65 called to particular orders and forms of ministry. This handbook is designed to be a
66 resource for those who are seeking Commissioning or Ordination within the Christian
67 Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region.

68

69 It is intended to be used alongside the Theological Foundations for the Ordering of
70 Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). General understandings of
71 particular orders of ministry are described within the foundations document. Specific
72 procedures and requirements for the Northern Lights Region are detailed in this
73 handbook.

74

75 SECTION II. Called to Ministry

76

77 Within the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) there are two
78 recognized classifications of ministry: commissioned (formerly licensed) and
79 ordained.

80

81 Commissioned Ministry

82 **Commissioned Ministry** refers to non-ordained ministers who are
83 authorized by the Regional Commission on Ministry to offer ministry in a
84 particular place for a specified period of time.

85
86 There are two categories of commissioned ministers: **not seeking**
87 **ordination** and **seeking ordination**. Commissioned ministers are granted
88 standing within the region they are serving only for as long as they are
89 serving in that particular place and ministry.

90
91 Standing is not automatically transferred when moving to another region.
92 Commissioned ministers are not automatically given access to the Search and
93 Call system beyond the region in which they are serving.

94

95 Ordained Ministry

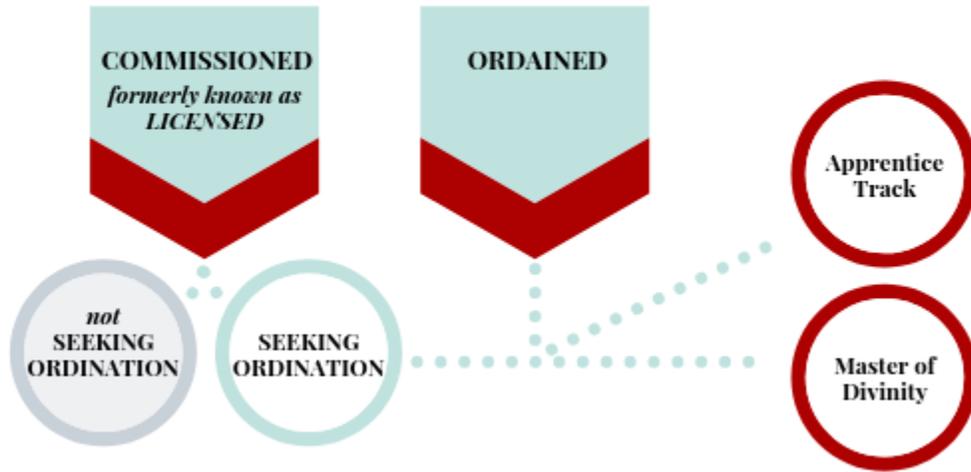
96 **Ordained Ministry** refers to those whom the Church has confirmed through
97 prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands through the act of
98 ordination. “Ordination is a rite of the Church Universal. While ordination is
99 normally done by a particular denomination, and standing is limited to a
100 particular communion, the intention is that no one is ever ordained into a
101 particular denomination or tradition, certainly not into the Christian Church
102 (Disciples of Christ). Those ordained are representative ministers of the
103 Church Universal: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” (See, Theological
104 Foundations).

105
106 There are two paths to ordination: the apprentice track and the seminary
107 track. Ordained ministers are granted standing within the region they are
108 serving as long as they maintain the requirements for standing. Standing is
109 transferred when moving to another region, although regions require
110 documentation of standing from the prior region. Ordained ministers with
111 standing have full access to the Search and Call System.

112
113 An outline of the relationship between the categories of ministry is included
114 below and the steps required for each category of ministry are described in
115 detail in the following pages.

116

Called to MINISTRY



118

119 Additional Qualifications

120 All candidates for ministry, whether commissioned or ordained, will be
 121 expected to demonstrate evidence of the Personal Qualifications for Ministry.
 122 All candidates for ordination, whether apprentice or seminary will be
 123 required to demonstrate proficiency in the *16 Ministerial Areas of Practice*.

124
 125 The sexual orientation of candidates will not be a barrier to ordination or
 126 commissioning.

