

# **RCOM Policy Compilation**

**May 2022**

**Version 4**

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## Inclusion Statement

A statement regarding inclusion, a welcome announcement to clearly describe the existing position of our work with candidates.

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest Regional Committee on Ministry receives candidates that are sponsored by a local congregation. As such it is the congregation that endorses a candidate and presents the candidate on a path toward representative ministry. Congregations are the first covenantal process in the journey.<sup>1</sup> RCOM does not speak for congregations, nor create policies to dictate what candidates a congregation may submit.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest Regional Committee on Ministry (CCSW RCOM) has no barriers in the determination of persons being granted access to the process of ordination and/or commissioning, and standing does not and shall not differentiate based on theological position (conservative, liberal, etc.), race, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, or language.

In making decisions about whom to Commission or Ordain, the policies that follow, help the Regional Committee on Ministry to determine that candidates possess:

- the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,
- the God-given gifts and graces,
- the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
- the preparation and promise (e.g., education, skills, etc.) that they have for effective ministry.

By these criteria, and the policies that follow, CCSW RCOM discerns whom it will Commission and/or Ordain, in partnership with their sponsoring congregation.<sup>2</sup>

Further, we recognize and celebrate God working in and through local congregations as they seek clergy calls to serve in local pastoral settings. Congregational freedom is part of our cherished covenant, and congregations alone endorse candidates, call pastors and employee staff.

As we embrace this process together, let us pray for God's spirit to guide and empower us. May our journey with one another be enriching and relationally binding through Jesus Christ, who calls us to partner in ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Modified: 04/26/2022

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<sup>1</sup> Sharing the Journey, Adopted 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), line 340.

<sup>3</sup> Sharing the Journey.

## RCOM Ordination Process

The journey to ordination is a partnership among you, your sponsoring congregation, the Region, your education and God. We work together for the good of the Gospel and the Church.

The practice of the Southwest Region is to see candidates on a regular basis with at least one meeting of RCOM in between interviews. Listed below are the basic steps in the interview process with the RCOM. We hope this will help you in your preparations for interview questions along the way. Please know that to best prepare you for ministry, more interviews and learning opportunities may be recommended and/or required by the committee.

We pray that the candidacy process is challenging and hopeful; rigorous and supportive. We want creative, faithful, well-prepared ministers leading us in response to God's call.

<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Interview</b>
<p><b>Preparation for Initial Interview</b></p> <p>a) An interview with your Area Minister.</p> <p>b) Completion of Personal Data Form, Application for Candidacy for Ordination, CCSW Personal Disclosure Form, Criminal Background Check Form.*</p> <p>c) Review <i>Theological Foundations and Policies &amp; Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)</i> and <i>My Ministerial Code of Ethics</i>.*</p>	<p><b>Initial Interview</b></p> <p>Getting to know the candidate - personal story, background etc.</p> <p>Topics for questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Current church setting (membership/work)</li> </ul> <p>Start <i>Sharing the Journey</i> - bring congregational representative next time</p>
<p><b>Expectation for Intermediate Interview</b></p> <p>a) Paper – on the understanding of Scripture. Answering the question “What is the Gospel?”</p> <p>b) Be prepared for theological questions designated in the Intermediate Interviews (see block to right)</p> <p>c) Psychological Assessment completed and documentation in Regional Office.*</p>	<p><b>First Intermediate Interview</b></p> <p>Reflect upon education thus far and current work setting.</p> <p>Questions on paper (Focus upon scripture) Topics for questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church</li> <li>• Jesus and God</li> <li>• Lord’s Supper and Baptism</li> <li>• Salvation</li> <li>• Ordination</li> </ul>

<p><b><i>In between Intermediate Interviews</i></b>  Mini-Mock Interview - would consist of 3-5 classmates/mentors/clergy working with the candidate to clarify articulation and depth of responses to interview questions. It is an informal opportunity to strengthen your preparation for ministry and needs to address multiple topics.</p>	<p><b>Second Intermediate Interview</b>  Reflect upon <i>Sharing the Journey</i>  Experience Work setting  Update on education Topics  for questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning of ordination</li> <li>• Self-care</li> <li>• Pastoral care</li> <li>• Theology of stewardship</li> <li>• Disciples History and Polity</li> </ul>
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<p><b><i>In preparation for ordination interview</i></b></p> <p>a) Paper on “Theology of Ministry and The Church” (5-7 pages).*</p> <p>b) Mock interview – following the traditional guidelines. Letter from the Area Committee holding the mock interview due with paperwork.</p> <p>c) Letter from sponsoring congregation (preferably Congregational Care Committee) indicating the work of the candidate during this process.</p> <p>d) Taped sermon (utilizing current lectionary texts –assigned by RCOM). *</p> <p>e) Complete Search and Call packet (may take 4 to 6 weeks) *</p>	<p><b>Ordination Interview with Full Committee</b>  Be ready to respond to any questions.</p>
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**\*See forms, documents and further instructions on website at [ccsw.org/ordination-process](http://ccsw.org/ordination-process)**

### Educational Requirements

<b>Master of Divinity</b>	<b>Apprentice Track</b>
Transcript Disciples History and Polity Healthy Boundaries for Clergy Training	TBD Disciples History and Polity Healthy Boundaries for Clergy Training

## Initial Interview Outline

- [] Before Candidate, subcommittee makes assignments
- [] Pray
- [] Ask candidate to tell us about themselves
- [] Call
- [] Education
- [] Work
- [] Current church setting
- [] Adjourn candidate: subcommittee discussion and reflection
- [] Subcommittee summarizes to paperwork
- [] Candidate returns to receive results and decision
- [] Affirmations and recommendation
- [] Start sharing the journey
- [] Share grid chart
- [] Candidate sign paperwork
- [] Ask candidates to pray as closure

## First Intermediate Interview Outline

- [] Before Candidate, subcommittee makes assignments
- [] Pray
- [] Ask candidate to catch us up since last interview
- [] Tell us about *Sharing the Journey*
- [] Church
- [] Jesus and God
- [] Lord's supper and baptism
- [] Salvation
- [] Ordination
- [] Adjourn candidate: subcommittee discussion and reflection
- [] Subcommittee summarizes to paperwork
- [] Candidate returns to receive results and decision
- [] Affirmations and recommendation
- [] Possible suggest Mock Interview
- [] Candidate sign paperwork
- [] Ask candidates to pray as closure



## Second Intermediate Interview Outline

- [] Before Candidate, subcommittee makes assignments
- [] Pray
- [] Ask candidate to catch us up since last interview
- [] Tell us about *Sharing the Journey*
- [] Meaning of Ordination
- [] Self-care
- [] Pastoral Care
- [] Theology of Stewardship
- [] Disciple History and Polity
- [] Adjourn candidate: subcommittee discussion and reflection
- [] Subcommittee summarizes to paperwork
- [] Candidate returns to receive results and decision
- [] Affirmations and recommendation
- [] Possible suggest Mock Interview
- [] Candidate sign paperwork
- [] Ask candidates to pray as closure

## Ordination Interview Outline

- [] Before Candidate, make assignments and first questions
- [] Pray
- [] Introductions around the room
- [] Ask candidate to catch us up since last interview
- [] Interview questions to touch as many areas as possible
- [] Adjourn candidate: subcommittee discussion and reflection
- [] Committee summarizes to paperwork
- [] Candidate returns to receive results and decision
- [] Affirmations and recommendation
- [] Candidate sign paperwork
- [] Ask candidates to pray as closure

Call

Education

Work/Current setting

Church

Jesus and God

Lord's Supper and Baptism

Salvation

Ordination

Scripture: authority and interpretation

Self-Care/Pastoral Care

Theology of Stewardship

Disciple History and Polity

Anti-racism Reconciliation

Church Admin and Planning

Ecumenism

Evangelism

Mission of the Church/World

Ethics

Worship

## Orientation Session for New RCOM Members

### I. What does the RCOM do?

- Nurtures candidates for ordination and transfer of ordination/ recognition of standing
- Authorizes ordination
- Maintains the standards for holding standing in the Order of Ministry
- Has responsibility for ethics and misconduct outside of cases of alleged sexual misconduct
  - RCOM is the “court of appeals” if the accused or the accuser seeks additional processing
- Acts on behalf of the whole church

### II. Who is on the RCOM?

- Representatives from the 8 Historical Areas and Lower Rio Grande Valley District
- Representatives from covenant institutions of higher learning, i.e., Jarvis, TCU and Brite
- Representatives from Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship and the Convención
- Six (6) at-large members elected by the Regional Assembly
- Regional Minister
- Regional Executive Minister, non-voting
- Two (2) officers of RCOM: Chair and Secretary

### III. Who does the RCOM report to?

- Regional Council
  - The RCOM Chair is a member of the Regional Council
  - Our Committee reports to the Regional Council directly
  - Our work is described in the Regional Design
- Regional Assembly
- God – often, the actions we are called to take are matters of conscience and deeply held conviction

### IV. What should you expect at a RCOM meeting?

- Full Committee Interviews - Final Interviews before the entire committee for ordination, recognition of ordination/transfer of standing; also full committee hearings for ethical/disciplinary issues.
- Sub-committee Interviews - Initial and Intermediate Interviews with candidates for ordination or for recognition of ordination/transfer of standing.
- Consideration of Business Items – full committee discussions of the items that need to come before the RCOM. Consideration of these Business Items is often worked around our interview schedule.

