



1 **CONCERNING THE CONSIDERATION FOR STANDING OF CLERGY**
2 **ORDAINED IN OTHER DENOMINATIONS**

3 **Theological Premise**

4 Ordination to ministry is an act of the Church to sustain the witness of the faith community by persons
5 “set apart” for this purpose. By faith we affirm that God is the one who validates every ordination.
6 Therefore, it is not our task to question the ordination of minister’s in other denominational traditions.
7 We affirm that the Commission on the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of
8 Mid-America has been appointed to determine the level of fitness of individuals who apply for standing
9 in the ministry of our particular faith community known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

10 In this instance, the issue being considered is STANDING, not ORDINATION. A decision to affirm or
11 deny STANDING will come only after careful and prayerful consideration of the qualifications and
12 motivation of the person to minister as defined by our tradition. It is not a judgment of the capacity for
13 ministry as validated by other traditions. By the nature of this process, each individual will be considered
14 on a “case by case” basis. Quotas and arbitrary limits will be avoided. Standards reflecting the theology
15 and ecclesiology of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be considered the essential elements
16 and will require factual evidence to create a favorable decision.

17 **Ecclesiastical Premise**

18 For a clergy person to seek to move from one faith community to another is a major decision with life
19 changing implications. It is more than a “career move,” or a matter of personal convenience. To hold
20 standing as an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is to incur mutual
21 obligations on the part of the individual minister and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Standing
22 is an ecclesiastical function to affirm and support the clergy in the ministry to which she/he is called, as
23 well as the faith community, which calls the individual to ministry. Maintaining a balanced support for
24 both the clergy and the church is the task that the General manifestation of the Christian Church
25 (Disciples of Christ) has entrusted to the Regional manifestation of that body. The Commission on the
26 Order of Ministry (hereafter, RCOM) has accepted the responsibility to act on behalf of the Region of the
27 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

28 This Commission (RCOM) shall act within the structures and procedures of our Region as well as the
29 “Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church
30 (Disciples of Christ), amended 5/08/2014” as set forth through the General Assembly. Within these
31 limits, the Commission seeks to be both pastoral to the individual seeking standing and responsible to our
32 faith community in which standing is being sought. Standards followed are developed in response to the
33 Gospel and to the needs of the people and congregations we represent.

34 **Individual Premise**

35 Ordination and standing involve more than an individual perception of “call.” H. Richard Niebuhr writes:

36 A call to the ministry includes at least these four elements:

37 1. The call to be a Christian....;



- 38 2. The secret call...whereby a person feels directly summoned by God to take up the work of the
39 ministry;
40 3. The providential call, which...comes through the equipment of a person with
41 the talents necessary for the exercise of the office;
42 4. The ecclesiastical call...extended to a (person) by some community or institution of the Church
43 to engage in the work of the ministry.¹

44 When an individual chooses to alter any one of these elements of being called to ministry, such as the
45 ecclesiastical call, it is incumbent on that person to examine all the elements of a call to ministry.
46 Therefore, seeking standing in a denomination other than where the individual received and expressed
47 [that] calling should call for rigorous self-examination. The evaluation instituted by RCOM is intended
48 to produce a responsible process to facilitate further growth in ministry, for both the individual and the
49 Church.

50 Such a process requires time. It is neither wise nor appropriate for any person who is a minister in
51 another denomination to expect full standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) immediately.
52 Even if the qualifications and circumstances are such that the granting of standing is a “mere courtesy,”
53 both the person and the profession benefit when the qualifications and circumstances are examined with
54 care. To affirm a minimum period of one year is a measure of the seriousness with which the
55 Commission takes its responsibility. Ministry requires skill, preparation, fitness, multiple gifts, and an
56 evident commitment to the Christ and to the faith community that bears his name.

57 ¹ Niebuhr, H. Richard, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, Harper & Brothers: New York,
58 1967, pp. 64-65

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60 **Procedure and Requirements for Ministers Ordained in Another Denomination, (NOT UCC),**
61 **Seeking Ordained Minister Standing Within The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

62 **Summary of Procedures for Application for Standing**

63 *The following eight points outline, in brief, the procedure for applying for Standing. The full*
64 *explanation follows of Procedure, Requirements, Documentation provided to the Candidate and*
65 *required from the Candidate. Please read carefully all information which follows.*

- 66 **1.** Secure material and forms needed for application (see attached list). Consult with the appropriate
67 Regional Minister Team member concerning clarification of materials. Obtain appropriate transcripts
68 from colleges and seminaries.
- 69 **2.** Submit written materials and transcripts prior to an interview with the RCOM Coordinator or Regional
70 Minister Team member designated.
- 71 **3.** Schedule an interview with the appropriate Regional Minister Team member. Meet with that person.
72 With the assistance of that person, schedule an interview with the Commission on the Order of Ministry
73 so that appropriate documents may be presented and a personal interview conducted.



