

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 victim, the parent or guardian of the 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 the ~~allegations~~ ~~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.

Liaison—Both the complainant and accused minister shall be assigned a liaison who will accompany them through the process and be empowered to hold the other parties involved for following the stated processes. A liaison for the victim should be assigned with the victim's input and consent and should be assigned as soon after the complaint has been made.

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 clergyperson 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.¹ 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 there 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 clergyperson 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 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 Chairperson, Constituency Group president (if applicable), Complainant Liaison 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 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 victim and the accused minister receive pastoral care through the process and beyond. A specific advocate will be called upon to accompany the 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 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 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, and the victim/complainant liaison.
 - 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. In the assessment meeting, any pre-investigation interventions should be recommended and agreed to. Pre-investigation interventions might be mediation, changes to standard policies and procedures (i.e., in the case of alleged financial misconduct). The liaison representing the complainant/victim shall determine whether the interventions have the potential for adequately responding the victims complaint or if investigation and hearing is immediately warranted (see #9 under "Notifications").
 - c. 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.
 - d. Special Circumstances

- i. In cases where the alleged misconduct consists of harm to an individual person or persons in the form of sexual misconduct, physical or verbal abuse, bullying or other potential traumatization, the assessment committee will identify what forms of psychological and spiritual care should be offered to the victim.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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 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 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 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 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 was 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 of 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.

Date and Versions	RCOM Action	Documentation
January 2022—Policy Presented for Adoption	Approved, Effective Immediately	RCOM Minutes, January 2022
April 2022—Changes made to be more aligned with Trauma-Informed Best Practices	Approved, Effective Immediately	