



GUIDE FOR COMMISSIONING
IN THE MID-AMERICA REGION OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

JANUARY 2018

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) GUIDE FOR COMMISSIONED MINISTERS

JANUARY 2018

Process

1. A new Inquirer interested in Commissioned or Ordained ministry will begin by requesting an **interview** with the appropriate Regional Minister Team member in the Regional office to which their home congregation associates; complete the following before the meeting:

- Application (Appendix 1)
- Minister's profile with references and background check [submit Appendix 3]
- Letter of support from home congregation
- Letter of support from congregation of employment
[Discerning candidates do not need this]

ALL DOCUMENTATION SHOULD BE SENT TO THE
OFFICE OF MINISTERIAL SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

500 South Avenue
Springfield, MO 65806

ccmasw@sbcglobal.net

A Commissioning Ministry Team “*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.*” TFPC, B.4.d

To be a Candidate for Commissioning or a Commissioned Minister, they must be serving a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

2. An **exploratory meeting** with the Commissioning Ministry Team [CMT] will take place at the suggestion of the Regional Minister Team member. For this meeting along with the previously submitted information, the Inquirer will submit a 500-1,000-word statement concerning their faith journey to this point. Another statement will be submitted describing their understanding of commissioning and what it will mean for the ministry the Inquirer wishes to pursue. A psychological evaluation must be completed and submitted to the Commissioning Ministry Team. Information of possible locations for the evaluation can be obtained by contacting a Regional Minister Team member.

The Inquirer will come with her/his pastor or a congregational leader from the currently served congregation.

At the Exploratory meeting the action of the Commissioning Ministry Team can be, but is not limited to, 1) accepting the Inquirer under care; 2) requesting more thought and time be put into the consideration for this journey, with other preparatory actions; or 3) denying taking the Inquirer under care. The Inquirer will then declare for Commissioning or Ordination.

When accepted, the Inquirer will be a Candidate for at least one year.

3. When the Inquirer becomes a Candidate for Commissioning several items will be sought:

a. A Mentor will be assigned by the Commissioning Ministry Team, in conversation with the Candidate. This can be done by identifying either (1) an Ordained Minister or a Commissioned Minister with extensive experience in ministry or, (2) a Mentoring Group who will Mentor and support this Candidate during his/her ministry. They will meet for a set amount of time each year, (at least four times) with a report (Appendix 2) from the mentor or group leader for the annual evaluation.

b. The Congregation will identify an Elder to be available to the Candidate for guidance and support, and to work with the Mentor or Mentoring Group. The Elder can be selected from either the home congregation or from the congregation of employment with consultation from the Commissioning Ministry Team.

c. In addition, the Congregation will appoint a Pastoral Support Committee including the Congregational Elder, two to three members of the congregation, and a representative of the CMT who will be available to consult as needed. This group will meet quarterly and file reports with the Commissioning Ministry Team and the Office of Pastoral Support and Accountability following each meeting. (Appendix 3, *Commissioned Minister's Pastoral Support Committee's Report*).

To help in this process Appendices 16 is found in this guide. The personal qualifications along with the Practices of Ministry should be the framework of the conversation between the Commissioned Minister and the Pastoral Support Committee. As the process continues the Sixteen Ministerial Practices will need to be reviewed for direction and understanding. The Practices should also be used as future education and training possibilities are considered.

4. Educational Requirements

The candidate for Commissioned Minister needs to be in a program of education to complete the Certificate of Pastoral Ministry, offered by Phillips Theological Seminary [previously offered by Missouri School of Religion, and the Mid-America Center for Ministry]. Seeking and completion of this certificate is required for Commissioned Ministers. Candidates and Commissioned Ministers are to complete at least two classes per year as they pursue the Certificate of Pastoral Ministry. Once completed Commissioned Ministers will complete the Continuing Education Report required of all clergy in the Mid-America Region mindful of their weaknesses in the 16 Practices of Ministry.

If the Candidate decides not to pursue the Certificate of Ministry, the Candidate must complete 800 hours of study, 50 hours in each of the 16 Practices of Ministry, identified by the General Commission on the Order of Ministry.