- 74 **4.** Be willing to submit a summary of recent psychological tests to the RCOM Coordinator, or arrange
75 with him/her for the tests to be conducted by the agency designated by the region. Submit the four
76 reference letters to the Commission office. These are all to be submitted thirty days prior to the interview
77 with the Commission.
- 78 **5.** Meet with the Commission on the Order of Ministry. If a positive determination is made, the
79 candidate will be “brought under care” and assigned to an ordained Disciple pastor as the candidate’s
80 Mentor.
- 81 **6.** Participate in guided reading and learning about the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for a period
82 of six to eighteen months, usually one year if carefully scheduled. This is for the mutual growth in
83 relationships between the candidate and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Complete and submit
84 certificate of completion of a course in Disciples History and Polity.
- 85 **7.** After the study program is completed and a final report is submitted by the Mentor, meet a second time
86 with RCOM for a review of the progress and consideration for standing.
- 87 **8.** If progress warrants and all reports and recommendations are positive, the Commission will grant
88 Standing in accordance with procedures of the “Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria of the
89 Order of Ministry” and the Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America.

90 **Additional Information to Guide Candidates in the Process toward Standing**

- 91 **1.** Any minister from another denomination seeking recognition of Ordination and Standing must meet
92 the same standards of preparation and fitness as those who are members of the Christian Church
93 (Disciples of Christ) and seek Ordination and Standing through the processes of nurture and certification.
94 The standards for the latter process are specified in the *Theological Foundations and Policies and*
95 *Criteria for the Ordering of the Ministry the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, [pg. 34-35] and
96 normally include a graduate degree from an ATS accredited theological seminary or equivalent from an
97 institution of higher education, endorsement from a regional Commission on the Order of Ministry, and
98 sponsorship by two local Disciple congregations.
- 99 **2.** Ordained ministers of other denominations seeking Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of
100 Christ) need to, (1) read the above mentioned “Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria...,”
101 document to identify the procedures to follow, (2) schedule an interview with the Mid-America Regional
102 Minister Team member responsible for such interviews. Concerning the interview, the Candidate needs
103 to understand that issues of confidentiality are balanced with concerns of collegiality, and data learned in
104 the process may be shared, when appropriate, with the Commission on the Order of Ministry and (3)
105 complete a course In Disciples History and Polity.
- 106 The content of the interview will include an exploration of motive, need, realistic opportunity of
107 placement with a Disciples congregation, or other ministry setting, a discussion of relationships with
108 judicatory officials of the present denomination, an examination of differences of theology, ecclesiology
109 and methodologies in ministry, and any other questions considered appropriate by the Regional Minister
110 Team member conducting the interview.



- 111 **3.** The Candidate shall submit a written statement concerning his/her understanding of ministry within
112 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This statement should include a description of the pilgrimage
113 of faith that has resulted in the request for standing in the Disciples church, the meaning of “Church,” the
114 meaning of “Ministry” and the role and authority of ministers. It must also reveal the candidate’s
115 understanding of the structure and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as well as concepts
116 of ministry found in that body.
- 117 **4.** The Candidate shall present documentation of ordination as well as a Ministerial Profile, official
118 transcripts from the colleges and seminaries attended, four references from clergy and laity who have
119 observed the candidate’s ministry, and evidence that the candidate is a minister in good standing within
120 the present denomination. Contacts and references may be sought from the candidate’s present
121 denomination before standing is approved, so responsibility lies with the candidate to inform the
122 Regional Minister Team member or the Commission on the Order of Ministry if there is a reason this
123 contact should not be made or should be delayed.
- 124 **5.** The Candidate must be willing to undergo a psychological evaluation. This will be with an agency
125 specified by RCOM or a Regional Minister Team member. If a recent psychological evaluation is
126 presented, the evaluating agency must be acceptable to RCOM. Any cost for the psychological
127 evaluation will be at the expense of the Candidate. Care and respect for the confidentiality of the
128 Candidate will be given.
- 129 **6.** The Candidate shall be assigned to an Ordained Disciples of Christ minister in good standing who will
130 serve as the Candidate’s Mentor. The role of the Mentor is to offer counsel, support and guidance during
131 this period of transition between denominations. The Mentor’s evaluation of the candidate’s progress
132 shall become part of the data to determine the Candidate’s qualifications and fitness for ministry in the
133 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 134 **7.** In a time frame of twelve to eighteen months, the candidate will follow a course of action proposed by
135 the Commission, which includes but is not limited to assigned readings, interviews with established
136 Disciple of Christ leaders, and participation in regional and general events such as assemblies,
137 workshops, leadership labs.
- 138 **8.** Following self-examination, the initial interview with a Regional Minister Team member, an
139 interview with RCOM, and the period of directed study (all of which are set out above), there will be a
140 second interview with RCOM. The progress of the Candidate will be evaluated from the reports of the
141 above. The granting of standing may be considered at this time. Standing may be granted; or if the
142 Commission members desire to see more progress on the part of the Candidate, Standing may be
143 deferred.
- 144 **9.** Completing the process for Recognition of Standing does not, in itself, assure a position in ministry
145 within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The “call” system of the Christian Church leaves to
146 congregations, and other ministry units, the right to select their own minister(s) within the policies and
147 criteria of the Christian Church. Although the Regional Minister Team provides consultation and
148 assistance in every way possible in the process of the call, they will not presume upon the authority of the
149 congregation. The “call” of a congregation to a minister to become the settled pastor does not, in itself,
150 assure recognition of standing. That function has been delegated to the Region, which has delegated it to