- Frustration - it's hard to work effectively with a group this large; it takes time to talk things through, the matters before us are difficult, at nearly every meeting there is at least one time when I think we've made the wrong decision.
- Moments of "Wow!" – at every meeting, I am taught and humbled and inspired by our candidates and by my colleagues on the RCOM.
- The opportunity to wrestle with hard issues – this committee frequently has to grapple with: the changing leadership needs of the church, inclusion issues; justice issues (race, gender, economic); changing demographics in our congregations and in our region; what does it mean to work in Covenant with other expressions of the church; how do we stay faithful to our heritage as Disciples?

#### **V. What are the Norms of the RCOM?**

Punctuality - we will start and end on time

Honesty- we must be willing to speak the truth in love to each other and to our candidates

Directness – we must ask our questions and speak our differences **TO EACH OTHER** as mature and responsible Christians. No parking lot meetings.

Confidentiality – the deliberations of RCOM are confidential.

This assurance of confidentiality is essential to protect the honesty that we must have to do our work.

Hospitality

Spirituality

Respect for our candidates

#### **VI. Resources that Inform our Work**

Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry / Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Interview Questions for Candidates Seeking Ordination (Draft)

Candidate's Educational And Experiential History

"Sharing the Journey"

Forms used by the RCOM to document the candidate's process with the committee

## Retired Commissioned

### 1. Criteria

- a. A person must be at least 65 years of age.
- b. A person must have been a licensed/commissioned minister at least five (5) years under the care of an Area Committee on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest, or an equivalent committee of another Region, or another denomination.
- c. A person who meets the above criteria must make a formal request to the appropriate Area Committee on Ministry to be considered for "Commissioned Minister Retired" [CMR] status.

### 2. Accompanying Privileges

- a. A CMR would no longer need to meet with the Area Committee on Ministry regularly.
- b. A CMR would be granted a permanent commission<sup>1</sup>
- c. A CMR would be granted Standing each year, upon completion of the "Annual Ministerial Standing Renewal" form and upon approval of the Regional Minister/Committee on Standing.
- d. A CMR would be formally recognized at the next Regional Assembly following the granting of the new status.

### 3. Process

- a. An Area Committee on Ministry will review the request and, if granted, will forward it to the Regional Committee on Ministry for presenting a certificate for Commissioned Minister Retired.
- b. The Regional Committee on Ministry will review requests and prepare certificates and arrange appropriate ceremonies for the presentation of this special credential.

\* \*Thank you to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas for sharing their policy that forms the foundation of this document.

\* \* Approved by the CCSW Regional Committee on **Ministry**, January 2014.

## Minister Criminal Background Check

<b>Title</b>	<b>Policy for Criminal Background Checks Ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest.</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	This policy standardizes background check frequency
<b>Definitions:</b>	<b>Minister with standing:</b> A minister with standing is either an ordained or commissioned minister who has not had standing withdrawn for cause or had a clerical removal or hold on standing.  <b>Background Check Service</b> —A vendor who provides criminal background checks for fee.
<b>Details:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Regional Executive shall select a Background Check Service(s) to provide thorough background checks as affordably as possible.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The Regional Executive or Regional Ministerial staff overseeing background checks shall use the selected background check service for all criminal background checks except where residential addresses must be used to conduct the check in place of social security numbers.</li><li>b. When an alternative background check service is used, the commissioned minister or commissioned minister’s congregation may be asked to cover the additional expense.</li></ol></li><li>2. A minister making initial application for commissioning or entering the process of ordination will authorize the CCSW to conduct a criminal background check as part of the initial interview process.</li><li>3. Candidates for ordination submit to the criminal background check connected to the Search and Call ministerial profile.</li><li>4. All ministers commissioned and ordained, who enter into search and call will complete the criminal background check connected to the Search and Call ministerial profile.</li><li>5. Ministers with standing in the Christian Church in the Southwest will authorize criminal background checks every five years along with their boundaries training renewal.</li><li>6. Any criminal violations that appear on a background check will be discussed confidentially between the applicant and the Regional Executive or Regional Ministerial staff overseeing background checks.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The commissioning applicant or minister with a violation on their report shall be encouraged to make disclosure to the overseeing CCOM and the elders of the congregation served. Commissioning or standing can be denied by the Regional Executive or Regional Ministerial staff member overseeing background checks will recommend denying or removing commissioning or standing renewal to the Regional Committee of Ministry if:</li></ol></li></ol>

- i. the criminal record reveals a crime against persons (assault, rape, etc.) or
  - ii. a crime that would jeopardize faithful execution of ministerial duties or
  - iii. if the minister refuses to provide explanation of the recorded crimes to the Regional Executive or Regional Ministerial staff overseeing background checks, CCOM or congregational leadership.
7. If a criminal background reveals an offense, the Regional Executive or Regional Ministerial staff overseeing background check, may indicate to CCOM and the employing congregation that the criminal background check is not “clear” and/or share information in accordance with the policies of the background check service.
  8. Clear criminal background will not be discussed other than to provide assurance to CCOM or congregation that the background check was clear.

**Applicability:** Ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest.

**Authority** CCSW Regional Committee on Ministry

**Implementation:** Policy applies to initial commissioning occurring after January 1, 2019 and to Commissioning Renewals where the last completed criminal background check by an area was done more than two years prior to November 1, 2019.

**Relevant Policies or Documents** Regional Committee on Ministry Minutes.

**Approval and Revision History** September 17, 2018, RCOM Approval first draft as Commissioned Clergy Criminal Background Check Policy  
*Revisions September 2019* making this policy effective for all clergy and connecting it to Boundaries training approved by the September 2019 RCOM Meeting

## Commissioned Minister Expectations

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest  
Commissioned Minister Expectations

- Title                      Commissioned Minister Expectations
- Purpose:                    The Purpose of this document is to clarify the annual requirements for commissioned ministers, the ministers for whom commissioning is most appropriate, and the progression of a commissioned minister from initial commissioning through to career commissioned minister. The Christian Church in the Southwest affirms the values of collegiality and accountability.
- Definitions:            Commissioned Minister: Commissioning is a recognition of a Minister's call and authority to have ministerial standing by a local congregation or Disciple-related ministry in collaboration with the Region. Commissioning applies to a particular person in a particular call and location and continues for the time they serve in that ministry and as long as they meet the expectations given by CCSW for Commissioned Ministers. Commissioned Ministry is most appropriate for the following kinds of ministers:
- Initial Commissioning--Discerning Call to Ministry—People who are accepting an initial ministry position and discerning a call to ministry long-term.
  - Non-Disciples Serving Disciples Congregation. Commissioning is a way for people who have been educated and experienced in ministry in another denomination to be in covenant relationship with Disciples for the time that they are serving a Disciples congregation.
  - Seminary Students. Commissioning provides for credentials to seminary students while they are serving in field-education placement or ministry settings while in seminary.
  - Career Commissioned Ministers. Commissioned Ministers for whom Commissioning enables them to fulfill their call in accountable and collegial ways. Career Commissioned Ministers have completed foundational ministry education (see below), have at least five years of continuous service in a Disciples congregation or Disciple-related Ministry. Have completed annual CCOM interviews and had a capstone Career Commissioned Interview with a CCOM.

CCOM: Commissioning Committee(s) on Ministry are geographically dispersed committees gathered for initial commissioning interviews and annual standing renewal interviews for Commissioned Ministers in the Christian Church in the Southwest. CCOMs will: (a) be authorized to their work by the Regional Committee on Ministry; (b) be geographically accessible to candidates; (c) be consistent with other



CCOMs across the region in the criteria and explanation of expectations for Commissioned Ministers.

The lead member of each CCOM will assume responsibility of recruiting additional members (3-5 total members per committee is optimal). They will recruit interpreters when necessary. The Regional Ministry staff will work with the CCOM to provide language interpretation or accessibility modifications where necessary.