5. Commissioning Interview

After one year the Candidate will have a Commissioning interview with the CMT. Before this meeting can be scheduled the following will need to be on file with the Commissioning Ministry Team and the Office of Pastoral Support and Accountability:

- All items from the initial interview with the Regional Minister Team member and the CMT
- Boundary Training completion certificate
- Pro-Reconciliation/Anti Racism Training completion certificate
- History and Polity class completion certificate
- 15 hours continuing education for the year of the interview
- A 500-1,000 word paper: how the process has affected you and your ministry, including what 'representative ministry' mean to you
- A statement of your future plans for continuing education

The Commissioning Ministry Team can 1) grant commission, 2) request more study and preparation, or 3) deny commission.

6. Continuing Process

Each year the Commissioning Ministry Team will interview each Commissioned Minister who is up for renewal in that year. This meeting will be with the Commissioned minister and one member of the Pastoral Support Committee. A Renewal Application and a Board Endorsement form must be received before the CMT meets with the Commissioned Minister. The CMT will either grant a year extension to the Commission or, if the minister has been commissioned for three (3) years following the year of candidacy, the CMT may decide to grant either, a one, two or three (1-3) year Commission.

If the Commissioned Minister has served ten year in the same congregation, the minister can be granted a Continuing Commission lasting as long as the Commissioned Minister is employed by the same congregation or in the same ministry setting. In place of the annual renewal applications, the commission will continue as long as the Commissioned Minister has turned in his/her Continuing Education Report for that year. If the Commissioned Minister leaves his/her commissioned location, she/he will need to be re-commissioned for the new position. After one-year in the new position, a continual commissioning may be given at the recommendation of the CMT.

Every Commissioned Minister will submit an annual continuing education report, will complete Boundary Training and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Training every three years, and will complete all other educational requirements set out by the Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry, Mid-America.

THE ORDER OF MINISTRY APPLICATION FORM
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Name of applicant _____ Date: _____

Permanent address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Present mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

I hereby apply to the Commission on the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America for:

(Commissioning/Ordination Options)

- Commissioned
 Commissioned as a Theological Student
(Name of Seminary): _____

(Standing Options)

- Reinstated lapsed standing
 Recognition of Ordination by other Church/Denomination, except UCC
- Candidacy for Ordination
 Seminary Track Apprentice Track
- Partner Standing (ordained UCC ministers)

By signing below I am making application as indicated above. I attest that I have received the Policies and Criteria of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America and understand that it is my responsibility to meet all requirements as indicated in the Policies and Criteria document.

Signature of applicant _____ Date _____

Sponsoring congregation (if applicable) _____

All written materials must be received in the Office of Ministerial Support and Accountability before a meeting with the Mid-America Ministry Team member or the Commission on the Order of Ministry will be scheduled for the candidate.

Christian Church of Mid-America, Southwest
500 South Avenue
Springfield, MO 65806
Or
ccmasaw@sbcglobal.net

****Please see reverse side for additional documentation requirements. ****

Please attach the documents listed for your specific request.

Commissioned (not seeking ordination)

1. A letter from church board requesting the commissioning for the ministerial position.
2. Reading list and continuing education since the last interview.
3. Complete the form below (first time commissioning only).

Church or institution where serving in ministry: _____
Address: _____
Name of supervising person or body: _____
When did you **begin serving in this ministry**? _____
What are your **duties**? (please attach a copy of your job description)
Are you **enrolled in seminary**? Yes No
If yes, which seminary? _____
If not, do you **plan to enroll**? Yes No
Are you enrolled in any other course of study? Yes No If yes, where? _____
Briefly describe the course of study _____
Please attach a statement that discusses your **view of ministry**, your **current goals in ministry**, and your **concept of how commissioning will impact your ministry** (one full page).

Commissioned as a Theological Student or Candidacy for Ordination (seminary track)

1. A personal resume including education and employment history.
2. A brief statement of 500-1,000 words explaining why the candidate is interested in exploring ordination. It shall include: critical theological reflection on one's call, assessment of one's gifts or ministry, goals and visions of ministry, type of ministry anticipated following ordination, understanding of the Church and the Church's ministry and mission..
3. A letter of reference from home congregation.

Reinstate lapsed standing

1. Letter to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America a minimum of one year after the date of relinquishment, requesting consideration of such action by the Commission on the Order of Ministry.

