

**GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR ENTRY INTO MINISTRY
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN TENNESSEE**

The fundamental ministry within the Church is that of Jesus Christ. He calls His church to participate in this ministry.

By virtue of membership in the Church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people. Within the corporate ministry, each Christian fulfills her or his own calling as a servant of Christ.

In addition, the Church recognizes and authorizes an Order of Ministry to which is entrusted the responsibility to lead in transmitting the Christian tradition, interpreting the Scriptures, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, administering the sacraments, serving to maintain a company of Christians, and acting as pioneers and leaders in the Church's reconciling mission in the world.

The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) includes two offices: the office of ordained minister and the office of licensed minister. The foregoing paragraphs are based on The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and "Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry" approved by the General Assembly of the Christian Church in 1971 and amended in 1977, 1981, 1985, and 1987.

In order to promote and maintain the development of a qualified and competent licensed and ordained ministry, the Christian Church in Tennessee has established a Commission on Ministry. The Commission holds responsibility for establishing and interpreting guidelines and procedures for persons entering the Order of Ministry, (see Appendices) for giving nurture to those preparing for entrance into the Order, as well as those already within it, and for cooperating with congregations in assuring that the work of the Order of Ministry is effectively fulfilled. The following paragraphs present the guidelines and procedures in four categories:

A. Licensed Minister

Men and women licensed as ministers are authorized to perform general ministerial functions under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry. The institution which the licensed lay minister may serve is stated on the license which is reviewed annually by the Commission on Ministry.

B. Ordained Ministers

Men and women are ordained as ministers of the Church for life (though standing is subject to regular review: see paragraph E). The Region and its congregations share responsibility for ordination through the Commission on Ministry. Such ordination is recognized in all Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Preparation for ordination ordinarily includes the securing of a baccalaureate degree and the completion of a seminary program of study at an association of theological schools accredited institution. (For a list of accredited institutions , go to www.ats.edu)

C. Ministerial Standing

Standing affirms that the ordained or licensed minister is presently 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 relocation assistance, ecclesiastical endorsement, scholarship aid; and have voting privileges in the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

More information concerning standing is found in the General Policies and Criteria, Section V.

Note: standing may be terminated at any time by the Commission on Ministry for reasons such as those described in the "General Policies and Criteria" p. 9-10, Section V, D.

D. Recognition of Ordination originating in other Communions.

Recognition of ordination is for those persons who have been ordained in another Communion but who wish to be recognized by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Standing as an ordained Disciple minister will be granted to such persons upon fulfillment of the requirements established by the Commission on Ministry of the Region.

**A. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR
LICENSED MINISTER**

1. Licensing is reserved for those who are actively engaged in a professional ministry, or who agree to discipline themselves to further study and training following the granting of a license and who, where feasible, hold membership in a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. A period of candidacy of up to one year shall be designated by the Commission on Ministry, during which the candidate will complete any assignments made by the Commission.
3. The applicant shall:
 - a. submit biographical information to the commission on a form secured from the Regional Church office.
 - b. submit a letter of recommendation from the official board or elders of the congregation of which the applicant is a member.
 - c. submit a letter from the congregation or institution the applicant will serve, requesting licensing.
 - d. meet with the Commission.
4. If the candidate is a student the candidate shall request that the college or seminary in which he or she is enrolled send a letter to the Commission on Ministry indicating satisfactory standing of the candidate in the institution.
5. All licensed minister will participate in a workshop entitled Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship.
6. If approval is granted, the candidate will be officially recognized as a Licensed Minister and an appropriate certificate will be provided by the Commission on Ministry. This license is valid only in Tennessee, for a specific placement, and is reviewed annually.

**B. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR
ORDAINED MINISTERS**

1. Admission to candidacy is a prerequisite step ordinarily lasting for at least one year prior to ordination. Having applied for ordination, a person shall come under the care and nurture of the Commission during this period of preparation.
2. The applicant shall:
 - a. submit biographical information to the Commission on a form secured from the Regional Church office.
 - b. submit a letter of approval and recommendation from the official board or elders of the congregation of which the applicant is a member.
 - c. submit a letter from the sponsoring congregation indicating their desire to do so.

