



SHARING *the* JOURNEY

A Guide for
CONGREGATIONS WITH CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION



CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE SOUTHWEST
REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE MINISTRY

Addendum to *Sharing the Journey*

Language in <i>Sharing the Journey</i>	The language currently in use
Licensed	Commissioned
Alternative educational track	Apprentice track
Page 8, last paragraph regarding assessment	CCSW requires of all candidates accepted to ordination candidacy process, after the initial interview and before the intermediate, to take a Standard Clergy Candidacy Inventory through The Center for Integrative Counseling and Psychology in Dallas, Texas. Cost is currently \$750 in 2021 and recommended that it be shared \$250 each by congregation, candidate and Southwest Region. (Cost is expected to be \$900 in 2022 and recommended that it be shared \$300 each by congregation, candidate and Southwest Region.)
Pages 5-7, "The Process in the Journey"	Use "Steps in the Ordination Process" adopted September 2014 and revised January 2019 for requirements prior to each interview and what to expect in each interview.
Sexual Misconduct Prevention	Healthy Boundaries

SHARING THE JOURNEY:

A Congregational Guide Toward Ordination
For Congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

Welcome to “*Sharing the Journey*.” The purpose for this document is to help you understand and participate in the ordination process in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we are bound together through covenant. In our denominational structure, covenant is the foundation of the congregation, area, region and general manifestations, or expressions, of the church. This covenant, or promise, is in Christ Jesus our Lord and it is the covenant that we are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in our part of the body of Christ, which makes us partners in faith as we are intentionally working together for the up-building of God’s kingdom. In our work together, we mutually respect one another, as well as respecting the authority and responsibilities that each holds. Moreover, our covenant binds us to hold one another accountable for the mission and ministry that we share.

In the ordination process, each covenantal partner has specific responsibilities that this document identifies. It is presented in these sections:

- ◆ **Beginning the Journey:** An introduction to the Regional Committee on Ministry, definitions of ordination, standing, covenantal partnership, and representative ministry.
- ◆ **The Process in the Journey:** An explanation of the process in the journey toward ordination as it is lived out in partnership between the sponsoring congregation, ordination candidate, area, and region in each phase of the journey.
- ◆ **As We Journey Together:** An explanation of the Congregational Care Committee of the sponsoring congregation, guidelines of meetings with the candidate in each phase of the journey, and a check list of all required documents prior to the ordination interview.
- ◆ **Encouraging the Journey:** Suggestions of ways to nurture the candidate along the way.
- ◆ **Celebrating the Journey:** An explanation of the ordination service, models of an ordination service, and planning guide.

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 the Christ, who calls us to partner in ministry.

*The Regional Committee on Ministry
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest~ 2007*

Beginning the Journey

The process of ordination is often engaged in conjunction with the candidate's pursuit of a Masters of Divinity degree from an Association of Theological Schools¹ accredited seminary or after completion of one of the alternative educational tracks that have been approved by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest. During the candidate's educational journey, the candidate ordinarily begins his/her relationship with the Regional Committee on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest.

The Regional Committee on Ministry is a regionally-approved body of representatives of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest, and acts on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest in matters pertaining to ministers.² Membership consists of chairpersons of the eight Area Committees on Ministry and six members at-large. In addition, there are ex-officio members from Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship, Jarvis Christian College and the Regional Minister & President.

The purpose of the Regional Committee on Ministry is to 1) help each candidate discover and articulate his/her gifts and graces for ministry, 2) determine the candidate's fitness for ministry, 3) examine the candidate's ability to articulate (both orally and written) his/her understanding of the Christian faith, the Bible, the church, and the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.),³ 4) authorize ordination, and 5) grant *standing* upon the act of ordination into the Order of Ministry.

What is ordination?

Ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is an act by which the church "sets apart" persons for *leadership* in the mission of the church. Leadership by these persons includes teaching the faith, oversight and care of the Christian community, and representation of Christian identity to both the church and the world. Candidates are

¹ The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (established in 1918) is the accrediting and program agency for graduate theological education in North America. The purpose of the Association is the improvement of theological education, which it seeks to attain by accrediting schools and by providing programs and services to its membership...The Association's current membership consists of 237 graduate schools of theology, of which 204 are accredited. (From the ATS Bulletin 43, Part 1, Introduction.)

² Understanding the Process Leading to Standing as a Minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest by Way of: Ordination, Recognition of Ordination and Transfer of Standing, Mutual Recognition in the Southwest and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministers (for United Church of Christ Clergy only), Standing by Call.

³ Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1, 2E, p. 2.

expected to demonstrate faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, exhibit an informed decision to enter ministry in response to God's call, and demonstrate personal fitness, gifts, and appropriate education for leadership in the church.⁴

In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), it is believed that God calls men and women to the ministry, but it is the church that recognizes this call and ordains them. For the candidate, the act of ordination is an affirmation of the whole church which celebrates God's call to ministry and the candidate's response to this call.

Because ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) happens on behalf of the whole church, ordination transfers with a pastor no matter their geographic locale for ministry.

What is standing?

Standing affirms that the ordained or licensed minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry, whether on an occasional part-time or full-time basis, with continuous accountability maintained with a congregation, organization, related institution or regional or general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Such ministers are listed in the *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and may call upon the church for services and support such as search and call assistance, ecclesiastical endorsement, scholarship aid; and have voting privileges in the General, Regional & Area Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.)⁵

Responsibility for certification of standing of ministers and for periodic review of that standing is lodged with the region where the minister is currently engaged in the practice of ministry.

What is representative ministry?

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Teegarden, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) said it well, "To be clergy is not to have prerogatives and control in the body of Christ, but to be set apart for servanthood" (*We Call Ourselves Disciples*, 76).

The fundamental ministry in the church is that of Jesus Christ. He calls his disciples—all of us—to participate in this ministry. All Christians, then, by virtue of our baptism, are Christian ministers. We are all called to bind up the brokenhearted, preach good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind and release to the captive, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4.18). We are all called to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6.8). Every Christian has the authority to invite others to the

⁴ Dr. Newell Williams, President of Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas

⁵ *Policies & Criteria of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* V, A, 1-2

Lord's table and to baptize in the name of Christ. We are a "priesthood of all believers." Every disciple has the responsibilities of ministry that are acknowledged and bestowed by God through baptism into Christ.⁶

Even so, the church has found it helpful from the beginning until now to recognize God's call to certain ministers and charge them with the servant role of equipping the whole people of God to fulfill their corporate ministry. These "representative ministers" encourage and build up the church. Their ministry is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4.12). They are "hand-picked" through the discernment of the Spirit by the larger body of the church, and are nurtured through educational and pastoral experiences designed to "equip the equippers." It is these women and men who are ordained by the laying on of hands and granted standing as ministers, recognized by the whole church. They represent Christ to the church. They also represent the church to the world.

Those who accept the ministry of the Word, sacrament, and mission are responsible for re-presenting, showing forth to the world and to all baptized Christians the character of their ministry and witness. A central task of such representative ministry is personally and publicly to point the church to its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its faith, mission, and unity.⁷

⁶ Rev. David Cobb, past member of the CCSW Regional Committee on Ministry

⁷ www.homelandministries.org/Ministers/MinistryGuidelines/Ordination

The Process in the Journey

The process in the journey toward ordination is lived out in partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest's Regional Committee on Ministry, Sponsoring Congregation and Candidate. This partnership is experienced in four phases: *introductory, initial, intermediate, and ordination.*

THE INTRODUCTORY PHASE

The *introductory* phase begins with the Area Minister of the sponsoring congregation.⁷ The candidate will contact the Area Minister to schedule an interview. In this interview, the Area Minister will provide a Regional Committee on Ministry packet to the candidate. The packet⁸ includes the following:

- ◆ Personal Data Form
- ◆ Application for Candidacy for the Order of Ministry
- ◆ Area Minister Introductory Memo
- ◆ Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (CCSW Edition)
- ◆ "My Ministerial Code of Ethics" pamphlet
- ◆ CCSW Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy
- ◆ Understanding the Process Leading to Ordination

THE INITIAL PHASE:

After this interview, the candidate will submit the *Application for Candidacy for the Order of Ministry* to the sponsoring congregation for consideration. The official governing body of the congregation must act upon this before the ordination process can begin. When all of the forms are completed, they are to be submitted to the Area Minister. Once this is accomplished, the Area Minister will forward the completed packet to the Regional office in order for the first interview with the Regional Committee on Ministry to be scheduled. The candidate will receive notification and invitation from the Regional Office to schedule an *initial* interview with the Regional Committee on Ministry.

⁷ The sponsoring congregation is the church that is endorsing the candidate toward representative ministry and usually is the host congregation for the ordination service.

⁸ These forms are all available from an Area Minister.