Recognition of Ordination by other Church/Denomination, except UCC

1. Ministerial Record Form and Relocation Assistance Form
2. Documentation of ordination and standing with present denomination
3. Official transcripts from college(s), university(ies), and seminary(ies) attended
4. A summary of recent psychological tests
5. Letters of reference, including clergy and laity, from the denomination of present standing and at least one from a representative of the sponsoring Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.
6. A statement of the candidate's reasons for seeking standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and his/her understanding of ministry within our denomination.

Partner Standing (ordained UCC ministers)

1. Completed application
2. Documentation of seminary degree
3. Interview with the Regional Minister Team member.
4. Documentation of ordination and standing with UCC
5. Ministerial profile
6. History and Polity

MENTOR REPORT FORM
(FROM MEETING WITH CANDIDATE)
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Candidate name _____ Date _____

Commissioned Minister

Mentor _____

Interview summary notes: (major issues/significant points)

Competencies/Personal Qualification worked on

Affirmations

Summary of recommendations

Summary of requirements

Documents required BEFORE next meeting (be specific)

Date of NEXT interview		Type of NEXT interview	
Candidate's Signature			
Mentor's Signature			

THE ORDER OF MINISTRY
MINISTER INFORMATION FORM
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Date Reason for completing form

Geographically which office you NE NW SEG SW

Title: Dr. Reverend Dr. Reverend Gender Male Female

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Nick Name or familiar first name

First Name Middle Last

Ethnicity African America Asian European Descent/Caucasian Haitian
check all that apply Hispanic Middle Eastern Native American Pacific Islander Other

Minister's Email

Current Residential Street Address

City State Postal Code

Home Phone Cell Phone

Status Active Retired-Active Retired-Inactive If retired – date went into retirement (mm/dd/yy)

Professional Code *[there is a list on the back]*

Are you an Ordained or Commissioned minister? Ordained Commissioned

IF Ordained by (DOC)

(DOC) Ordination Date (mm/dd/yy) (DOC) Ordaining Region

IF Ordained by another Denomination

Name of other denomination Ordained by

Date (mm/dd/yy) Has this Ordination been recognized by the (DOC) Yes

(DOC) Region that recognized the ordination

IF Commissioned

Date of original Commissioning (mm/dd/yy)

Date Commissioning was renewed (mm/dd/yy)

Date Commissioning Expires (mm/dd/yy)

Continue to next page

New Place of Employment

Date Position Started (mm/dd/yy)

City State Postal Code

Previous Place of Employment

Start Date (mm/dd/yy) End Date (mm/dd/yy)

Previous Work Address

City State Postal Code

Professional Codes

- P Pastor of a recognized (DOC) congregation
- A Associate Minister
- C-a Armed Services Chaplain
- C-f Chaplain – Federal
- C-n Chaplain – Institutional
- CE Christian Educator
- CM Campus Minister
- D Disciple Minister serving non – DOC congregation
- DU Disciple Minister with UCC standing serving a UCC congregation
- EM Minister employed by national ecumenical organization
- ER Minister employed by regional ecumenical organization
- G Minister employed by general ministry
- GU Disciples General Ministry minister with UCC standing
- HE Minister in Higher Education
- I Interim Minister
- M Missionary
- MC Minister of Counseling
- MM Minister of Music
- NP Non-Parish Minister
- OP Other employment but preaching
- R-a Retired Active Minister
- R-i Retired Inactive Minister
- RG Senior Regional Minister
- RM Regional Minister (other than RG)
- SA Student Associate Minister
- SP Student Pastor
- SZ Ordained minister returning to school for a limited time for or Ordained student not presently employed in ministry
- UC UCC General Minister with Disciple standing
- UD UCC minister with Disciple standing serving a DOC congregation

**APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF
COMMISSIONED MINISTRY**

Name _____ Date _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone: Home _____ Church _____ Business _____

Email: _____

Church or Institution Presently Serving _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Board Chairperson _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

How long have you been serving in this ministry? _____

Please Fill In the Following As Completely As Possible

As you look back over the ministry you have performed in the past year, describe the things that have given you the greatest satisfaction.

What areas of ministry have been most difficult for you?

In what ways has your understanding of ministry changed in the past year?

Describe briefly what you have done during the past year to grow in your knowledge and understand of your Christian ministry.

What books have you read in the last year?

List the courses you have taken since you last reported to the Commissioning Ministry Team.

Conferences and Meetings Attended

Please indicate what meetings you have attended since you last reported to the Commissioning Ministry Team

Cluster Gatherings Yes No Persons in Ministry Retreat Yes No

General Assembly Yes No Regional Assembly Yes No

Others

Do you anticipate any major changes in the nature of your ministry during the coming year?