- d. maintain regular contact with his or her sponsor (this person is assigned to the applicant by the Commission).
 - e. meet with the Commission on Ministry.
3. At the time of the final ordination interview, the candidate shall submit:
 - a. a letter from his or her seminary indicating the applicant has successfully (or will soon) complete a M. Div. Degree or its equivalent and showing this person has passed a course in Disciples History and Polity, Homiletics, and Pastoral Care.
 - b. a letter from a member of the seminary faculty (a Disciple, if possible) recommending him or her for ordination.
 - c. a four-to-six page personal statement on his or her understanding of the church, the ministry, ordination, and career plans for service within the church.
4. An Ordination council shall meet and must approve ordination before a date for the service is set. The Ordination Council shall be composed of the presiding minister, some or all of the elders of the sponsoring congregation(s), at least one representative from the Commission on Ministry and at least two other person's chosen by the candidate. The Council shall meet to interview the candidate, discuss the concept paper, act upon the authorization for ordination granted by the Commission on Ministry, and assist the presiding minister and the candidate in planning the Ordination Service.
5. Whenever possible, the applicant shall undergo an assessment with a qualified counselor appointed by the Commission. This shall include an assessment of gifts, talents, vocation interests, personal strengths and growing edges, skills in relating to people, and any other areas deemed appropriate by the Commission. After the counselor evaluates the assessment results, the candidate and counselor will arrange an interview to discuss the assessment and other pertinent background information. The counselor will then write his/her final evaluation which will be shared with the Regional Minister who will guide the commission in its work with the candidate. The Region will ordinarily pay one-half of the cost of the assessment. It is suggested that the candidate approach his or her home congregation about paying the other half.
6. Each person residing in, or performing a recognized ministry in the Region of Tennessee, who wishes to be licensed or ordained, is expected to come under the care and nurture of the Commission on Ministry. Those under the care of another Region will not be the responsibility of the Commission except by their personal request. In the event a candidate from another Region seeks ordination or licensing in Tennessee, the Commission shall consult with the Region of candidacy regarding transfer of candidacy. If a candidate under the care of the Tennessee Commission on Ministry seeks licensing or ordination in another Region, the Commission will cooperate with that Region.
7. Candidacy is terminated by ordination, withdrawal by the candidate, or decision of the Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee.

**C. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR
MINISTERIAL STANDING**

1. The Commission on Ministry will review standing of all licensed and ordained ministers with the region of Tennessee annually. Any person may apply for standing by contacting the Regional Minister for a personal interview during which the circumstances of the request may be considered and the appropriate processes suggested by the Regional Minister. No person seeking standing shall be denied a hearing by the Commission on Ministry.

**F. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR
RECOGNITION OF ORDINATION ORIGINATING IN OTHER COMMUNIONS**

1. Admission to candidacy is a prerequisite step ordinarily lasting for at least two years prior to recognition of ordination. Having applied for recognition, a person shall come under the care and nurture of the Commission during this period of preparation.
2. The applicant shall:
 - a. submit biographical information to the Commission on a form secured from the Regional Church office.
 - b. submit a letter of approval and recommendation from the official board or elders of the congregation of which the applicant is a member (if practical).
 - c. submit a letter from the sponsoring congregation indicating their desire to do so (if practical).
 - d. submit a letter of recommendation from a judicatory official of the former denomination (where possible).
 - e. submit a photocopy of the candidate's ordination certificate.
 - f. maintain regular contact with his or her sponsor (this person is assigned to the applicant by the Commission).
 - g. study Disciple History and Polity either by participation in a class or through reading and discussion with his or her sponsor.
 - h. meet with the Commission on Ministry.
3. At the time of the final recognition of ordination interview, the candidate shall submit:
 - a. evidence that he or she holds an M.Div. degree or its equivalent.
 - b. a four to six page personal statement on his or her understanding of the church, ministry, ordination, and career plans for service within the church.
4. Whenever possible, the applicant shall undergo an assessment with a qualified counselor appointed by the Commission. This shall include an assessment of gifts, talents, vocational interests, personal strengths and growing edges, skills in relating to people, and other areas deemed appropriate by the Commission. After the counselor evaluates the assessment results, the candidate and counselor will arrange an interview to discuss the assessment and other pertinent background information. The counselor will then write his/her final evaluation which will be shared with the Regional Minister who will guide the Commission in its work with the candidate. The Region will ordinarily pay one-half of the cost of the assessment.
5. Candidacy is terminated by recognition of ordination, withdrawal by the candidate, or decision of the Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee.
6. After approval of "recognition of ordination" by the Commission on Ministry, the candidate will then (and not before) schedule an appropriate celebration at which a "Certificate of Recognition of Ordination" will be presented by the Regional Minister or by a representative of the Commission on Ministry.