Details:

Annual Standing for Commissioned Ministers would be achieved through:

(a) Interview-Meeting with Commissioning Committee on Ministry

1) Renewal for Commissioned ministers who are in the Initial Commissioning Phase, Seminary Students, and Non-Disciples Serving Disciples Congregations are required to meet with a CCOM ever year. The purpose of this interview is to be in dialogue with the minister about what they have experienced in the last year of ministry. What challenges and successes have they experienced? This interview is also an opportunity to grow and strengthen the relationship between the minister and the larger church. CCOMs should ask how best we can support the minister's ministry. Note: For Commissioned Ministers pursuing ordination, a regular RCOM interview (Initial, first or second intermediate, or final) will serve as CCOM interview.

2) New commissioning

i. Candidates will be offered the opportunity to interview with a CCOM when they have completed and submitted to the Regional Executive:

1. the application
2. the congregational endorsement
3. the disclosures
4. the criminal background check.
5. Introductory memo from a Regional Ministry staff person, preferably the CRM serving their service field.

ii. The purpose of this interview is to get to know the minister and establish a relationship between the minister and the larger church. Topics for questions should include: call, education, work history, their current work setting, Disciples Ministerial

Code of Ethics, and CCSW requirements for initial and continued standing.

- iii. Renewal paperwork (but not a second interview) will be needed on November 1 of the year to be renewed.
- 3) A Career Commissioned Interview will be offered to a commissioned minister who has completed five years of continual ministry in one location or between two locations and has completed the foundational ministry training (CCSW Learn or Certificate Program). The Career Commissioned Interview will involve the minister's
  - i. Theology of Ministry
  - ii. Disciples Identity and Covenant Relationship with the Disciples of Christ
  - iii. Ministry Record of Service--
  - iv. Education and Training for Ministry
- 4) Following the Career Commissioned Minister Interview, the Career Commissioned Minister will visit with a CCOM at least once every five years for prayer, encouragement, support and accountability.

(b) Completion of Paperwork

First-Time Commissioned Ministers

- 1) Commissioned Minister Application Form
- 2) Congregational or Disciple-related ministry Support for Commissioned Ministers affirmed by a non-related leader in congregation or ministry
- 3) Criminal Background Verification Release Form

Renewal of Commissioning

- 1) Commissioned Minister Renewal Form
- 2) Congregational or Disciple-related ministry Support for Commissioned Ministers affirmed by a non-related leader in congregation or ministry

(c) Required Education

- 1) Foundational Education—Commissioned ministers' foundational training must include education in all sixteen competencies and practical ministry, regardless of the time length necessary to complete.
  - i. CCSW will issue a "Record of Completion" to ministers who complete the Regionally-Sponsored Training Plan.

- ii. CCSW may issue a “Record of Completion” to any minister who has completed an Area-sponsored ministry training plan.
  - iii. Commissioned Ministers who have completed Area-sponsored training sessions related to the 16 competencies but have not completed an entire plan may submit a record of the area-sponsored trainings they have completed to be included in partial completion of their progress toward the “Record of Completion.”
  - iv. CCSW ~~may~~ will regard Disciples-related complete ministry certifications or approved ministry preparation certificates as equivalent to the CCSW Record of Completion.
    - ✦ Known and approved programs are listed in Appendix A.
- 2) Commissioned ministers with less than five years of commissioning or who have not completed a foundational education certificate will be expected to complete 4 regionally-sponsored Commissioned Minister Training sessions or alternatives identified in Appendix A that equal 4 classes.
  - 3) After foundational ministry education is complete, commissioned ministers will be expected to complete 12 hours annually of professional development exclusive of Boundaries Training or PRAR Requirement in the form of CCSW Learn, Constituency Group Sponsored Ministry Workshops, Ministry Education from qualified resource (i.e., Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, Healthy Churches, Coach Approach Ministries, The Church Network, etc.)
  - 4) Commissioned Ministers with an earned degree including not less than 36 hours of graduate ministry education are exempted from the foundational of the CCSW Commissioned Ministers Expectations.

#### Regional

- (a) Completed portfolios for initial commissioning (paperwork, interview summary form, and any completed educational work) will be submitted to the Regional Executive.
- (b) The Regional Executive will publish a schedule with Commissioned Minister interview/meeting times. If a Commissioned Minister cannot make their scheduled time they should communicate with the lead member of their CCOM or the Regional Executive immediately for rescheduling.

- (c) New Commissions are issued after all required documentation is submitted to the Regional Executive, required trainings have been completed, background checks made, and on the approval of the interviewing CCOM.
- (d) New commissions approved by CCOM will run from CCOM/Regional Executive approval date until the Last Day of February the following year.

**Applicability:** Policy goes into effect in 2019 and covers 2020 standing.  
 April 2022 and covers 2023 and forward ministry

**Authority** Regional Committee on Ministry

**Implementation:** Initial: January 20, 2019  
 Revision, September 19, 2019  
 Revision, April, 2022

**Relevant Policies or Documents** Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Approval and Revision History** Approved, January 15, 2019, Regional Committee on Ministry  
 Revised, September 19, 2019, Regional Committee on Ministry

**Author(s)** Revisions approved, January 2020, Regional Committee on Ministry  
 Rev. Andy Mangum, Regional Minister; Rev. Christy Drechsel, Regional Executive;  
 Revision, RCOM Task Force (Sutton, Rawlins, Hargrave, Velasquez, Mangum), February 2022àRCOM April 2022

Appendix A  
Approved Sources for Annual Education

1. Four Regionally-sponsored training events localized throughout the region. Cost for participation \$50 per course OR
2. Four classes with the Texas Bible Chair OR
3. Participation in Southwest Hispanic Summer Ministry Institute ~~Training Week~~ (Rosemont)—collaboration between Brite and Southwest Hispanic Convention. This week-long program covers ministers' complete annual training requirement OR
4. Participation in Escuela De Formacion Ministerial
5. At least two completed courses with an approved ministry training certificate program:
  - a. Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from the Center for Ministry and Lay Training, Phillips Seminary.
  - b. Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from Lexington Theological Seminary.
  - c. Certificado en Ministerios Hispanos from Lexington Theological Seminary.
  - d. Certificate in African-American Ministry from Lexington Theological Seminary.
  - e. Certificate of Ministry Studies (Spanish) from Disciples Seminary Foundation
  - f. Truett Seminary Certificate Program
  - g. SMU Perkins School of Theology Certificate in Practical Ministry
  - h. Other programs may be approved by RCOM
6. Six completed hours of seminary or graduate theological education OR
7. Be making progress with an Apprentice Track educational path toward ordination as approved by RCOM. OR
8. Have an earned theological graduate degree and be accepted as a candidate for Ordination or Recognition of Ordination by RCOM.

Appendix B  
16 Competencies

(from *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in Christian Church (Disciples of Christ; <http://disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/TFPCOM-Final.pdf>)*)

**Biblical Knowledge:** Be rooted and grounded in scripture and able to interpret and apply the scriptures in ways that are appropriate to original and contemporary contexts.

**Church Administration and Planning:** Be able to practice the principles of good administration, planning and implementing short- and long-range goals to enhance Congregational life in collaboration with teams and committees.

**Communication:** Be an effective communicator and be able to facilitate effective communication within and on behalf of the church.

**Cross Cultural and Anti-Racism Experience:** Be sensitive to the different manifestations of racism and prejudice in the culture and be committed to confronting and overcoming them.

**Ecumenism:** Exhibit a commitment to working with other Christians and denominations and with other faiths in programs of common witness and service, and to articulating the vision of the ecumenical and global church as a starting place for mission.

**Education and Leader Development:** Know the foundations of Christian education and the principles of leader development. Show competency in teaching children, youth, and adults, including lay leaders and staff.

**Ethics:** Be able to help parishioners think critically about the relationship of their faith to issues of justice, ethics and morality.

**Evangelism:** Be able to motivate Congregational members to share their faith through word and action.

**Mission of the Church in the World:** Be able to understand and articulate the centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

**Pastoral Care:** Be able to engage other persons with empathy and assess situations and relationships with the compassion of Christ, with sensitivity to culture and context. Be able to convey the healing power of God to those who suffer.

**Proclamation of the Word:** Know the practice and theory of Christian preaching. Be able to proclaim the Word of God, share the Good News of Jesus Christ, and help Congregational members apply their faith to daily life.

**Spiritual Development:** Establish and maintain spiritual disciplines that lead to personal growth

and help others develop a rich spiritual life.

**Stewardship:** Be able to develop and encourage healthy stewards who recognize and share generously God's abundant gifts for all creation.