During this *initial* phase, the candidate is interviewed by a sub-committee of the Regional Committee on Ministry. The purpose of this interview is to meet the candidate and explore his/her faith journey and explore his/her call to ministry and the gifts which the candidate possesses for ministry. It is at this time that the candidate is accepted into the process for ordination. This decision is made by the entire Regional Committee on Ministry. If the candidate is accepted into the process, he/she will next schedule an intermediate interview with the Regional Committee on Ministry through the Regional office.

THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE:

The work of the candidate and requirements of the Regional Committee on Ministry intensify during the duration of the candidate's pursuit of ordination. During the *intermediate* phase, the candidate will be required to submit a 3-5 page paper reflecting the following:

- 1) Describe your faith journey.
- 2) Demonstrate your theological understanding of the church.
- 3) Demonstrate your theological understanding of ministry.

The candidate will meet with a sub-committee of the Regional Committee on Ministry. It is during this phase that the committee determines whether to continue the candidate in the ordination and standing process and determine if additional requirements need to be made. It is not uncommon for a candidate to be required to have a second intermediate interview. If the candidate is continued without additional requirements, the candidate will next schedule an ordination interview with the Regional Committee on Ministry through the Regional office.

THE ORDINATION PHASE:

During the *ordination* phase, the candidate will be asked to submit the following items:

- 1) Completed Ministerial Profile for Search and Call
- 2) Four references, one of which must be an Area/Regional Minister.
- 3) A *Disclosure and Release* form
- 4) A *Permission to Release* form
- 5) An *Application for Ordination*
- 6) Letter from the congregation that you listed on the *Application for Ordination* stating its willingness to sponsor your ordination.
- 7) One of the following indicators of completed education:
 - a. Transcript from an ATS accredited seminary demonstrating your achievement of a Masters of Divinity degree or equivalent, or,
 - b. Letter from the ATS accredited seminary you attend stating the anticipated date of graduation with a Masters of Divinity degree or equivalent.
 - c. Official documentation that other education approved by REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY is (or is about to be) completed.
- 8) Documentation of completion of approved course in Disciples History and Polity
- 9) Documentation of completion of an approved Sexual Misconduct Prevention Course
- 10) Theological reflection paper (5 to 7 pages, double-spaced) demonstrating your understanding of:
 - * The Christian faith
 - * The nature and work of the church
 - * The representative ministry of Jesus Christ
 - * The office of ordained ministry

During this phase, the candidate will meet with the entire Regional Committee on Ministry for an hour-long interview. After the interview, the committee will determine if the candidate is now prepared for ordination within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and ensure that all requirements have been met (or are in process of completion). However, at this juncture, the Regional Committee on Ministry can also make the decision to identify additional requirements for the candidate and invite them to a second ordination interview or cease the ordination process entirely. It is not uncommon for a candidate to be required to have a second ordination interview.

As We Journey Together

As the candidate begins his/her journey, the sponsoring congregation is responsible to develop a Congregational Care Committee to join a candidate in this journey. This committee should be between 5-7 members who have a genuine interest in this candidate. The selection of the committee can be created in whatever manner works best in the sponsoring congregation; however, it is important to remember that this committee is a reflection and representation of the congregation.

As the committee is selected, it is recommended by the Regional Committee on Ministry that the Area Minister meet with the committee and candidate in an orientation to this process. The nature of the meeting is to discuss the steps of the journey, answer questions, and to offer prayers of blessing. Moreover the church may wish to have a commissioning service of this committee in a Sunday morning worship service. The purpose is to establish a covenant between the committee, congregation, and candidate. The Area and minister can provide the leadership for the commissioning.

During the process, the Congregational Care Committee is encouraged to meet with the candidate on an annual basis for: 1) theological reflection, 2) updates on the candidate's educational process, 3) support of the candidate's ministry 4) assist candidate in pre-arrangement of details for the ordination service, and, most importantly, 5) offer ongoing and continuous encouragement. In order to provide the greatest level of continual care for your candidate, it is helpful if the Congregational Care Committee membership remains as consistent as possible throughout the entire process, which is normally a 3 ½ to 4 year time period.

It is also recommended, when possible and mutually desired, that a representative from the Congregational Care Committee be present during the times when the candidate meets with Regional Committee on Ministry. The purpose is to offer the ministry of presence, to give encouragement, and, with permission by candidate, report to the sponsoring congregation the candidate's experience, and Regional Committee on Ministry's action.