Outline briefly your plan for personal and professional enrichment and growth during the next year.

How can the Commissioning Ministry Team help you?

Signature _____ Date _____

Please by email one copy to ccmasw@sbcglobal.net and return this form along with form from Board Chair or Supervisor to: Office of Ministerial Support and Accountability at 500 South Avenue, Springfield, MO 65806.

RENEWAL OF COMMISSIONED MINISTRY BOARD FORM

Name of Commissioned Minister _____ Date _____

Name of Board Chairperson or Supervisor _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home _____ Church _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

Name of Church or Institution _____

Email _____ Church # _____

As you review the past year of the Commissioned Minister's ministry what do you see as his/her strengths?

In what areas of ministry do you believe the commissioned minister could improve? Be as specific as possible.

How can the Region help your congregation in its Ministry?

The _____ Church / Institution does request the renewal of commissioning for _____ for the year of _____.

Signature _____ Date _____

This form should be returned along the with commissioned minister's application for renewal or mailed to: Office of Ministerial Support and Accountability at 500 South Avenue, Springfield, MO 65806

Pastoral Support Committee

Congregational Elder

Member

Member

Member

CMT Contact Person

When Committee is filled please send this document to

Office of Ministerial Support and Accountability
ccmasw@sbcglobal.net or

500 South Avenue
Springfield, MO 65809

Any questions? Call 417-865-0850

COMMISSIONED MINSTERS PASTORAL SUPPORT
COMMITTEE'S REPORT
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Candidate name _____ Date of interview _____

Mentor _____

PSC leader _____

Interview summary notes: (major issues/significant points)

Competencies/Personal Qualification worked on

Ministry Practices Reviewed

Affirmations

Summary of recommendations

Summary of requirements

Documents required BEFORE next meeting (be specific)

Date of NEXT interview _____ Type of NEXT interview _____

Name of recorder _____

Candidates Signature _____

**PROGRESS CHART FOR INITIAL
COMMISSIONING**
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Candidate's Name:			
Date:			
			Date Sent
		Guide for Commissioning	
		Theological Foundation and Polity	

Preparation for Meeting with Regional Ministry Team Member			
	Application		
	Minister Information Form [Appendix 3]		
	Minister's Profile with references & background check		
	Home/Supportive Congregations		
	Employment/Supportive Congregations		
	Interview with RMT	<input type="checkbox"/> In Person <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Conversation	

Preparation for Exploratory Meeting with the above information plus			
	500 to 1000-word statement concerning their faith journey		
	500 to 1000-word statement of your understanding of "commissioning" in light of your proposed ministry position		
	Psychological profile		
	Arrange for a congregational leader [Senior Pastor or Board Elder] from current congregation to attend the meeting		
	Meeting with the Commissioning Ministry Team		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Accept as Candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Denied <input type="checkbox"/> Request that the inquirer take additional time to consider this journey		
	Addition Items Required by CMT		

When the Inquirer becomes a Candidate:				
Establish a Mentor Relationship				
1 st Qtr.		2 nd Qtr.		3 rd Qtr.
				4 th Qtr.
Identify an Elder for guidance & support				
1 st Qtr.		2 nd Qtr.		3 rd Qtr.
				4 th Qtr.
Establish a Pastoral Support Committee & submit PSC Member Form [Appendix 6]				
Submit PSC Reports				
1 st Qtr.		2 nd Qtr.		3 rd Qtr.
				4 th Qtr.
Assessment of Candidates Growth [Appendix 16]				
1 st Qtr.		2 nd Qtr.		3 rd Qtr.
				4 th Qtr.
Name of Program of Education				
Commissioning Interview				
All items from the initial interview with the Regional Minister Team member				
Boundary Training completion certificate				
Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Training completion certificate				
Disciple History & Polity class completion certificate				
Submit Annual Continuing Education Report				
A 500-1000 word paper; how the process has affected you and your ministry, what 'representative ministry' means to you				
A statement of your future plans for continuing education				
Completion of any additional requirements placed on you by the Commission Ministry Team				
Commission Issued: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				