**Theology:** Be able to articulate a coherent view of God's nature and activity in relation to the Christian tradition, to critically engage human situations from a perspective of faith, and to help persons recognize theological issues in their daily lives.

**Understanding of Heritage:** Have knowledge of and appreciation for the history and thought of Christianity and of the history, structure, practices, and ethos of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**Worship:** Know the purpose and elements of Christian worship. Have the ability to plan and lead meaningful worship by working with the worship team, musicians, and Congregational members.

Appendix C  
CCSW Regional Plan for Course Offerings for Commissioned Ministers

	A (2019)	B (2020)	C	D	E
February	Scripture and the Practice of Ministry	Theology	Scripture and the Practice of Discipleship OR Hermeneutics and Applications	Ethics	Mission of the Church & Ecumenism
April	Education and Leader Development	Disciples Identity	Pastoral Care Personal	Cultural Sensitivity /Anti-Racism	Proclamation of the Word
August	Communication	Practical Ministry 1	Spiritual Development	Pastoral— Congregational	Practical Ministry 2
November	Transformational Leadership	Evangelism	Stewardship	Church Administration	Worship



## Commissioning Committee on Ministry (CCOM) Info Sheet

### **Purpose**

Commissioning Committee(s) on Ministry are committees gathered for initial commissioning interviews and annual standing renewal interviews for commissioned ministers in the Christian Church in the Southwest. CCOMs will: (a) be authorized to their work by the Regional Committee on Ministry; (b) be geographically accessible to candidates; (c) be consistent with other CCOMs in the criteria and explanation of expectations for commissioned ministers.

### **Formation**

The lead member of the CCOM will be selected by RCOM with strong input from Area representatives to RCOM. The lead member of each CCOM will assume responsibility of recruiting additional members (3-5 total members per committee is optimal). They will recruit interpreters when necessary.

### **Interview Process**

Initial and Renewal Interviews have two different purposes. The CCOMs can expect to have all the minister's paperwork in front of them for the Initial Interview. The Renewal Interviews, though, will occur at various times throughout the year (determined by the individual CCOMs) with all paperwork due by November of the current year. (Initial Interviews – paperwork is necessary to conduct interview. Renewal Interviews – interview is one piece of what is required of the minister.) This document says a little more about timeline dates that the other expectation document. They both need to be consisted and both have a suggested administrative timeline, including when candidates can expect renewal certificates and cards returned to them. It is appropriate at each interview to remind the ministers of the Commissioned Minister requirements and to provide them with up to date information on Continuing Education opportunities.

### **Initial Interview Expectations**

The purpose of this interview is to get to know the minister and establish a relationship between the minister and the larger church. Topics for questions should include: call, education, work history, their current work setting.

### **Renewal Interview Expectations**

The purpose of this interview is to be in dialogue with the minister about what they have experienced in the last year of ministry. What challenges and successes have they experienced? This interview is also an opportunity to grow and strengthen the relationship between the minister and the larger church. CCOMs should ask how best we can support the minister's ministry.

## Temporary Administrative Removal of Standing Policy

<b>Title</b>	<b>Temporary Administrative Removal of Standing Policy</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	Process clarification to define the conditions under which a minister's standing may be temporarily removed and clarification and authorization for how to reinstate standing when it has been removed for temporary and/or clerical reasons.
<b>Definitions:</b>	<p><b>Standing--</b> In terms of the Office of Christian Vocations including Search and Call, a minister either has or does not have standing. However, the General Office of Christian Vocations does require a reason whenever a minister's standing is removed.</p> <p><b>Removal of Standing for Cause--</b> Removal of standing for Cause (disciplinary) creates a permanent flag and must be disclosed on a minister's ministerial profile.</p> <p><b>Temporary Administrative Removal of Standing—</b>Temporary Clerical Removal of Standing would occur when a minister does any one of the following: (1) Fails to complete required paperwork; (2) Fails to complete boundaries training on the appropriate timetable; (3) Fails to submit authorization for criminal background check. Return to standing can be remedied by completing missing items and would not require disclosure once reinstated.</p>
<b>Details:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. For ordained ministers to have standing in the Christian Church in the Southwest, they must:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Annually submit a Standing Renewal Form.</li><li>b. Complete regionally approved boundaries training every five years.</li><li>c. Submit authorization to perform criminal background checks every five years in conjunction with boundaries training.</li></ol></li><li>2. For a commissioned minister to have standing in the Christian Church in the Southwest, they must:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Annually meet with a Commissioning Committee on Ministry for accountability and relationship.</li><li>b. Participate in ministry training education (varies depending on certification track).</li><li>c. Annually submit necessary paperwork including request for renewal, congregational endorsement and disclosures</li><li>d. Submit authorization to perform criminal background checks every five years in conjunction with boundaries training.</li></ol></li><li>3. When the action is taken to temporarily remove standing, the Regional Minister or Regional Executive shall send a letter indicating</li></ol>

- that standing has been removed, citing reason(s) for the removal of standing, and clarify how the minister can have standing reinstated.
4. Once deficiencies are completed and documented evidence of correction is received, the Regional staff will take steps to renew the standing, update General Church records, and provide timely documentation to the minister.
  5. IMPORTANT NOTE: this removal of standing does not create the distinction as removal of standing for cause nor is it an official censure. Once the items are corrected, standing will be returned and the minister will not need to make notification of these actions on a disclosure form.

**Applicability:** This policy pertains to ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

**Authority** Regional Committee on Ministry

**Implementation:** September 30, 2019

**Relevant Policies or Documents**

**Approval and** Approved at the September 2019 RCOM Meeting

**Revision History**

**Author(s):** Andy Mangum, Regional Minister; Christy Drechsel, Regional Executive

Appendix A  
Sample Letter

Dear Rev.

Thank you for your service to the church. According to our records, we have not received your request for standing renewal form for the past 24 months. Also, our records indicate that your last boundaries training classes was completed seven years ago and boundaries training must be completed every five years.

This letter is to inform you that your standing has been temporarily removed. This temporary hold on your standing can be re-instated with documented correction of the missing paperwork and completion of boundaries training. Please understand that this removal of standing does not qualify as removal of standing for cause nor it is an official censure. Once the items are corrected, you will be returned to full standing and will not need to make notification of these.

Please feel free to contact us if you feel we are in error with our record keeping, if you have any questions, or if you are no longer in ministry or have knowingly allowed your standing to lapse and do not wish to resume standing with the Christian Church in the Southwest.

Sincerely,

Andy Mangum  
Regional Minister, CCSW

## Minister Transferring Regions

According to the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, “Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is credentialing for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a call to accountability to the church, and collegiality with other ministers both denominationally and ecumenically” (II.F.1). Furthermore, it states, “Responsibility for certification of Standing of minister and for annual review of that Standing within the Order of Ministry is lodged with the Region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry” (II.F.1.c). With this understanding, here are some suggestions for ministers who move from one region to another in ministry roles where the region holds the minister’s standing (this does not apply to ministers whose standing is held by GCOM).

### Definitions:

**Sending Region**—the region where the minister is leaving. The region who currently holds the minister’s standing.

**Receiving Region**—the region where the minister is going. The region who needs to hold the minister’s standing.

### Process

1. The minister should accept responsibility for ensuring that their standing resides where they do ministry. Ministers should not assume that regions have an automatic system for notifying one another of inter-regional transfers.
2. The minister should make sure the receiving region knows they are newly and officially in the region, find out what is required of them to get standing transferred to their new region, and accomplish such requirements. In most cases, the minister should contact the sending region requesting that standing verification be sent to their receiving region.
3. The minister should make sure the region follows through with reporting such new standing in the region by contacting Brenda Tyler at [btyler@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:btyler@dhm.disciples.org) four to six weeks after requesting the prior region to send verification of standing to the new region and completing the new region’s standing requirements.

**NOTE:** It is often the case that many clergy are in a position for quite some time without having standing transferred to their new region. The minister can be proactive by following the steps above because, if the sending region drops standing for the reason of “Minister no longer in region,” they function without standing in the new region.

## Non-Disciples Ministers Serving Disciples Congregations

Members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have an old slogan that begins, “We’re not the only Christians.” So, we value the partnerships we have with a variety of people from different denominations. As well, our local congregations have all the authority they need to call whomever they wish to serve as their minister. The Region—the Christian Church in the Southwest—serves alongside our local congregations to provide advice and to certify people as being—to the best of our knowledge—trustworthy and competent to serve as ministers in our congregations.