127
128

129 SECTION III. Commissioned Ministry

130 Common Criteria of Commissioned Ministry:

131 In order to be a commissioned minister persons must:

- 132 A. Be baptized members of a Disciples congregation in the commissioning
- 133 region and serving in a congregationally, regionally or generally recognized
- 134 call;

- 135 B. Be recommended for commissioning by a recognized congregation or
 136 congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one
 137 in which his/her membership is held;
 138 C. Meet with the Regional Commission for an interview and review of a).
 139 Ministerial Areas of Practice b). and documents submitted.
 140 D. Comply with any other expectations of the region.” (see Theological
 141 Foundations Document)
 142

143 **SECTION IV. Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination)**

144 **Outline of Process:**

145 A. Gather documents and submit to the regional office:

- 146 1. A letter from the candidate to the regional minister requesting
 147 commissioning, including situation and need.
 148 2. Official transcripts from all post-high-school education and a resume or
 149 curriculum vita, outlining work experience
 150 3. Completion of In-Care Request Form. Electronically available online:
 151 <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/in-care-request-form/>
 152 4. Submit letters of recommendations from:
 153 a. Minister of congregation in which he/she holds membership (or
 154 moderator/board chairperson if candidate is serving as minister),
 155 including description of need and situation for which commissioning
 156 is required.
 157 b. Minister/moderator of congregation served (if different from above)
 158 including description of need and situation for which commissioning
 159 is required.
 160 c. Two additional letters of recommendation from persons familiar with
 161 the candidate’s ministry.
 162 5. A “Spiritual Autobiography” of no more than three (3) pages.
 163 6. A Written paragraph on each of first nine (9) *Personal Qualifications for*
 164 *Ministry* indicating how these qualifications are manifest in the life and
 165 practice of the candidate.

166 B. **Initial Meeting** with the Commission on Ministry.

167 The COM will review documents presented, interview the candidate, explore
 168 the candidate’s gifts and abilities, and determine whether to continue the
 169 commissioning process.

170
 171 When a candidate is of a cultural or racial minority – the commission will
 172 consult with appropriate national pastoral leadership and/or leaders of racial
 173 / ethnic communities
 174

175 Some questions to be considered:

176 1. **Does the ministry in which this candidate is engaged require**
177 **commissioning?** Within the Disciples we recognize and value the
178 priesthood of all believers and expect that all Christians are engaged in
179 some kind of ministry.

180
181 **Therefore, does this ministry require formal recognition and**
182 **standing?** Some examples of situations in which the answer would be yes
183 might be: serving as an interim or settled bi-vocational pastor to one of
184 our congregations, serving on staff in a recognized congregation in a
185 ministerial role, serving as a chaplain or pastoral care specialist that
186 requires denominational recognition as a condition of employment.

187
188 2. **Does the candidate show evidence of possessing the Personal**
189 **Qualifications for Ministry including the skills and abilities to**
190 **perform ministry?** Not having these does not necessarily preclude
191 Commissioning, but may require additional training, education, or
192 assessment.

193
194 3. **Does the candidate have a sponsoring congregation that agrees that**
195 **Commissioning is required to perform the ministry?**

196
197 C. If decision is to continue, the candidate will be considered to be “under care”
198 with the commission and the commission will outline next steps to include the
199 following:

200 1. Completion of Ministerial Profile **including required background check**
201 2. Anti-Racism and Boundary training as outlined in regional requirements
202 for maintaining Standing.
203 3. Participate in a designated period time, mentoring with an established
204 minister with standing within the region. The Mentor will be assigned by
205 the Commission on Ministry.
206 4. Other requirements may include additional courses of study and/or
207 psychological and vocational evaluation or other steps deemed necessary.

208
209 D. **Second meeting** with Commission on Ministry at which point the
210 commission may do one of the following:

211 1. Determine to commission the candidate
212 2. Determine commissioning is not appropriate at this time
213 3. Decide to continue the candidate in a period of study and mentoring and
214 schedule a next interview at a later date.

- 215
216 E. If commissioned, the candidate will be notified. A certificate will be issued
217 with the request that it be presented by the regional minister or a
218 representative of the region during a commissioning service in the
219 congregation. The commissioned minister will be granted ministerial
220 standing in the region and will be conveyed to the office of search and call of
221 the denomination.
222
223 F. An annual review is required for renewal of commission.
224