COMMISSIONING MINISTRY TEAM REVIEW FORM
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) OF MID-AMERICA

Name of Candidate _____ Date: _____

Candidate's email address _____

CCMA Office Northeast Northwest Southeast Gateway Southwest

Congregation Serving _____ City _____

Position Minister Associate Other _____

Suggested Action: Commission Issued <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Date for Next Interview _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Candidacy (1 year) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Years <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Years <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing Commission	
Beginning Date for Certificate (mm/dd/yy): _____	Beginning Date for Certificate (mm/dd/yy): _____

Pastoral Support Committee

Mentor _____

Practice of Ministry Group _____

Recording Member _____

Commission Ministry Team Members in attendance

Comments

Requirements before next meeting

Minister's Signature _____

ORDER OF MINISTRY
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

COM 14

Approved August 8, 2017

Mid-America Certificate of Commissioned Pastoral Ministry

A Supplemental Program for Commissioned Ministers

*A continuing education process for commissioned ministers in the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America.*

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.

*I. Theological Foundations for the Ordering of Ministry in the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 9/30/2009, lines 332-338, pg. 10.*

Mindful of the need to support the ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with an informed, educated and competent clergy, and to allow choice among options, the Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry establishes the *Mid-America Certificate in Pastoral Ministry* as an alternate for Commissioned Ministers within this region, to supplement the offering at Phillips Theological Seminary for Commissioned Ministers. This policy is established to support the ongoing education of our clergy, as the Mid-America Center for Ministry closes and passes its legacy to Phillips Theological Seminary.

Within the *Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry* the Church has established sixteen areas of ministerial practices, in which it feels the women and men it ordains and commissions need to demonstrate competency. The Mid-America region feels that its clergy should be knowledgeable about and show some competency in those same sixteen areas of ministerial practices.

Commissioned Ministers will be required to pursue and complete the certificate program at Phillips Theological Seminary (PTS) for Commissioned Ministers, as they have been previously required to complete the certificate program with Mid-America Center for Ministry. [Beginning in January 2018 PTS will continue the work of the Mid-American Center.] In addition, a certificate program designed for Commissioned Ministers based on the sixteen ministerial practices outlined in the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Amendment 2.0, 5/8/2014*; and presented by an accredited seminary or institution of higher education with prior approval by RCOM, will be accepted to fulfill this education requirement.

An acceptable program for Commissioned Ministers will be built on the sixteen areas of practical ministry. In *II.C.2 Education Requirements*, we find the listing of the 16 areas of ministerial practices:

- 1 1. Biblical Knowledge
- 2 2. Church Administration and
- 3 Planning
- 4 3. Communication
- 5 4. Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism
- 6 Experience
- 7 5. Ecumenism
- 8 6. Education and Leader
- 9 Development
- 10 7. Ethics
- 11 8. Evangelism
- 12 9. Mission of the Church in the World
- 13 10. Pastoral Care
- 14 11. Proclamation of the Word
- 15 12. Spiritual Development
- 16 13. Stewardship
- 17 14. Theology
- 18 15. Understanding Heritage
- 19 16. Worship

The candidate needs to have a minimum of fifty-hours (50)* in each of the 16 Practices, for a minimum of 800* total hours. If a certificate program does not meet the minimum face-time hours required, other work will need to be completed to reach the required hours.

Work to be completed at other institutions, in seminars or workshops, may be accepted if a request is made and approved prior to the event in question. The request, as well as information concerning the event, the nature and competency of the sponsor, and face time expected during the event, is to be sent to the Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry. It is the candidate's responsibility to forward that information to RCOM, allowing sufficient time prior to the scheduled date(s) of the event in question, so that RCOM may respond to the request in a timely manner.

Each institution has its own requirements for registration and completion of the classwork. Notice of completion from the institution **must be** filed with the Office of Ministerial Support and Accountability, ccmasw@sbcglobal.net or mailed to CCMA, Southwest Office, 500 South Ave., Springfield, MO 65806. It is the responsibility of the candidate to make sure notice is received.

** At the writing of this document Phillips Theological Seminary has not established the requirements for their program. Whatever is established in hours required by PTS will be the guide for the Christian Church of Mid-America. RCOM will continue to watch the development of the Phillips program and make adjustments accordingly.*

August 8, 2017

PASTORAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE PROGRAM MANUAL

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Purpose

The Church is the body of Christ, knit together by God for the mutual up-building of life, and for the spread of the gospel.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and builds up itself in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

The Pastoral Support Committee gives to the congregational representatives and to the clergy person the opportunity to model the church in miniature.