The primary way we do this is by granting Standing. Standing is best understood as a professional credential extended to persons by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the regions. It identifies a minister as having met requirements for the preparation for ministry, membership in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation, adherence to an ethical code of conduct, adherence to policies regarding sexual misconduct and conduct training (boundaries), regular communication with and accountability to judicatory offices, and active participation in ministry. Standing is reflected by inclusion in the “Ministers Directory” of the annual Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

However, we have several non-Disciples ministers serving Disciples congregations within our region who have the necessary training and may have standing within another denomination. This document explains how such ministers can signal their collaboration with us as we serve the mission of Christ and respect the Disciples identity of the congregations they serve. There are three pathways of ministers from other denominations to function within the Christian Church in the Southwest.

### Recognition of Ordination and Transfer of Standing

Ministers who are ordained in another congregation but who now wish to make the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) their denominational home may choose to enter into a process of Recognition of Ordination and Transfer of Standing. This pathway will involve meeting with the Regional Committee on Ministry at least three times. Once of an initial interview with a sub-committee, once for an intermediate interview with that same sub-committee, and once for a final interview with the complete Committee on Ministry. This pathway would also require letters from the home denomination clarifying the status of standing there, an MDiv or equivalent, an ATS Accredited Graduate-Level course in Disciples History and Polity, and essays detailing ones theology, ministry and reasons for transferring relationship to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Through this process, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) becomes the ministers home denomination. Ministers who move through this process are recognized as ordained ministers in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), their standing is held by the region where they are serving, and they maintain standing so long as they fulfill the requirements of standing.

### Commissioning

Commissioning is a form of entry into the order of ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Generally, it is the pathway of standing for ministers who do not have graduate theological education. However, **it is also our preferred way for ministers to affiliate with the**

**Disciples if they come from another** denomination. For ministers who have graduate theological education but are not ordained or who are ordained in another tradition, here are the requirements for commissioning for a minister with a graduate theological education.

#### For Initial Commissioning

1. Recommended but not required: An initial meeting with a Regional Ministry Staff Person
2. Complete:
  - a. Form A—Application for Commissioning
  - b. Form C—Congregational Endorsement
  - c. Form D—Disclosures
  - d. Form E—Consent for Criminal Background Check
3. Healthy Boundaries Training
4. Meet with CCOM (Commissioning Committee on Ministry)
5. For exemption from annual training—Evidence of Graduate Degree of not less than 36 graduate hours in an ATS Accredited Seminary in a ministry discipline.
6. Agree to adhere to the most recent version of the Disciples Ministerial Code of Ethics, and the Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry.

#### For Renewal of Commissioning

1. Submit all necessary forms for annual standing renewal with CCSW (B, C, and D).
2. Meet annually with a CCOM (Commissioning Committee on Ministry—these are Committees of Disciples positioned throughout the Region. Meetings are scheduled by the Regional Executive. [ccom@ccsw.org](mailto:ccom@ccsw.org))
3. Agree to adhere to the most recent version of the Disciples Ministerial Code of Ethics, and the Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry.
4. Receive training in the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) equivalent to the training required of commissioned ministers.
5. Submit to all required trainings of ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest (Currently that's only Boundaries Training).

Ministers Commissioned in this way would have all the rights and privileges of a minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

#### Regionally Affiliated Minister Status

Regionally Affiliated Minister Status is specifically designed for ministers who wish to have a covenant relationship with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) **in the Southwest** but for whom standing through commissioning would disqualify them from standing in their home denomination, betray personal commitments, or jeopardize accrued benefits such as pensions.

Initially:

1. Have an initial meeting with regional ministerial staff person who would explain to them the process and based on the staff person's own discernment would write a letter recommending them for affiliate status.
2. Submit to a criminal background check.
3. Provide a transcript with graduate theological/ministry education.
4. Meet with a CCOM who would either recommend or not recommend affiliate status to RCOM.
5. Where possible, provide a letter from denominational official verifying their good standing within their home denomination.
6. Receive or be enrolled to receive training in the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) equivalent to the training required of commissioned ministers.
7. Receive or be enrolled to receive boundaries training.

Renewal

1. Report annually like a minister with standing giving an Affiliation Form (similar to form B for commissioned ministers), Congregational Endorsement, and Disclosures.
2. Meet annually with a CCOM
3. Agree to adhere to the most recent versions of the Disciple Ministerial Code of Ethics.
4. Submit to all required trainings of ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest (Currently that's only Boundaries Training).

Ministers with Regionally Affiliated Status would come under the authority of the Regional Committee on Ministry with regard to ethical conduct. Any accusation of ministerial misconduct would be investigated by the RCOM, sanctions or withdrawal of status would be determined by RCOM. Removal of Status for cause would be treated as removal of standing with cause. Where possible, notification would be made to the minister's home denomination that the findings of ethical misconduct had been made, sanctions or withdrawal of status had been issued. Regionally Affiliated Ministers do not have the same rights and privileges of a minister with standing. The whole denomination (the General Church) does not have this category. However, the Regional Council and Regional Ministry staff are requested to treat Regionally-Affiliated Clergy as Disciples clergy in matters controlled by the region including voting privileges at Regional Assembly, participation on Regional Committees, installation services presided over by regional ministry staff, and limited and regionally-directed access to open positions within the CCSW—note this is especially beneficial for the region as we seek to recruit potential interim ministers.

Approved by Regional Committee on Ministry, January 2020



## Steps in the Process for Recognition of Ordination and Transfer of Standing

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understands the Body of Christ to be more than any one particular denomination or expression of the Christian Faith. Each tradition has its own particular path to ministry and requirements for ordination and standing. While respecting other traditions, a minister seeking recognition of her/his ordination and to transfer one's standing to the CC(DOC) in the CCSW will work with the Regional Committee on Ministry in the process outlined below.

### Preparation

1. Become involved with a recognized Disciples congregation
2. Meet with the pastor of that congregation and the appropriate Regional/Area representative expressing your desire to become a DOC minister.
3. Receive support of the local congregation.

### Documents Required

1. Complete Form A (ccsw.org ordination process)
2. Introductory memo (completed by the appropriate Regional/Area representative)
3. Documentation of ordination/licensure/standing in all previous denominations and/faith Traditions. Including copies of ordination certificates, licenses, and commissions.
4. Official transcript of all graduate theological education. If you do not have any graduate education, include transcripts of other education and theological trainings post high school.
5. Statement of why you are seeking to be a Disciples of Christ clergy and why you are leaving your previous denomination. 2-3 pages double spaced.
6. Statement from Judicatory official certifying you are in good standing with that denomination. (If providing such a letter is difficult to obtain due to theological circumstances or other hardship, explain the circumstances to the Regional/Area representative and in writing ask for an exception of this requirement.)
7. Letter of endorsement from leadership of DOC congregation.

### Initial Interview

The subcommittee questions will center around  
Why DOC  
Prior ordination and church experiences  
Involvement with a DOC local congregation  
Connection with other DOC clergy (Mentor/colleague/?)

### Preparation for Next Interview

1. Documentation of Disciples History Course

2. Documentation of last completed Healthy Boundaries course
3. Paper, 6-10 pages, double spaced
  - a. The Christian Faith
  - b. The nature and work of the church
  - c. The representative ministry of Jesus Christ
4. Complete Search and Call packet

**Interview with full committee**

Questions center around

1. Paper
2. Understanding of Disciples of Christ and willingness to embrace Disciples Identity

## Policy and Procedures for Responding to Clergy Misconduct

Policy and Procedures for Responding to Clergy Misconduct of Persons Whose Standing is Lodged with the Christian Church in the Southwest Regional Committee on Ministry

### Definitions

The definitions used in this document are grouped by relevant documents, people involved, types of misconduct, and operational definitions for terms described in the process.

#### Relevant Documents

***Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada*** (TFPCOM)—the governing document for Commissioned and Ordained Ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). TFPCOM contains the most recent and authoritative Ministerial Code of Ethics. Ministers with standings and/or regionally affiliated minister must adhere to the version of the Ministerial Code of Ethics published in the most recent version of TFPCOM—not the one they signed last. Clergy are responsible for insuring that they have a copy of the most recent code of ethics.

**Ministerial Code of Ethics** is the written standards to which all ministers with standing or regionally affiliated minister status agree to adhere in the course of initial commissioning and/or ordination. It is found in TFPCOM. While Disciples clergy with standing are always accountable to the most current Ministerial Code of Ethics, Ministers ought not be held accountable for allegations related to additions to the ministerial code of conduct made after the alleged infraction.

