

Why I Love the Church

Last week, August 14-15, I staffed the meeting of the **Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry (RCOM)**. Over our 2-day meeting, the Commission members, our Regional Ministers and I interviewed eight candidates who are preparing for ministry. **Three of the candidates were approved for ordination** and one of those 3 women, Angela Williams, was ordained on Saturday, August 19th.

That great event got me thinking as I reflected on the end of one journey for our candidate, now ordained Disciples of Christ pastor, and the beginning of her new journey. How did she get to the moment when hands were laid on her head and all gathered gave God thanks and prayed for her and her ministry? How did she arrive at that moment?

The first answer should be obvious. It is because **she prepared well and worked hard**—days and weeks, months and years of preparation: classes, papers to write, exams to take, annual interviews with RCOM, all while working full time in a secular job and pastoring congregations. Angela worked, studied and sacrificed to answer the call God laid on her heart. Praise God!

But there is a second answer to my question—to how Angela came to that moment of blessing and celebration on August 19th at Montgomery City Christian Church. Ask yourselves this: **Who else and what else made the journey with her**; brought her to the moment she rose from where



she was kneeling to receive the love and congratulations of the gathered family of faith? The answer is you—so many of you throughout the Mid-America Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We all know the saying: “It takes a village.” But here’s another truth saying: “It takes the Church.”

Why do I love the Church? Because of people like you—lay leaders, pastors, spouses, family, friends and teachers—the list goes on and on—so many members of the CC(DOC) in Mid-America who faithfully raise up, teach, guide, encourage and nurture our candidates on their journey.

In our denomination, those who feel God’s tug on their heart, God’s insistent call begin that journey in congregations like yours and mine. They begin that journey meeting with one of our Regional ministers, talking about their sense of call and desire to serve in ministry. Based on the outcome of that conversation, individuals meet with the members of the Commission on Ministry—16 lay leaders and clergy from across our Region. Those 16 individuals—all volunteers--commit 6 years of service to RCOM. Their role is to **interview, challenge, encourage and hold accountable those received into candidacy**. They meet with our candidates for typically 3-5 years, maybe more, as candidates complete their education, meet the requirements for ordination and serve our congregations. But that’s not all!

A candidate is sponsored and supported by 2 congregations within our Region. And many have a home church where they were raised and from which they were sent. They are assigned a mentor—DOC pastor or chaplain. They have an **ordination nurture team** made of, again, of 7-8 lay and clergy from across our Region. All those faithful volunteers walk alongside our candidates throughout their journey. God bless you all for that commitment.

Year after year, Disciples have raised up pastoral leaders here in Mid-America and across our denomination. **Church members, pastors, entire congregations—all committed to preparing those candidates to be servant leaders and ministers of Christ’s Gospel**. I am moved by and deeply grateful for that kind of committed service by our Mid-America congregations. Like our newly ordained sister and pastor, I was raised up, called and sent by people like you. I was given the support and nurture, encouragement, prodding and means by Disciples congregations which allowed me to be educated and prepared to answer God’s call and serve Christ’s Church. Reflecting on Angela’s journey and all who walked with her I can say with a grateful heart, ‘these are my people.’ The people of God in our small part of the Universal Church. We call ourselves Disciples—a servant Church for Christ’s Gospel and God’s Kingdom. **Thanks be to God.**

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Commission on the Order of Ministry