Each and every clergy person will benefit from participating with a small group of persons in a congregation whom she or he can trust. In such a group communication can occur. In such a group he or she can find acceptance, and the love of Christ exemplified.

Such groups are often called Pastoral Relations Committees. Perhaps, a more useful term would be a Pastoral Support Committee.

The Pastoral Support Committee begins with the commitment of the members to pray daily, for the pastor(s) who serves a congregation or a ministry setting. In return the clergy person will pray for the committee members, and for the congregation. Such daily prayer seeks the best for the individual, even in the face of disagreement.

Support does not always imply agreement. Rather, there must be the trust and acceptance which makes disagreement possible. Such trust enables avenues of proposed action to be explored.

Criticism must be faced. When criticism is faced within a relationship laced with God's grace and love, any individual has the opportunity to improve. Certainly that is true for the minister serving a congregation.

Thus, the Pastoral Support Committee, or PSC, will be formed in prayer and worship. Meetings of the total group should seek to be bathed in light of the scriptures, and in the power of the Spirit. The committee, as the Church, is to function as the body of Christ Jesus.

All human beings are living in a time of change and high stress. Expectations continue to change. Certainly, that is true for the role of the Christian, and for the role of the pastor. Change will be a major part of life for the next several decades, at least. There appears to be no dissipation of the stress related to the fact of constant change.

An opportunity to model the Church operating in love in the power of the Spirit, and to

provide clarification are two of the purposes of the PSC.

Communication

One of the fundamental tasks of any body is communication. Pastoral Support Committees provide one avenue. Within this group road blocks may be identified. Opportunities may be explored. Ill-advised actions may be thwarted. If there is to be any support, there must be communication.

All communication involves, for the human being, listening. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *Life Together*, writes:

The first service that one owes to other in the fellowship consists in listening to them...We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.

Glenn Boyd in his book, *The A.R.T. of Agape Listening*, agrees:

What may be most distinct about what I am trying to say is this: agape-love clearly expresses itself in agape-listening. This sort of listening concentrates on the other's reality in a non-casual way without defensiveness, competition or judgement. I have found that it requires a surprising degree of self-discipline to do this. It also takes time. The agape-listener listens out of an unswerving commitment to the well-being of the other, believing that the self-discipline demanded enriches both speaker and listener. God works in and through both in agape-listening.

Boyd's book provided a good study for the Pastoral Support Committee and for the other groups within the church. Communication requires that we listen, really listen to the other person.

Good communication provides a certain level of comfort. Communication occurs between individuals when there is a level of comfort which makes possible the lowering of the gate which bars access to one's interior self. Human beings need to be affirmed, to hear words of encouragement, to receive acts of affirmation, appreciation and acceptance.

Beyond active listening and comfort, individuals and churches need opportunity to clarify, to come to understand another person.

The old story of the description of an elephant by four individuals who are blind remains true. Each sees the elephant from a perspective different than the other described. One "saw" a tail, another a leg, another the trunk, and another, the tusks. Each was correct; all were needed to gain a better idea of the "elephant."

Listening, acceptance, and clarification are all necessary for the process. Not all three are always necessary. Some meetings may be only to listen – when one – the Minister – is hurting, or one of the committee members, or when the group perceives he/she is hurting. Several meetings may be primarily to provide the opportunity for clarification: "look at it this way, Pastor..." or "it seems to me..." Or, rarely, "some are saying..."

There is a fourth element: CONFIDENTIALITY. Pastoral Support Committees cannot function without confidentiality. There is no level of comfort without confidentiality, if one must ponder if what is said will be repeated to anyone. Confidentiality means that what is spoken in the committee remains in the committee. When the meeting closes, what has been said remains in the room.

Regardless of the size of the congregation, every congregation member is aware of what some term "the grapevine," an informal network of communication which can spread misinformation as quickly as information, throughout the congregation. Imagine casting your private sins upon the waters to see them change and multiply before returning to you.

Without confidentiality there will be no constructive criticism. This is, perhaps, the most difficult element of pastor support. Ministers are human. He/she will stub their toe once in a while, and hurt the feelings of someone. Individuals may not want to be perceived as speaking of the minister's weakness, and even less so if their words are repeated because confidentiality has been broken. That loss will preclude opportunities for growth.

