

Implementation Procedures for the Northwest Region

CANDIDACY FOR THE ORDER OF MINISTRY

1. The region shall keep a file of persons interested in professional ministry, the name to be secured from the congregations of the region.
2. The region shall establish a record of persons who declare themselves to be candidates for future ordination.
3. The Commission on Ministry shall establish a program of nurture involving applicant, congregation and seminary.
4. The region may grant a provisional license, subject to annual renewal, to those performing limited ministerial functions under supervision in the region.
5. All applicants for licensing or ordination must consent to a criminal background check.

The sexual orientation of candidates in and of itself will not impact their progress towards ordination or licensing as the candidates work with the Commission on Ministry.

THE OFFICE OF ORDAINED MINISTER

Degrees obtained from an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary will be accepted; degrees from other graduate schools will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with the possibility that the degree may not be acceptable or that further studies will be required.

1. The candidate for ordination shall write a letter of application to the regional minister who shall forward the same to the Commission on Ministry.
2. The candidate shall request the congregation sponsoring the ordination to write a letter of intent to be sent to the regional minister and forwarded to the Commission on Ministry.
3. The candidate will ask the following for letters of recommendation for ordination: one from the congregation in which membership is held, one from a seminary and/or training facility and three from individuals of his/her choice.
4. The candidate will submit a statement of views on the nature of the church and the understanding of his or her role within it, a curriculum vita and transcript.
5. The Commission on Ministry shall convene an ordination council which will consist of one layperson and one clergy from the Commission on Ministry; the pastor of the congregation sponsoring ordination; a committee of two from the ordaining congregation; and a person selected by the Commission on Ministry from another congregation in the Region. This council will review the file assembled relating to the candidate, using the statement referred to in No. 4 above.
6. Following the review and interview, the ordination council shall have the authority to

authorize ordination on behalf of the region.

7. The ordination service shall be planned by the candidate and the local congregation, following the plan recommended by the Commission on Ministry, and shall include participation by the regional minister or representative, a representative of the Commission on Ministry and, where possible, representatives of the general church and ecumenical partners.

THE PROCESS OF ORDINATION

(Guidelines adopted October 8, 1993)

Committees and candidates frequently find the process for ordination confusing. Each candidate for ordination brings unique experience to the ordination process. Theological education usually takes place outside this region. Sometimes that means that a candidate has had an in-care committee in a region closer to his/her school and must begin again with a new in-care committee in this region.

Frequently the pastor of the seminarian has not gone through an ordination procedure with the Commission on Ministry in the Northwest Region. New members of the Commission on Ministry appointed to oversee an in-care committee or ordination council can experience uncertainty about how to proceed. Each party in the process has questions about the correct procedure to follow. In an effort to provide clarity to this frequently confusing and long process leading to ordination, the Commission on Ministry hereby lists the basic responsibilities of each party entering the process.

Finally, to our in-care committees, ordination councils and candidates: as you work through the process, please do not hesitate to give feedback to the Commission on Ministry about procedures that seem unclear. Please write to the chair of the Commission on Ministry (care of the Northwest Regional Christian Church) with your comments and suggestions. It will help all of us.

The Regional Minister:

1. Participates as ex-officio member of the Commission on Ministry and the ordination council.
2. Expedites candidate's relationship with the Commission on Ministry.
3. Works with the ordination council, Commission on Ministry, host pastor and candidate to set the date and plan the ordination service.
4. Participates in the ordination service.
5. Provides the certificate of ordination.
6. Provides the denomination's Office of Search and Call with candidate's credentials.

The Commission on Ministry:

1. Meets with any person interested in exploring the possibility of ordination.
2. Makes the declaration that places that candidate in-care of the Northwest Region.
3. Appoints and oversees the in-care committee.

4. Receives annual reports from the in-care committee regarding the progress of the candidate.
5. Receives a written request from the candidate when the candidate and in-care committee determine that she or he can now proceed toward ordination.
6. Authorizes the in-care committee to now become the ordination council and oversees the work of the council receiving reports as needed.
7. Receives the recommendation of the ordination council on the fitness of the candidate for ordination.
8. Makes the final decision regarding whether the candidate can proceed with ordination.
9. In consultation with the candidate, ordination council and regional minister, sets the date for ordination.
10. May ask the candidate to undergo a psychological evaluation by a qualified agency recommended by the commission. The evaluation will be done at the individual's expense, and the individual will sign a release of permission for the evaluator to give the report to the chair of the Commission on Ministry. Confidentiality pertaining to the report will be observed.