225 SECTION V. Commissioned Minister (Seeking Ordination)

226 Outline of Process

- 227 A. Gather documents and submit to regional office as listed in Section IV.
228 Commissioned Minister (Not Seeking Ordination)
- 229 B. In addition, include letter requesting candidacy for ordination and describe
230 how candidate intends to fulfill the competency requirements for the *16*
231 *Ministerial Areas of Practice* either through pursuing a Master of Divinity
232 degree at an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary or
233 through the apprentice track to ordination. If through the apprentice track,
234 please include extenuating reasons why pursuing an M. Div. is not feasible or
235 practical.
- 236 C. Initial Meeting with the Commission on Ministry. The commission will
237 determine whether to continue the commissioning process and which track
238 to ordination (M. Div. or apprentice) is most appropriate. The commission
239 will consult with the appropriate national pastor/leader of racial/ethnic
240 communities when considering persons from an unrepresented cultural,
241 ethnic or racial group.
- 242 D. If the decision is made to continue, an in-care team will be assigned and the
243 process will be followed as laid out in the ordained ministry section of the
244 handbook.
- 245 E. The in-care team will also be responsible for developing an individual plan to
246 continue preparations for commissioned ministry while moving forward in
247 the ordination process.
- 248 F. A second meeting with the Commission on Ministry will be held to determine
249 commissioning and to evaluate progress towards ordination.
- 250 G. If commissioned, the candidate will be notified. A certificate will be issued
251 with the request that it be presented by the regional minister or a
252 representative of the region during a commissioning service in the
253 congregation. The commissioned minister will be granted ministerial
254 standing in the region and that will be conveyed to the Office of Search and
255 Call of the denomination.
- 256 H. An annual review is required for renewal of commission.
257

258 **NOTE: A Handbook for Working with Ordination Candidates**, will be helpful in
259 assessing the appropriate track for ordination.

260

261 SECTION VI. Ordained Ministry

262 “By ordination, the church recognizes the work of the Holy Spirit in calling particular
263 persons to creative and imaginative servanthood in Christ; accepts their ministry in and
264 for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for the whole body of Christ;
265 covenants to undergird the ministry; and grants authority to perform that ministry as a
266 representative of the church. Ordained ministers are baptized members of a Disciples
267 congregation. In accepting ordination, the minister covenants to obey God by caring for
268 the church, offering gifts of mind, body and spirit to that service agreeing to fulfill the
269 functions of a minister, and adhering to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian
270 Church (Disciples of Christ)” (see Theological Foundations Document).

271

272 There are two educational tracks in preparation for ordination:

273

274 **Apprentice Track**

275 The candidate will demonstrate competency in the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice
276 by completing a program outlined by the Commission on Ministry and will include
277 at least 250 contact hours of study.

278

279 **Seminary Track**

280 The candidate will demonstrate competency in the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice
281 by securing a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent from a theological school
282 accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and
283 Canada or its equivalent.

284

285 *Candidates for ordination are expected to follow the seminary track unless the*
286 *Commission on Ministry, in consultation with the candidate, determines that economic,*
287 *linguistic, vocational or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more*
288 *appropriate.*

289

290 **Outline of Process**

291 Both apprentice and seminary track candidates use the same process.

292 A. Gather documents and submit to the regional office:

293 1. Letter from candidate to regional minister requesting consideration for
294 ordination including brief description of history and sense of call to
295 ministry. If requesting to follow the apprentice track, include reasons
296 why the apprentice track would be most appropriate including