All criticism hurts. Even when spoken in love criticism is difficult to take in and digest. When a corrective voice is never heard, one does not have the opportunity to change the pathways one walks. Criticism is helpful when one is able to change, or to recognize that one cannot change. When the latter occurs, the minister should seek some assistance.

Meeting

The Pastoral Support Committee must meet regularly. For some groups that may be quarterly. Most often, however, monthly meetings are suggested. It is usually true that most groups will meet eight or nine times during the year. Normally, meetings will not occur during the summer, Advent and Lent.

The length of each meeting should be no more than one-and-one half hours. Begin promptly. End promptly. That is a part of the covenant between Pastoral Support Committee members.

Each gathering begins with Worship. This may be reading, a prayer, a meditation. A hymn could be included. Members of the group rotate leadership of this opening worship. Following the lead of Chuck Olson in *Transforming Church Boards into Spiritual Bodies*, employ a candle lighted during the beginning to remind the group of the light of Christ's presence and that all which occurs is done in the spirit of an offering unto God through Christ Jesus.

Spend time allowing members to relate what is occurring in their lives and ministries since the last meeting of the group. Strive to be very specific, as comfort will allow.

Arrange the meeting and sharing so that the pastor has the last opportunity to talk with the group. Each person must be active in listening to every member of the group.

One possibility is that each person answer these questions.

1. What has occurred in my life since the last meeting that I will share?
2. What joys have I experienced?
3. What is causing me a problem at the moment?
4. What do I want to talk about

today? Each person follows this outline:

- Successes. "Whatever is considered a success may be shared?"
- Surprises. "Anything that has been or is a surprise in the life of the congregation or of the individual."
- Satisfactions. "What has given the person satisfaction, even though it may not be seen as a success."
- Solutions: "What are the challenges being faced? Are there problems to which she/he is seeking solutions? Are there theological matters that are challenging the person?"
- Sadness. "Are there losses, hurts, fears that are occasions for personal or congregational grief?"

Committee members must be willing to allow two-way communication between themselves and members of the congregation. Similarly, the pastor is expected not to relate information gained in counseling. The leader or facilitator must be careful to enhance and control the flow of conversation. No one is asked to disclose any information that has been shared in confidential sessions.

Concerns for the Congregation and Concerns of the Congregation

Those concerns which have surfaced are now faced. "Some people say" must be translated to "these people have expressed concern that your sermons are too short." God be praised? Even these concerns must be clarified: what is being said?

Concerns which will require almost all of the meeting time must be given the necessary time. However, before those concerns continue for several weeks or months, the counsel of one outside the congregation should be sought.

Membership

Congregations are requested to name their Search and Call Committees as the first Pastoral Support Committee for a new clergy person who answers their call to serve the congregation.

That Committee is asked to meet regularly with the incoming pastor so he/she can be aware of their continuing support. As any relationship develops, some new gems are seen, and, some blemishes appear which were not initially seen.

In both instances the pastor should have the opportunity to talk with those who felt that she or he was called to the congregation.

Each such reconstituted committee should meet with the Regional Minister six months after the minister begins service with the congregation to review the process, to ascertain what improvements in the process might be made, and to relate their joy at the new relationship now growing.

During that first year, if Pastoral Support Committee membership is not included in the documents of the congregation, the Board is requested to initiate a formal procedure that would provide for congregational members to serve. Usually, this procedure will provide for two members to rotate off the Pastoral Support Committee, each year, providing for new membership and continuity.

The size of the initial Pastoral Support Committee is determined by the required number of representatives composing the Pastoral Search and call Committee. Optimally, the Pastoral Support Committee will have six (6) persons. These individuals will probably not have additional responsibilities within the congregation, such as Board or Committee Chair, for the time they serve on the Pastoral Support Committee. However, each person should represent some portion of the congregation. *No meeting of the Pastoral Support Committee is to be held without the*

presence of the minister. No other minister on the staff is to be talked about without that minister being present in the Pastoral Support Committee.

Concerns

Concerns with staff members in a multi-staffed congregation should be discussed with the Executive Committee and/or the Personnel Committee of that congregation. Concerns raised within the boundaries of the Pastoral Support Committee are addressed directly with the individual.

Each minister may suggest names for the Pastoral Support Committee to the Chairman of the Board. Final selections are to be made by the Chairman of the Board.