It is also highly recommended that the candidate preach at least annually before the sponsoring congregation, and when necessary, the congregation provide travel expenses when the candidate meets with his/her sponsoring congregation. This allows the congregation, as a whole, to experience growth from the candidate, and to be reminded of the church's commitment and relationship.

In addition, during the first year of each candidate's journey toward ordination, the candidate will participate in a comprehensive battery of psychological and psychosocial assessment. The cost for these assessments is \$500. The sponsoring congregation is

encouraged to assume the cost of these assessments. The purpose of these assessments is to help candidates understand and give insight to who they are, how they think, how they respond, how they are perceived by others and how each one perceives his/her environment. Moreover, these assessments help professionals decipher and detect psychological and personality disorders which could pose serious issues for a candidate's ministry or a potential threat to the church.

The results of these assessments are added to the comprehensive information with which the RCOM evaluates each candidate. They are released for RCOM's confidential use. The candidate may request a personal copy, as well as authorize release to the sponsoring congregation.

Encouraging the Journey

The journey toward ordination is long and demanding. The education process is not only academically demanding, but for many, it is faith-challenging. Candidates are challenged to deeply examine their belief system-- which can produce anxiety and doubt, as well as excitement and deeper spiritual commitment. The goal is for a seminary student to leave seminary with not only a theological education and preparation for ministry, but also a belief system that has been shaped and strengthened by the journey.

During this journey, encouragement is a welcomed gift. We suggest the Congregational Care Committee be creative in finding ways for the sponsoring congregation to share the gifts of affirmation, encouragement, and hospitality. The following are suggestions from former seminarians:

- ◆ Shower the candidate with cards of love and prayer, especially during mid semester exams and papers.
- ◆ Send the candidate a prayer with the signatures from members of the sponsoring congregation.
- ◆ Occasionally include candidate(s) in the pastoral prayer during Sunday morning worship.
- ◆ Celebrate their journey in the church's newsletter and other means of communication.
- ◆ Send a care package during finals.
- ◆ Send an occasional gift certificate to a restaurant or movie.
- ◆ Celebrate the candidate's birthday and anniversary. (Don't forget spouse and other family members who are on this journey as well).
- ◆ Invite ministry groups in the sponsoring congregation, e.g. women's ministries, men ministries, youth and children ministries, etc.... to share encouragement in creative ways.
- ◆ Share financial assistance ANYTIME! Seminary, as are most post graduate studies, is expensive while most vocational opportunities for the candidate are part time.

Celebrating the Journey

Participating in the ordination service is a joyous responsibility of the sponsoring congregation. The service is a celebration and affirmation of the candidate's call to ministry and a marker for the beginning of their service and ministry in Christ's church. A sponsoring congregation hosts the ordination service and reception (if a reception is desired by candidate), gives an honorarium to the guest preacher (who is requested by the candidate), and funds the guest preacher's travel expenses. It is recommended that the sponsoring congregation provide an ordinand with gift(s) of the office, i.e., a robe or alb, liturgical stoles, a cross, or a chalice and paten.

It is highly recommended that the Congregational Care Committee and the sponsoring congregation's pastor participate in planning the ordination service with the candidate. This allows sharing of the joy and excitement of this event, as well as fostering communication. It is important that the candidate select the date and time for the service in coordination with the Regional Minister and President and the sponsoring congregation's calendar. Moreover, it is wise and highly recommended to set the date of the ordination service after the candidate has met all requirements and ordination has been authorized by the Regional Committee on Ministry.

The ordination service requires careful planning and preparation. There are participants to invite and schedule. There are numerous details to be arranged with the Region, the host congregation and its pastor. The process cannot be rushed. Although the candidate is expected to take initiative in making arrangements, the process of preparation and planning will entail close cooperation and will call for a spirit of mutuality among many persons. While the candidate has considerable discretion in selecting participants in the service, the Region, the host pastor, and congregation are to be respected as well. Information and assistance for planning an ordination service is available in the booklet, *Guidelines for Planning An Ordination Service*. It is provided free-of-charge to candidates following completion of an ordination interview.

Congregational Care Committee Guidelines

First Meeting with Candidate:

This is a time to begin preparing your candidate for his/her journey with the RCOM. During your time together it is recommended that you:

1. Open with prayer
2. Establish a covenant of confidentiality, integrity, and intercessory prayer.

Leader: As we begin our journey together, let us affirm what we believe as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

All: As members of the Christian Church, we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the World.

In Christ's name and by his grace, we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.

We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in the covenant of love, which binds us to God and one another.

Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God.

In the communion of the Holy Spirit we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ.