- 297 limitations that would prevent the candidate from pursuing a Master of
298 Divinity degree.
- 299 2. Official transcripts from all post-high-school education and resume
300 outlining work experience.
 - 301 3. Completion of the In-Care Request Form found online at
302 <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/in-care-request-form/>
 - 303 4. Letters of recommendations from:
 - 304 a. Minister of congregation in which he/she holds membership (or
305 moderator/board chairperson if candidate is serving as minister)
 - 306 b. Moderator/board chairperson supporting consideration for
307 ordination.
 - 308 c. Two additional letters of recommendation from persons familiar with
309 the candidate's ministry.
 - 310 5. A "Spiritual Autobiography" no more than three (3) pages.
 - 311 6. Written paragraph on each of **first nine (9) Personal Qualifications for**
312 **Ministry** indicating how these qualifications are manifest in the life and
313 practice of the candidate.
- 314
- 315 B. **Initial Meeting** with the Commission on Ministry: The commission will
316 determine whether to accept candidate "under care" and to develop a
317 timeline/process for completing ordination requirements. The commission
318 will also, in conversation with the candidate, determine the appropriate track
319 towards ordination. The commission will consult with the appropriate
320 national pastor/leader of racial/ethnic communities when considering
321 persons from an unrepresented cultural, ethnic or racial group.
- 322
- 323 C. **Formation of In-Care Committee:** The Commission on Ministry will appoint
324 an in-care committee to walk with the candidate during the ordination
325 process. The in-care committee will be comprised of
- 326 1. a member of the Commission on Ministry who will serve as chairperson
327 of the committee
 - 328 2. a second member of the Commission on Ministry if possible.
 - 329 3. a mentor assigned by the Commission on Ministry. Usually this person
330 will be the pastor of the sponsoring congregation but another mentor
331 may be appointed if circumstances dictate.
 - 332 4. two elders from the sponsoring congregation
 - 333 5. one elder from another Disciples congregation
 - 334 6. additional members may be included at the request of the commission or
335 the candidate. (i.e. ecumenical representative, seminary or theological
336 school professor, etc.)
 - 337 7. regional minister (ex-officio)
- 338
- 339 D. The in-care committee will meet with the candidate to review *the 16*
340 *Ministerial Areas of Practice and Personal Qualifications for Ministry* and
341 develop an Individualized Educational and Formational Plan to meet the
342 competency requirements for each area. **A Handbook for Working with**

343 **Ordination Candidates** will be helpful in assessing the appropriate track for
344 ordination.

345
346 Generally, the in-care committee will meet twice a year with the candidate
347 and the mentor will meet monthly with the candidate to provide ongoing
348 support and encouragement. However, this will vary depending on individual
349 circumstances.

350
351 The in-care discernment period requires a minimum of 8 meetings over at
352 least 2 years but no more than 5 years. Exception to this timeline must be
353 approved by the Commission on Ministry. If the in-care process is not
354 completed within 5 years from the first meeting, the candidate will be asked
355 to meet in-person with the Commission on Ministry to evaluate progress. The
356 in-care committee chairperson and mentor will be asked to provide regular
357 reports to the Commission on Ministry.

358
359 E. When the in-care committee determines that the candidate is nearing
360 completion of the educational plan and that competencies are being met, the
361 candidate will be asked to write a Theology of Ministry paper (15 to 20
362 pages) describing her/his understanding of theology, the nature and mission
363 of the church and the role of the professional ministry. This paper will be
364 reviewed and discussed with the in-care committee and when approved,
365 submitted to the Commission on Ministry for final approval.

366
367 F. Meeting with the Commission on Ministry: When the in-care committee is
368 satisfied that the personal qualifications and ministerial areas of practice
369 competencies are met, and have approved the Theology of Ministry paper,
370 the committee will recommend approval of ordination to the full Commission
371 on Ministry. The candidate will be invited to meet with the commission.

372
373 1. Key inquiry may focus on the following:
374 a. **Does the paper adequately describe the candidate's theology and**
375 **understanding of the nature and mission of the church and their**
376 **role as an ordained minister?**
377 b. **Is the theology and understanding consistent with Disciples'**
378 **theology, recognizing the wide diversity within the Disciples of**
379 **Christ?**
380 c. **Does the paper reflect a Disciples' understanding of the**
381 **ecumenical and global church as well as the current challenges**
382 **facing the church?**
383 d. **How does the paper demonstrate growth and a deepening**
384 **understanding of the candidate's call to ministry?**

385
386 2. **Prior to that meeting the candidate** will, in a timely fashion, gather and
387 submit documents electronically to the regional office.
388 a. Theology of Ministry paper

- 389 b. Final transcripts from seminary or course of study (if apprentice
390 track)
391 c. Letters of reference from:
392 d. Pastor of sponsoring congregation
393 e. Moderator or board chairperson of sponsoring congregation
394 f. Completion of Ministerial Profile including background check
395 including 4 references, one of which must be the Regional Minister or
396 his/her designee. The other three references should be people who
397 have had opportunity to witness the candidate's competency for
398 ministry within the last 5 years.
399 g. Completion of regionally approved Boundary and Anti-Racism
400 Training class
401 h. Other documents as requested by the Commission on Ministry.
402 G. If approval for ordination is granted by the Commission on Ministry, the in-
403 care committee will become the ordination committee and work with the
404 candidate to schedule and plan the ordination service.

405 The **Planning Committee** will use the service provided by the region though it may
406 be adapted. The Regional Minister or her/his designee will preside at the ordination
407 service.