#### People

**Clergy—ordained or commissioned** ministers with standing or affiliation in the Christian Church in the Southwest.

**Complainant**--the person who brings a written complaint or allegation of ethical misconduct to the attention of the Region. The complainant can be the alleged victim, the parent or guardian of the alleged victim or other family member specifically responsible for caregiving or guardianship, the caregiver for an elderly person, or a church or ministry stakeholder with first-hand knowledge of the alleged misconduct. Complainants will normally be directed to communicate with the Regional Minister, Regional Executive Minister, or in cases where a complaint may be directed toward a Regional staff person, the chair of the Regional Committee on Ministry may receive complaints directly from the complainant.

**Ethics Sub-Committee**—The Ethics Sub-Committee (previously the “Sexual Misconduct Committee”) is a sub-committee designated by RCOM to receive and review investigation reports, conduct hearings related to alleged clergy misconduct, summarize their findings and discern recommended outcomes and make recommendations to the Regional Committee on Ministry.

**Investigation Team**—The investigation team will consist of two or more investigators appointed by the Regional Minister to collect information, conduct interviews, and report findings around alleged misconduct. These investigators are specifically trained to conduct interviews and report findings.

**GCOM**—General Commission on Ministry.

**RCOM**—The Regional Committee on Ministry (RCOM) is the committee designated in the Regional Design for overseeing ministers and ministerial standing for the Christian Church in the Southwest.

#### Types of Misconduct

**Boundary Violation**—Clergy need established boundaries with regard to multiple aspects of their life and ministry. Boundaries include but are not limited to work-life balance, collegial relationships

and relationship with other congregations or ministries, social media and online behavior, finances, gift-receiving, identity and self-differentiation. A boundary violation occurs when a minister's actions exceed what is in their own and/or another's best interest. Boundary violations occur when a minister does not faithfully observe the law, the Ministerial Code of Ethics and other official policies, the governing policies of their employing congregation or ministry, and/or sound judgment.

**Financial Misconduct**—Financial misconduct involves misuse of the congregation or employing ministry's financial resources, mishandling of congregational and donor financial information, mishandling of donor relationships such as bullying donors or using one's authority as a minister to leverage access to donors for personal interests.

**Misconduct**—Misconduct refers to actions that violate the Disciples of Christ Ministerial Code of Ethics. The Region's response to allegations of clergy misconduct must be clearly and directly guided by the Ministerial Code of Ethics. Misconduct can include but not be limited to: financial misconduct relative to funds held by the congregation or ministry agency, financial transactions between a minister with standing and congregation member(s) or ministry clients or stakeholders, discrimination in hiring, plagiarism, slander, misrepresentation of credentials, misuse of congregational assets, alcohol or substance abuse and sexual misconduct.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Sexual misconduct falls into three broad categories: Sexual abuse, Sexual exploitation, and sexual harassment.

**Sexual Abuse**--For the purposes of this policy, sexual abuse includes (1) sexual involvement or contact by a clergy person with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent and (2) rape. Sexual abuse of a minor is a criminal offense and must be reported to law enforcement officials. It is Regional policy to make such reports immediately and to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in investigating any allegations of sexual abuse.

**Sexual exploitation** by clergy is a betrayal of trust in a pastoral, teaching or ministerial relationship.<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, sexual exploitation is generally contact of a physical nature between adults in an unequal power relationship that may involve inappropriate touching, embraces or assault. Sexually exploitive activities may include dating, intense kissing, touching breasts or genitals, verbal suggestions of sexual involvement or sexually demeaning comments by a leader, or sexual intercourse. It includes but is not necessarily limited to pastor/parishioner, pastoral counselor/counselee (or former counselee), seminary professor/student, clergy camp counselor/co-counselor, clergy camp counselor/camper, and supervising clergy/employee relationships.

Clergy should be aware that theirs is a relationship of unequal power with parishioners or others with whom there is a pastoral relationship. Due to the imbalance of power existing between clergy and those with whom there is a pastoral/professional relationship, the development, or the attempted development, of a sexual or romantic relationship between a religious leader and a person with whom the leader has a pastoral/professional relationship is typically sexually exploitive.

A clergy person cannot be a pastor to a person with whom he or she engages in a dating or romantic relationship. Because a congregation must be able to trust in the pastoral relationship (and the consequent power and authority thereby vested in clergy), a congregation and not just the alleged victim is harmed when a pastor violates his or her trust and engages in a dating or romantic relationship with a parishioner or other person with whom there may be a pastoral relationship.

**Sexual Harassment** (in the context of employment)-- Sexual Harassment is a form of misconduct that is specific to a clergyperson's professional context as supervisor of both paid staff and volunteers. The United States Federal Government defines Sexual Harassment: "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment" [29 C.F.R. § 1604.11](#). Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome and/or persistent sexually-oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior, preference or orientation, unwelcome or undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements or interaction, in a situation where there is an employment, mentor or colleague relationship between the people involved, including clergy with standing (whether ordained or licensed) or seminarians working in this Region. Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive comments about an individual;

- Graphic, verbal commentary about an individual's body, sexual capacity, or sexual deficiencies;
- The display in the workplace of demeaning, insulting, intimidating, pornographic, or sexually suggestive objects, pictures, calendars, or photographs; and

Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive written, recorded, or electronically transmitted messages (such as email, text messages, instant messaging, and internet materials, including social media and social networking sites).

The Region's authority for allegations of sexual harassment when the Region is not the Accused's employer extends only to the issue of standing. Employment termination and/or disciplinary action toward an employee of a congregation or ministry agency rests solely with the governing bodies of the congregation or ministry agency. While the region may recommend a course of action, it has no authority to enact a course of action.

## Process

**Assessment Meeting**—A meeting consisting of the Regional Minister, Regional Committee on Ministry Chair, Ethics Subcommittee Chair Person, Constituency Group president (if applicable) and other relevant staff members where applicable who together review a received complaint, determine the best course of action, and define the timeline for adjudication.

**Complaint**—the written documentation supplied by the complainant detailing the alleged misconduct and confirming that the complainant desires official review of the accused minister's fitness to retain standing. If at all possible, complaints should be signed complaints and complainants should be prepared to give testimony in ensuing investigations.

**Permanent File**—Once all RCOM deliberations are complete and final decisions have been made and communicated to the necessary parties, the procedural file will become a permanent file held in the Regional Office confidential files. Included in the permanent file should be copies of notification

correspondence to the accused clergy, the complainant, the alleged victim, and other persons or entities notified of the findings and any actions by RCOM. The Regional Minister shall also include a summary of the circumstances around the allegation. Contents of the permanent file are accessible by the Regional Minister or the Regional Executive. Information from a permanent file may be shared with another regional minister or GCOM if a minister for whom we have a file has been accused of misconduct similar to accusations made against them in the CCSW as reflected in the permanent file. Under such circumstances, the Regional Minister and/or Regional Executive will speak with designated representatives from the requesting region sharing only the information that is directly relevant to the accusations in the requesting region.

**Procedural File**—When an accusation of misconduct is made, the Regional Minister will begin a procedural file containing hard-copy correspondence, reports, and notes related to the accusation of misconduct. Procedural files shall be kept confidential. Contents of the procedural file will be made available to members of the Ethics Subcommittee along with instructions that information contained in a procedural file is: (a) confidential and (b) should not be kept by committee members beyond the time that is needed for deliberation. A procedural flowchart should accompany the procedural file.

**Summary Document**—The Regional Minister or designee shall write a summary document at the conclusion of complaint adjudication. The summary document shall include a description of the complaint, the summary of the findings, and the final decision of the Regional Committee on Ministry. The summary document shall be kept in the Permanent File along with all relevant documents and stored in the Regional office. A copy of the Summary Document shall also be submitted to the Office of Christian Vocation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

## Theological Foundation of the Clergy Ethical Accountability

All baptized believers should live out their call from God by discerning their gifts, acting as stewards of those gifts, and directing their activity in such a way that God is glorified through their work. First Peter 4:10-11 says, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; who ever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and power forever and ever. Amen.” Therefore, we speak of the ministry of the whole church and the ministry of each believer. While affirming the ministry of each believer, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and its congregations also recognize the role of those called to vocational ministry within the life of the Church. The governing document for ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), *The Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada* (hereafter referred to as *TFPCOM*) explains, “Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive functions. The Commissioned and the Ordained are both of the *laos*, but in recognizing God’s call to particular individuals, the Church designates persons “to re-present to the Church its own identity and calling in Jesus Christ” (The Nature of the Church, A Word to the Church on Ministry). Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated in Ordination and Commissioning” (*TFPCOM*, I.A). The Christian Church in the Southwest has the responsibility for upholding the Ministerial Code of Ethics, setting and maintaining the standards of conduct for commissioned and ordained clergy, hearing and discerning accusations of clergy misconduct, and prescribing pathways of accountability when ethical violations have occurred.