At the table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ.

Within the universal church, we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture.

In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end.

Blessings, glory and honor be to God forever. Amen

—Preamble to the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Leader: As we begin our journey together, let us affirm one another.

All: We believe that in the church, all are called to share in Christ's ministry. We believe that through our baptism, we have become commissioned to carry out God's work in Christ in the manner that is true to the Gospel.

We believe that some people are called to lead the church as pastors, teachers, prophets, preachers, visionaries, and leaders, and it is the church that is called to ordain men and women who have heard God's call into the order of representative ministry.

We believe in forming and nurturing (name of candidate) as he/she journeys toward ordination, and together form a covenant that will maintain integrity of the gospel witness and confidentiality; providing a safe place to share and be.

We believe in the power of intercessory prayer and covenant with each other to lift up (name of candidate) and our congregation, area, and region as we partner in this journey. Amen

3. Ask the candidate to share his/her faith story. Questions to ask (or what to listen for) can include:

- ◆ When did you first begin to experience God's call to the ordained ministry?
- ◆ How do you believe the church has shaped your call?
- ◆ Who in your faith journey has been most influential and why?
- ◆ What excites you about entering into this calling?
- ◆ What creates anxiety?
- ◆ What gifts do you feel you have for ordained ministry?
- ◆ As you begin this journey, how can we, your sponsoring congregation, help you?

4. Give honest and loving feedback to the candidate.

- ◆ Was the candidate able to articulate his/her faith journey.
- ◆ Was the candidate able to articulate his/her call to ministry?
- ◆ Did your candidate openly share his/her gifts for ministry?
- ◆ Are there gifts that you perceive in him/her that were not addressed?

5. Share together *My Ministerial Code of Ethics* (enclosed in document)

- † Are there any areas that could be an issue with your candidate?
- † Do you find the candidate able to conduct him/herself by this code of ethics?
- † Share from the lay perspective how the church views the minister and his/her

conduct in the church and community.

6. Schedule your next time for meeting. Keep in mind that it needs to be prior, if possible, to the intermediate interview with the RCOM and that your candidate needs to present his/her intermediate paper to the ministry team.

7. Close with prayer.

Intermediate Interview:

1. Open with prayer

2. Revisit and renew your covenant (found in First Meeting with Candidate)

3. Ask the candidate to bring you up to date on his/her journey.

- ◆ How is your educational process preparing you for ministry?
- ◆ What courses have you enjoyed the most and why?
- ◆ What have been some difficulties that you have encountered?

4. Have candidate share his/her reflection paper that will be submitted to the Regional Committee on Ministry. This is to be a 3-5 page paper reflecting the following:

- ◆ Describe your faith journey.
- ◆ Demonstrate your theological understanding of the church.
- ◆ Demonstrate your theological understanding of ministry.

5. Give honest and constructive feedback on his/her paper. If there are areas that are unclear to the ministry team, it will likely be unclear to the Regional Committee on Ministry.

6. Discuss if ministry is still the direction that your candidate feels called to go. Sometimes it does happen that through this process, persons become clear that their call is to some other work.

7. Go over the check list that will be needed for the ordination interview. Help the candidate know that it is crucial that he/she begin working on this check list so that all paper work will be complete for the ordination interview.

8. Set up the next meeting time. Remember the candidate will need to present his/her ordination paper, so the meeting needs to be before the ordination interview.

9. Close with prayer.

Ordination Interview:

1. Open with prayer and renew covenant (found in First Meeting with Candidate)
2. Ask the candidate to bring you up to date on his/her journey.
3. Discuss with the candidate plans that he/she is making for vocational ministry.
4. Have candidate share his/her reflection paper that will be submitted to the Regional Committee on Ministry. This is to be a 5-7 page paper reflecting the following:
 - ◆ The Christian Faith
 - ◆ The nature and work of the church
 - ◆ The representative ministry of Jesus Christ
 - ◆ The office of ordained ministry
4. Give constructive feedback on his/her paper.
5. Discuss if ministry is still the direction that your candidate feels called to go. Sometimes it does happen that through this process, persons become clear that their call is to some other work.
6. Have a mock “search committee” interview with the candidate. In this interview, ask questions that are appropriate and frequently asked by a search committee. It is recommended that you contact your area ministry for assistance and participation in this process.
7. Plan/communicate regarding the ordination service realizing that all plans at this moment are tentative.
8. Close with prayer.

The Ministerial Code of Ethics for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) can be found at www.disciples.org.

CREDITS:

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