408 SECTION VII. Ministerial Standing

409 The description of ministerial standing is found in the Theological Foundations Document.
410

411 Requirements for Ongoing Standing in the Regional Christian Church 412 (Disciples of Christ)

- 413 1. Performing faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by commissioning or
414 ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in
415 purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.
- 416 2. Participating regularly in programs of study, growth and renewal.
- 417 3. Maintaining relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including
418 participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of
419 residence where feasible.
- 420 4. Adheres to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of
421 Christ)
- 422 5. Continues to meet the personal qualifications for ministry
- 423 6. Completes the *Annual Ministerial Standing Form* as requested by the Commission
424 on Ministry
- 425 7. Adheres to the Regional Clergy Healthy Boundary Anti-Racism Policy
- 426 8. *Note for Retired Ministers:* Please note the requirements for ongoing standing
427 as listed in the Theological Foundations document. There are two categories of
428 retired ministers: 1) inactive and 2) active. Active-retired ministers are required

429 to meet the requirements listed above including adhering to the Clergy Healthy
430 Boundary Anti-Racism Policy.

431 9. Special Cases. The COM is to consider those situations in which there are no
432 clear or uniform guidelines to decide an individual’s standing. The following
433 provides a consistent means of determining whether a person qualifies for
434 standing, or how a person can attain standing.

435 a. Commissioned Ministry Retirement Standing. If a Commissioned minister
436 has been involved in ministry (with standing) for five continuous years
437 and is commissioned in the year he or she retires, the person shall
438 continue in standing as a retired Commissioned minister subject to
439 annual review. The COM shall determine if the person is retired.

440 b. Counseling, Education, and Non-Parish Ministries

441 i. Ordained persons who hold membership in a Christian Church
442 (Disciples of Christ) congregation and are actively engaged in the
443 ministry of pastoral counseling, higher education or other forms of
444 non-parish ministry, but who serve in non-Disciples or non-church
445 organizations having structures of accountability, shall be eligible
446 for standing.

447 ii. Self-employed, ordained persons involved in the ministry of
448 pastoral counseling, higher education or other forms of non-parish
449 ministry shall establish a covenantal relationship, for purposes of
450 accountability, with a manifestation of the church as a condition
451 for being eligible for standing.

452 iii. Guidelines for accountability and granting of standing are outlined
453 in Appendix 1: Guidelines for Standing for Ministers in Non-
454 Traditional Ministries or Between Ministries

455 c. Ministers in the Process of Relocation. Ordained ministers (with
456 standing) who have been in the process of relocation for three years
457 without attaining a call shall be invited to meet with the (COM) for review
458 of their standing.

459

460 **United Church of Christ Ministers Seeking Ordained Ministerial Partner**
461 **Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

462 “Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing is recognition granted to an ordained
463 minister with standing in the United Church of Christ who has been called to an
464 ordained ministry setting in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” – Theological
465 Foundations

466

467 Outline of Process:

468 1. Gather the following documents and submit to the regional office:

469 a. Letter to the regional minister requesting ordained ministerial
470 partner standing

- 471 b. Letter from the United Church of Christ minister's conference
 472 indicating ordination and standing with the UCC
 473 c. Copy of most recent UCC profile
 474 d. Official transcript or document indicating completion of a
 475 Disciples history/polity course (if one has been completed)
 476 e. Completion of the Clergy Standing Transfer Form found on the
 477 disciplesnw.org website.
 478 [https://northernlightsdisciples.org/clergy-standing-transfer-](https://northernlightsdisciples.org/clergy-standing-transfer-form/)
 479 [form/](https://northernlightsdisciples.org/clergy-standing-transfer-form/)
 480 2. Meet with the regional minister
 481 3. Completion of Disciples history/polity course or approved course of
 482 study
 483 4. Meet with the Commission on Ministry (or subgroup appointed by the
 484 commission)
 485 5. Once knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity and practices
 486 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been demonstrated, the
 487 ordained ministerial partner will be granted access to the Search and Call
 488 system. The Search and Call profile must be completed within 6 months
 489 of receiving access. If not completed, the minister will be asked to begin
 490 the process again beginning with #1 above.
 491 6. Ordained ministerial partner standing is granted only after securing a call
 492 in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by applying to the region in
 493 which the minister's calling body is located.
 494 7. Ordained ministerial partner standing is reviewed annually by the region.
 495 8. The ordained ministerial partner is required to maintain all the
 496 requirements for standing as outlined above including adhering to the
 497 Northern Lights Regional Clergy Healthy Boundary Training Policy.
 498 9. Participate in the Regional required training courses: Anti-Racism and
 499 Boundary Training.
 500