## Purpose of the Document

This document is to guide the Christian Church in the Southwest, congregations, and individuals whenever accusations of clergy misconduct occur. When this document refers to a “minister” or “ministers,” it is referring to commissioned and ordained clergy with standing, ordained ministerial partners with standing (United Church of Christ ministers serving Disciples congregation or ministry), or Regionally Affiliated Minister (CCSW Specific). Ministers who serve *in* the Christian Church in the Southwest but have their standing *with* the General Commission on Ministry (full-time military chaplains, activated reserve military chaplains, and ministers serving with General Ministry units such as the Christian Church Foundation, Pension Fund, National Benevolent Association) are not directly accountable to the Christian Church in the Southwest. However, should allegations surface about such ministers, the Christian Church in the Southwest will facilitate reporting to the General Commission on Ministry (GCOM).

## Guiding Principles

1. **Confidentiality**—Unless otherwise directed in this policy under “notifications,” members of the Ethics Committee, Investigators, Liaisons and RCOM members shall not discuss allegations, investigation, hearings and/or RCOM beyond the confines of official communications related to the deliberation process. Documents related allegations, investigations, hearings, findings, recommendations, or decisions shall be protected and should not be shared outside of the members of the ethics subcommittee or Regional Committee on Ministry. The documents shall be retained by relevant parties for only as long as necessary to allow for faithful discernment. When final decisions are made and a permanent file is created, all other documentation held by persons related to the investigation should be destroyed. All misconduct files must be held permanently.
2. **Pastoral Care**—The regional minister has an obligation to ensure that both the alleged victim and the accused minister receive pastoral care through the process and beyond. A specific advocate will be called upon to be accompany the alleged victim and give voice to their concerns within the process. Responsibility for pastoral care is entrusted to liaisons. Regional Ministry staff, Ethics Committee Members, Investigators, and RCOM members—though committed to respectful and kind interactions—shall seek to maintain objectivity and should avoid being either the accused minister’s or victim’s pastoral caregiver.
3. **Expediency**—the assessment meeting will create a reasonable timeline and those involved should make every effort to meet timeline. Non-compliance with time limits set forth in the assessment meeting shall not be grounds for the dismissal or reversal of a Complaint unless such non-compliance shall cause material and substantial injustice to be done or seriously prejudice the rights of an Accused as determined by the Ethics Subcommittee on written motion of the Accused at hearing.
4. **Record-Keeping**. A thorough and complete physical file of notes, emails, correspondence, and other relevant documentation shall be maintained by the Regional Minister. In the



transition from one Regional Minister to the next Regional Minister, the outgoing Regional Minister provide orientation to the in-coming regional minister about: (a) any and all open investigations or deliberations; and (b) the nature and function of the confidential files.

5. **Presumption of Innocence**--Ministers accused of unethical conduct will be considered innocent unless a preponderance of evidence substantiates the allegations. However, for the care of all involved, the Ethics Committee may recommend temporary partitions between the accused clergy and ministry context while investigation and deliberation are being conducted.
6. **Temporary Suspension of Standing.** Ministerial standing of an accused minister may be temporarily suspended by the Regional Minister in consultation with the RCOM Chair and Ethics Subcommittee Chair if the gravity of the alleged offenses warrants immediate action. Temporary suspension of standing should serve as a partition between the minister and their ministry context. Temporary suspension of standing will pause any search and call processes involving the accused minister. In a situation where a situation standing has been temporarily suspended and then standing is sustained by RCOM, ministers are not required to disclose the temporary suspension of standing as a disciplinary action.

#### Procedures

##### Surfacing a complaint

1. Any complaints of misconduct that might also be illegal shall be referred to appropriate officials having jurisdiction as required by law. Action by the Regional Ministry Staff, the Ethics Subcommittee, or RCOM should never be used as a substitute for reporting alleged illegal misconduct.
2. A formal written complaint shall be made by the complainant to the Regional Minister or Regional Ministry Staff person who will immediately notify the Chair of RCOM. In cases where a complaint is being made against regional staff members, the RCOM Chair may receive complaints directly. Recognizing that complainants may not be able to sufficiently answer all of the following items, this policy does recommend the following to be included
  - a. Written complaints should provide the name and place of service of the accused minister.
  - b. Written complaints should be as specific as possible in terms of date and time of incidents involved in the complaint.
  - c. Written complaints should indicate a desired outcome of the complaint and if the complainant believes a fitness review to include possible termination of standing for cause should be made.
  - d. Indication of any other formal actions that have been taken with regard to the alleged misconduct: (a) reporting to law enforcement; (b) reporting to congregational or ministry leadership and/or employment suspension or termination.
3. In circumstances where the accused minister does not have standing the region will: (1) document the complaint; (2) begin a procedural file and will require adjudication of the allegations should the minister seek standing or affiliation in the future; (3) advise the

complainant to seek legal counsel and law enforcement intervention if the alleged misconduct may be illegal; (4) notify and advise the employing congregation or ministry of the complaint. However, it is the region's responsibility to advise **congregations with ministers who do not have Standing or Affiliation with the Region that they assume their own responsibility for such ministers as those ministers fall outside the limits of the region's authority.**

4. In cases where the alleged misconduct occurred while the minister held standing in the CCSW, RCOM may offer pastoral care and counseling to alleged victims and may serve as their advocate before the body holding the accused minister's standing.
5. An initial assessment meeting shall be called consisting of the Regional Minister and other relevant Regional Staff, Chair of RCOM, Chair of Ethics Sub-Committee, President or President of Pastors of relevant constituency group—if necessary, National Pastor of the relevant constituency group (NAPAD, Obra Hispana, National Convocation) per TFPCOM.
  - a. Purpose—The purpose of this meeting is three fold: (1) determination of jurisdiction (does the minister in question currently have CCSW Ministerial Standing?); (2) is the accusation clearly related to the Ministerial Code of Ethics; (3) determining the scope and process of investigation and adjudication.
  - b. The assessment meeting may determine that an accusation needs to be more thoroughly substantiated through documentation (in the case of accusations of financial misconduct) and/or reporting to law enforcement where the alleged action may be a violation of the law before proceeding.
  - c. Special Circumstances
    - i. In cases of alleged financial misconduct, documentation in the form of bank records, credit card receipts, or other independently verifiable information shall be required before the complaint goes beyond the initial assessment meeting.
    - ii. Accusations of plagiarism, inappropriate online or social media behavior shall require external verification through documentation such as sermon transcripts, recordings, or screen shots of social media interactions.

#### Notifications

6. The regional minister shall provide a written summary of the complaints to the accused. This notification shall be placed in the procedural file. Whenever possible, the regional minister will provide the summary of complaints in a face-to-face meeting with the accused minister. The regional minister at her or his discretion, and with the participation of an appropriate regional ministry staff or constituency representative, may meet with the accused clergy to review this policy and its procedures and to share any pastoral concerns that seem appropriate. Written notification should detail what future actions any regional staff, investigators, Ethics Sub-committee, and/or RCOM may take and a proposed timeline for actions.

7. Written correspondence shall be made to the complainant and/or alleged victim and the congregation and/or employing ministry agency detailing the decisions emerging from the assessment meeting and detailing future actions any regional staff, investigators, Ethics Sub-committee, and/or RCOM may take and the proposed timeline for actions.
8. If the assessment meeting determines that further action is warranted, a written notice should be sent to the accused minister's congregational lay-leader (moderator or chair of elders or equivalent) or the board employing ministry agency.
9. **Pre-Investigation Intervention**--In cases where alleged misconduct is (a) not of a sexual nature; (b) not potentially illegal, the assessment meeting may determine that corrective intervention is warranted prior to further investigation or action. Interventions might include:
  - a. Warning letter sent to accused minister. For example, a letter indicating that they have not maintained professional boundaries with a previous congregation or congregant.
  - b. Advice to congregation and/or minister concerning employment status.
  - c. Offer of conflict mediation or recommendation of mediator.
  - d. Notification to both minister and complainant that a procedural file has been established and that if subsequent complaints reveal a pattern of a similar behavior such behavior may justify formal investigation and adjudication.
  - e. RCOM will receive a summary of any Pre-Investigation Intervention.
10. If the accused minister admits culpability for the substance of the charge in the complaint, a ruling may be reached at this stage.
11. **Requirement of Evidence**—in situations where accusations involve financial misconduct, misuse of church property or assets, or inappropriate social media activity, those involved in the assessment meeting may require more documentation to be provided by the complainant before proceeding with investigation.
12. **Resignation of Accused Minister**--Even if the Accused resigns standing, the regional minister shall appoint one or more investigators. The investigator(s) shall promptly make an investigation of the matter, supply their findings to the ethics subcommittee. The ethics subcommittee may make recommendations to the Regional Committee on Ministry concerning the proper course of actions should the accused minister seek re-instatement of standing.
13. Within sixty days after appointment by the Regional Minister, unless delayed for good and sufficient cause stated, the Church Investigator(s) shall render a confidential Report to the Ethics Sub-Committee. The Report shall include:
  - a. evidence and findings
  - b. It may also include recommendations that the Investigators deem to be pertinent in the interest of justice and the good order and discipline of this Church.
  - c. The Report of the Church Investigator(s) shall be confidential for all purposes as between the Investigator(s), the Ethics Sub-committee, Regional Minister, and Chair of RCOM.