The Pastoral Support Committee will select its own chairperson at the beginning of each church year and will set tentative meeting dates and time. It is possible for special meetings to be called throughout the year.

The members of the Pastoral Support Committee must be persons with whom the minister has a good relationship. Those persons must have a knowledge of and sensitivity to the feelings and needs of the congregation and the minister. Skills which allow active listening are needed. Communication skills and the ability to translate feelings are helpful. One of the members should be an elder of the congregation. ABOVE ALL ELSE, THE PASTORAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE MEMBER MUST HAVE INTEGRITY WITH REGARD TO MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY.

Orientation Sessions

Every two years, the group may have an Orientation Session led by the Regional Minister or

someone else. The purpose of these sessions is to review the function and purpose of the Committee, to incorporate new members into the committee and to provide training in active listening and communication.

How Does the Pastoral Support Committee Fit?

The Pastoral Support Committee does not report the substance of its meeting to the Board. Those basic traits of trust, acceptance, and confidentiality must not be undermined. The Board should know that the committee is meeting. Minutes of the meeting should not be kept.

Any subject which affects ministry in any way is appropriate for discussion as the Committee meets. But the Pastoral Support Committee is not a problem solving group. Neither is it a task performing group. This Committee must be diligent to not assume any authority or responsibility beyond its stated purpose.

It may be that growing out of discussion under its stated function, recommendations may be made to other appropriate groups within the congregational structure. These suggestions will be at a bare minimum. Otherwise, the Pastoral Support Committee defeats its prime purpose.

Congregations with multiple staffs may consider a Pastoral Support Committee for each Minister. In such a way that congregation proclaims that each staff person is important to the life of the congregation. Such joint meetings aid the development of communication and care. Committees would not desire to compete with each other, or to take sides if conflict develops between ministers on the staff.

Ministerial Concerns

It is appropriate for the minister to develop his/her goals within the context of the Pastoral Support Committee. Such goals should be established and then revised every six-month. Then the areas of concern should consist of personal development, reading, personal health, professional development and congregational needs.

Additionally, the Pastoral Support Committee will discuss with the minister continuing education opportunities, including financial provisions. Conversations should also include sabbaticals. A suggested policy for sabbaticals can be found on the mid-America website under clergy. The PSC should also be knowledgeable about COM 10. Pastoral Support Committees should not perform as personnel committees to review and suggest salary adjustments. Pastoral Support Committees may, however, suggest that such a review and adjustment be made.

The Pastoral Support Committee will be sensitive to the need for celebrating anniversaries. Such anniversaries include ordination anniversary, length of service with the congregation birthday, wedding anniversaries. Care and attention to these special occasions is encouraged. Such care and attention goes a long way in developing a long term relationship.

There must be recognition that the significant other of the minister should participate in the Pastoral Support Committee. At times significant others may meet regularly with the Pastoral Support Committee.

Some significant others meet only once or twice a year with the Committee. Significant others need some place to talk about their own relationship with the congregation. *The spouses/significant others of ministers do not have a pastor within the congregation. The Pastoral Support Committee can assist.*

The Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry suggests the Pastoral Support Committee have social gatherings from time to time to share a meal together.

*(Revised and edited from "Revised Guidelines for the Pastoral Relations Committee," published by the Commission on Ministry, Christian Church in Indiana.)

My
Ministerial
Code
of
Ethics



Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

Foreword

In 1944 a ministerial Code Of Ethics was published by the Division of Homeland Ministries for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). 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.

A General church committee has periodically reviewed the Code Of Ethics. Occasionally, editorial changes have been made. The General Commission on Ministry and its predecessor, the General Board Task Force on Ministry, have worked over the past several years with Homeland Ministries, now Disciples Home Missions, to update the Code Of Ethics. Proposed changes have been reviewed by regional commissions on ministry as well as by many individuals.

Most recently, the contents of this document were revised and adopted in 2009 by General Assembly resolution #0922 and can be found in Section II., I, of *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. This version became official on August 1, 2011.

The revised Code Of Ethics maintains much of the language of the original; the principles that guide ministry remain the same from generation to generation. This 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

Ministerial Code Of Ethics

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, 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 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

RELATIONSHIPS TO THE CHURCH 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 an 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 toward 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 that strengthen its ministry, witness and mission

**Do you have a
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“My Ministerial Code of Ethics?”**

A certificate version of “*My Ministerial Code of Ethics*” printed in two colors,
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