151 RCOM. However, temporary Recognition of Ordination in another denomination may be granted by the
152 Commission for the purpose of allowing time for the minister to complete the process of obtaining
153 Standing in the above-described manner. Granting of a temporary Recognition of Ordination in another
154 denomination will be at the discretion of RCOM.

155 **10.** Upon satisfactory completion of examination, positive recommendation given by the responsible
156 Regional Minister Team member and affirmation by RCOM, Standing shall be granted with the
157 Recognition of Ordination in another denomination. It is recommended that this be publicly recognized
158 with a Certificate of Recognition given in a worship celebration, presented by a Regional Minister Team
159 member or a chosen representative.

160 **Items to be provided to the Candidate and Items to be submitted to the RCOM Coordinator and to**
161 **the Commission on the Order of Ministry for Application for Standing in The Christian Church**
162 **(Disciples of Christ)**

163 **A. Items to be furnished to the Candidate by the Regional Church**

- 164 1. A copy of the “Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in
165 the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” found at [http://www.mid-](http://www.mid-america-disciples.org/commission-on-the-order-of-ministry)
166 [america-disciples.org/commission-on-the-order-of-ministry](http://www.mid-america-disciples.org/commission-on-the-order-of-ministry)
- 167 2. A copy of COM 8: “Concerning the Consideration for Standing of Clergy Ordained in Other
168 Denominations”
169 [http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5419632ce4b0982954712b86/](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5419632ce4b0982954712b86/1410949932436/COM+3+++Revised+2014.pdf)
170 [1410949932436/COM+3+++Revised+2014.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5419632ce4b0982954712b86/1410949932436/COM+3+++Revised+2014.pdf)
- 171 3. A copy of “Application for the Recognition of Ordination and Standing”
172 [http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5551e025e4b094463960d967/](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5551e025e4b094463960d967/1431429157369/Appendix+1.pdf)
173 [1431429157369/Appendix+1.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/5551e025e4b094463960d967/1431429157369/Appendix+1.pdf)
- 174 4. Appendix 3, Minister Information Form, so Minister’s Profile might be completed.
175 [http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/54d3502fe4b0526a666c0ec0/](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/54d3502fe4b0526a666c0ec0/1423134767952/Appendix+3.pdf)
176 [1423134767952/Appendix+3.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53c68a2de4b0929c16dd9bf2/t/54d3502fe4b0526a666c0ec0/1423134767952/Appendix+3.pdf)
- 177 5. A copy of the DOC Ministerial Code of Ethics
- 178 6. A copy of *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of*
179 *the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*

180 **B. Items to be submitted by the Candidate**

- 181 1. Application for Recognition of Ordination and Standing
- 182 2. Ministerial Profile with references and background check. References will include clergy and
183 laity, from the denomination of present standing and at least one from a Disciples colleague.
- 184 3. Letters of reference from both the sponsoring and supporting Disciples of Christ congregations
- 185 4. Documentation of ordination and standing with present denomination
- 186 5. Official transcripts from college(s), university(ies) and seminary(ies) attended
- 187 6. A summary of recent psychological evaluation
- 188 7. A statement of the candidate’s reasons for seeking standing with the Christian Church
189 (Disciples of Christ) and an understanding of ministry within our denomination.