501 Persons Ordained in Other Denominations seeking Standing

502 Outline of Process:

- 503 1. Gather and submit the following to the regional office
 504 a. Proof of ordination (copy of certificate or letter from congregation
 505 that ordained minister)
 506 b. Official transcripts from college and seminary
 507 c. Two letters of reference from people who have witnessed the
 508 candidate's ministry
 509 d. A "Spiritual Autobiography" no more than three (3) pages
 510 e. Paragraph on each of the first nine (9) Personal Qualifications for
 511 Ministry and how they are manifested in minister's life.
 512

- 513 f. Letter explaining why minister desires to affiliate with the
514 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
515 g. Completion of the Clergy Standing Transfer Form found online at
516 [https://northernlightsdisciples.org/clergy-standing-transfer-
518 form/](https://northernlightsdisciples.org/clergy-standing-transfer-
517 form/)
519
520 2. Meeting with the Commission on Ministry: The commission will meet to
521 determine minister's intent in seeking standing and to outline other
522 requirements for granting standing. The commission will consult with the
523 appropriate national pastor/leader of racial/ethnic communities when
524 considering an under represented racial/ethnic applicant.
525
526 3. Following the meeting, provisional standing may be granted after:
527 a. Consultation with appropriate officials of the denomination or
528 congregation from which the candidate transfers.
529 b. Completion of Ministerial Profile including background check
530 c. Completion of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) history/polity
531 course.
532 d. These requirements must be met within 6 months of meeting with
533 the Commission on Ministry. Failure to do so will require re-
534 starting the process beginning with #1 above.
535
536 4. Provisional standing may be removed, and regular standing granted after
537 the minister demonstrates:
538 a. Membership in a recognized congregation of the Christian Church
539 (Disciples of Christ)
540 b. Demonstrated knowledge and appreciation for the history, polity
541 and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
542 c. Fulfillment of the prerequisites and preparation for the Order of
543 Ministry, including demonstrating competency in the 16
544 Ministerial Areas of Practice
545 d. One-year minimum service under the supervision and mentoring
546 of a Disciples of Christ minister with standing.
547 e. Manifesting the personal qualifications for the Order of Ministry.
548 (Document can be found here:
549 <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/com-resources/>
550 f. Commitment to adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the
551 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
552 g. Completion of boundary training as required by the Clergy Healthy
553 Boundary Training Policy.
554 h. Participate in the Regional required training courses: Anti-Racism
555 and Boundary Training.

556 **Reinstatement of Standing**

557 Standing may be reviewed with the possibility of terminating or suspending
558 standing at the initiation of the minister or the Commission on Ministry. (see
559 Theological Foundations Document).

560
561 Ordinarily, persons ordained to the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church
562 (Disciples of Christ) will retain that ordination for the rest of their lives.
563 Ministerial standing, however, incurs obligations for both the ordained
564 minister and the church, which require periodic review and adjustment.
565 Commissions on the ministry are called to perform this review.

566
567 A decision to affirm or deny reinstatement of standing to any individual must
568 come after careful and prayerful consideration of the qualifications and
569 motivation of the person seeking ministry in the Disciples’ tradition. The
570 regional Commission on Ministry must work within the instructions and
571 procedures of the region, as well as the Theological Foundations and Policies
572 and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of
573 Christ).

574
575 The original termination of standing of the individual by the Christian Church
576 (Disciples of Christ) needs to be examined by the commission. Copies of
577 records pertinent to prior standing should be obtained from the individual's
578 permanent file with the Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or
579 another region and from the Office of Search and Call of the Christian Church
580 (Disciples of Christ). This information should tell the commission about the
581 candidate's schooling, past ministry, why standing was withdrawn or what
582 happened in the minister's life or work that caused the lapse in standing.
583 Confidentiality, of course, will be observed.

584
585 Standing may be reinstated “to a minister whose standing has been
586 terminated or suspended by another region or the General Commission on
587 Ministry only upon the recommendation of the terminating or suspending
588 body.” (Theological Foundations).