- d. It may include a recommendation for or against a hearing.
  - e. The Committee shall in any case share the Report of the Church Investigator(s) with the Regional Minister for inclusion in the Accused’s confidential file.
14. If the Church Investigator(s) recommend against a hearing, the Report shall state reasons why.
  15. If a hearing is recommended by the Church Investigator(s), within thirty days after the receipt of the Report, the Ethics Committee shall schedule a hearing upon reasonable notice to the Accused. The Accused will be provided a copy of the Report prior to the hearing. The Ethics Committee will give an opportunity to be heard to the Accused, the alleged Victim, and the Complainant; further, it may hear from other persons and may receive additional evidence that it in its sole discretion deems appropriate.
  16. Upon the completion of hearings or completion of what the Ethics Subcommittee regards to be its investigation and discernment of allegations, the Ethics Subcommittee shall make written formal summary of findings and recommended judgement to the Regional Committee on Ministry. A vote of the entire RCOM minus any member not present for the session or others recusing themselves by conflict of interest shall determine the final assessment of the complaint.
  17. The Ethics Subcommittee may recommend and RCOM may elect one of the following options.
    - a. Sustain standing—The claims are found to warrant no action. Disclosure of RCOM action is not required on Ministerial Profile.
    - b. Sustain standing with required interventions (e.g., counseling). . Disclosure of RCOM action is not required on Ministerial Profile.
    - c. Censure—Ministerial standing is maintained, but RCOM writes a formal letter detailing conduct that is inconsistent with ministerial code of ethics. Disclosure of RCOM action is required in future Ministerial Profiles.
    - d. Remove Standing with clear process for having standing returned
    - e. Remove standing (with proposed minimum time before requesting reinstatement).
  18. If the investigator(s) either recommend against a hearing or make no recommendation about a hearing, within thirty days after the receipt of the Report, the Ethics Committee shall convene either in person or electronically to consider the Report. After reviewing the Report and any other evidence that the Committee deems pertinent, the Ethics Subcommittee may schedule a hearing on its own motion. If no hearing is scheduled, the Ethics Committee shall prepare a memorandum addressed to RCOM stating its reasons. The Ethics Subcommittee shall not terminate investigation or complaint without approval by RCOM. Determination of findings should not be communicated to the complainants, liaisons, or accused ministers as final decisions without the vote of RCOM. Recommendations about whether a hearing should be conducted or not should be based on:
    - a. Sufficiency of evidence of wrongdoing—if the investigators feel that there is not enough clear evidence of misconduct, they may recommend that no hearing be pursued.

- b. Jurisdiction—if the investigators feel that the alleged misconduct is not clearly related to the Ministerial code of ethics, they may recommend that no hearing be pursued.
- 19. If the Accused resigns standing prior to hearing, the Ethics Subcommittee will determine whether a hearing is necessary.
- 20. After a hearing, the Ethics Subcommittee shall communicate in writing its recommended course of action to the Accused, to the Complainant or alleged Victim, and to the congregation or ministry served by the accused minister with the clear explanation that final outcomes must be determined by the Regional Committee on Ministry. The following actions are possible actions for the Regional Committee on Ministry:
  - a. Removal of Standing for Cause with earliest date for review if RCOM determines a term longer or shorter than 24 months is warranted.
  - b. Removal of standing with clear pathway to reinstatement (disciplinary plan),
  - c. Censure—a written statement of disapproval of a minister’s conduct without removal of standing. Censure must be indicated on future disclosure forms with ministerial profile.
  - d. Sustained standing with required growth plan. Also called an educative warning.
  - e. Sustained standing.
- 21. The full Regional Committee on Ministry shall receive the ethics subcommittee’s summary and recommendation(s) and will make the final regional decision concerning the accused minister’s standing.
- 22. Verbal notification of RCOM’s Decision will be provided by the Regional Minister to the Ethics Subcommittee Chair, the members of the Ethics Subcommittee and the investigators.
- 23. A copy of the judgment shall be placed in the accused minister’s procedural file.
- 24. . The Regional Minister or designee shall write a summary document. The summary document shall be placed in the permanent file and the permanent file shall be kept in a secure location in the Regional office. Even in cases where standing is sustained or standing is sustained with interventions, a copy of the Summary Document shall also be submitted to the Office of Christian Vocation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 25. Censures, removal of standing for cause with clear pathway for standing to be reinstated, and removal of standing for cause, must be disclosed by the minister on future ministerial profile disclosure forms. Upon notification of such decisions by CCSW RCOM, The Office of Christian Vocation notifies all Regions through confidential correspondence.
- 26. If the CCSW Regional staff discover that a minister whose standing has been removed for cause, or who resigned standing while under investigation is seeking or has obtained ministry standing or ministerial positions in another denomination, the regional minister has an obligation to inform the other denomination’s middle judicatory or employing congregation’s leadership that the minister’s standing was removed for cause or that the minister resigned standing while under investigation. Details of the cause for removal of standing or investigation shall be shared only if the receiving judicatory is adjudicating similar misconduct.

## Right of Appeal

1. If the accused minister, complainant, or alleged victim is dissatisfied with the results of RCOM action, they may appeal the decision to the General Commission on Ministry. RCOM, Ethics Subcommittee, and the Regional Ministry Staff will cooperate fully with GCOM review of action.

## Reinstatement

1. If a minister whose standing has been removed for cause believes that restitution for the misconduct has been made, personal transformation has occurred, and requisite safeguards against future misconduct are in place, the minister may request a review of fitness for ministry and seek to have standing be reinstated. Reinstatement may not be considered sooner than 24 months from the removal of standing for cause unless standing was removed with a clear path for reinstatement outlined and the requirements of reinstatement have been met.
2. RCOM may make the following decisions in response to a request for reinstatement hearing:
  - a. RCOM may decline to review standing.
  - b. RCOM may require documentation of professional assessment
  - c. RCOM may require the minister to demonstrate strategies for long-term treatment, monitoring of behavior, and supervision.
  - d. RCOM may seek to ascertain behavioral change and fitness for ministry.
  - e. RCOM should notify the victim(s), complainant, and congregation or employing minister at the time the standing was reviewed of any decision to reconsider renewing standing unless the initial letter of RCOM's decision clearly spelled out a pathway for standing to be resumed.
  - f. If the RCOM determines that reinstatement of standing should be made, a written summary, recommendation and reasons for recommendation will be provided to the Regional Committee on Ministry who will make final decision.
3. If Standing is reinstated, the Regional Minister will notify the Office of Christian Vocation.
4. Any minister whose Standing has been restored after removal must disclose that Standing was removed for cause and restored in all Search and Call disclosure forms from that time forward. Failure to disclose will be cause for removal of standing for cause is grounds for disciplinary action [*Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), F. 4. d.*].
5. Restoration, if applicable, remain in the minister's permanent file.

### Special Procedures if the Accused is a member of the Regional Staff

1. Upon receipt of a signed, written complaint, the RCOM Chair shall name a minister with standing in the Region to serve as Proxy Staff. Proxy staff will fulfill the duties and responsibilities within the proceedings that are assigned to the Regional Minister. It is appropriate to compensate Proxy staff.
2. The RCOM Chair, Ethics Subcommittee Chair, and Proxy Staff may consult with the General Minister and President, the Chair of the General Commission on Ministry, and other Regional Ministers as deemed beneficial for proceedings. Normally, the RCOM Chair will serve as spokesperson for the region to outside entities. If the accused is the Regional Minister, who holds standing both with the Region and with the General Commission on Ministry, notification of accusation and deliberation about jurisdiction shall be made in collaboration with the General Commission on Ministry.
3. The RCOM Chair shall make a report and recommendation to the Executive Committee of the Regional Council as the Regional Minister would notify the congregational leadership or nonprofit employer of an accused minister.