589
590 Outline of Process:

- 591
592 1. The minister seeking reinstatement of standing will submit a letter to the
593 regional minister and the Commission on Ministry requesting
594 reinstatement. Include in the letter reasons for termination of standing
595 and how those circumstances have changed.
596 2. The minister will show active membership and participation in a
597 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation within the region.

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614
3. Meeting with the Commission: The minister will be asked to meet with the commission to discuss reasons for termination and reinstatement of standing.
 4. The commission may request additional documentation or steps towards reinstatement based on the reasons for termination, including at least completion of Ministerial Profile and background check and completion of Sexual Ethics Training Course.
 5. Exception: If the minister's standing has lapsed (not for cause) within the past three years, the Regional Minister can approve reinstatement of standing in conversation with the Chairperson of the Commission on Ministry.
- 070721 – Revised to include Guidelines for Non-Traditional Ministries

SECTION VIII. Appendix

Appendix 1: Guidelines for Standing for Ministers in Non-Traditional Ministries or Between Ministries

1 **Guidelines for Standing for Clergy in Non-Traditional Ministries or Between** 2 **Ministries** 3 **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region** 4

5 **Background:** The Disciples guiding document, “Theological Foundations and Policies and
6 Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)”, states
7 that “Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing for ministry
8 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to accountability to the church, and
9 collegiality with other ministers both denominationally and ecumenically.” (lines 886-889)
10 It further states that “Standing affirms that the Commissioned or Ordained minister is
11 currently engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional, part-time or full-
12 time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a congregation, related
13 organization or institution, Region, or General Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of
14 Christ.) (lines 891-895). Under the requirements for maintaining standing, the document
15 states the minister will “Perform faithfully the duties of a minister as authorized by
16 Commissioning or Ordination, either in an occupation recognized by the church as
17 ministerial in purpose or in a service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.”
18 (Lines 951-954).
19

20 With the changing landscape of ministry in this time it becomes necessary to re-evaluate
21 who qualifies for standing and what is required for maintaining standing. While the
22 majority of ministers seeking standing continue to be in well-defined, traditional roles
23 (congregational pastors, chaplains, religious education, etc.), more and more are finding
24 their ministries lived out in non-traditional, non-church-related ministries. Additionally,
25 some are finding it necessary to move between actively engaged in ministry and being
26 away from ministry for a season or needing more time to find new ministry opportunities.
27

28 These guidelines offer guidance to the Commission on Ministry and to ministers engaged in
29 non-traditional ministries who wish to maintain standing as active ministers within the
30 Northern Lights Region.
31

32 **Process:**

33 The minister seeking to gain or maintain standing while between regular ministries or
34 while serving in a non-traditional or non-church-related position will complete the annual
35 Standing Form required of all ministers with standing. Under “current ministry position”,
36 the minister should enter information about current employment and a description of the
37 duties or an explanation of why they are not currently engaged in active ministry. The
38 minister should also include a brief statement on why maintaining standing is important to
39 him/her.

40 Other requirements for standing as outlined in the Northern Lights Handbook must also be
41 met:

- 42 • Participating regularly in programs of study, growth and renewal
- 43 • Maintaining relations with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including
44 participating membership in a recognized congregation in the community of
45 residence or active ministry where feasible.

- 46 • Adherence to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of
- 47 Christ)
- 48 • Continuing to meet the Personal Qualifications for ministry
- 49 • Completing the *Annual Ministerial Standing Form* as requested by the Commission
- 50 on Ministry
- 51 • Adherence to the regional Clergy Healthy Boundary/Anti-Racism Training Policy.
- 52

53 Upon review of the Annual Standing Form, the Commission on Ministry will determine if
54 there is an accountability body providing oversight for the position and/or map out a plan
55 for providing accountability and connection for the minister. (This accountability is
56 presumed when serving in more traditional ministerial positions such as congregational
57 pastor or institutional chaplain.) This plan may include opportunities for oversight and
58 connection through quarterly or annual meetings with a member or sub-committee of the
59 Commission on Ministry, references from the employer, or meetings on a regular schedule
60 with the full Commission on Ministry. It is the intention of the Commission on Ministry to
61 provide support, encouragement, connection and accountability for the minister in
62 whatever role he/she/they is serving.

63 In some cases, the Commission on Ministry may determine that maintaining standing is not
64 warranted and will notify the minister that their standing has lapsed and the reasons for
65 that determination.

66
67

68 Approved by COM – June 25, 2021