The In-Care Committee and the Ordination Council:

1. Are appointed by the Commission on Ministry when the commission declares the candidate "in-care" of the regional church and includes:
 - a. The pastor and two elders from the sponsoring congregation;
 - b. An elder from another Disciples of Christ congregation within the region;
 - c. Two members of the Commission on Ministry (one clergy and one lay person), one of whom will serve as chair of the in-care committee and the ordination council;
 - d. The regional minister who may serve as an ex-officio member of the in-care committee and who will serve as an ex-officio member of the ordination council.
2. Meet at least once a year with the candidate and makes an annual written report to the Commission on Ministry.
3. Provide support, nurture and direction to the candidate throughout the in-care process.
4. Collect and maintain a file of materials (transcripts and papers relevant to the process) throughout the in-care process.
5. Together, the candidate and in-care committee determine that the candidate can proceed toward ordination.

6. Request that the Commission on Ministry appoint the in-care committee as the ordination council.
7. Receive approval from the Commission on Ministry to begin the work of the ordination council.
8. Request the candidate to submit a theology of ministry paper.
9. Having gathered all appropriate transcript and papers including the theology of ministry paper from the candidate, the ordination council meets to review the material, examines the candidate regarding fitness for ministry and makes its recommendation to the Commission on Ministry.
10. After having received approval from the Commission on Ministry and in consultation with the commission and the candidate, the ordination council sets the date for ordination.
11. The ordination service will be planned by the chair of the ordination council (or an appointed representative), the host pastor and the regional minister, in consultation with the person to be ordained. The planning committee will use the service provided by the region. The service may be adapted, but is expected to serve as the basic form.
12. Participates in the ordination service, especially in the laying on of hands.

The Candidate:

1. Writes a letter to the regional minister stating interest in exploring ministry within the church, education plans and desire to seek in-care status with the Commission on Ministry.
2. Requests the home congregation to write a letter of support, from the chair of the board and the pastor, to the regional minister.
3. Calls the regional office to request and attend a scheduled interview at a regular meeting of the Commission on Ministry.
4. Receives a letter from the Commission on Ministry regarding its decision to place the candidate in-care.
5. The candidate identifies and requests a congregation to sponsor him/her during the in-care and ordination process.
6. Pursues educational work and appropriate field-work, participating in regular meetings with the in-care committee.
7. Submits all documents as requested by the in-care committee.
8. Requests that the in-care committee formally consider the candidate for ordination and, with the support of the committee, writes to the Commission on Ministry stating his/her intention.

9. Asks the following individuals to send letters of recommendation to the Commission on Ministry:
 - a. Letter of reference from sponsoring congregation;
 - b. A seminary professor with direct knowledge of the candidate's work;
 - c. Three individuals who can attest to the candidate's qualification for the ministry.
10. Receives approval from the Commission on Ministry to proceed with consideration for ordination.
11. Writes a theology of ministry paper. The 15-20 page paper reflects the candidate's understanding of theology, the nature and mission of the church and the role of the professional ministry.
12. Submits all appropriate transcripts and other papers required by the ordination council.
13. Meets with the ordination council as requested for examination and review of the theology of ministry paper and their fitness for ordained ministry.
14. Receives approval for ordination from the Commission on Ministry following the recommendation of the ordination council.
15. In consultation with the ordination council, Commission on Ministry and the regional minister, sets the date for ordination.
16. In consultation with the chair of the ordination council (or an appointed representative), the host pastor and the regional minister, the candidate will help plan the ordination service. The planning committee will use the service provided by the region. This service may be adapted, but is expected to serve as the basic form.

The Sponsoring Congregation:

1. Provides the pastor and two elders for the in-care committee/ordination council.
2. Supports and nurtures the candidate in his/her work and faith development.
3. Writes a letter at the request of the candidate to attest to the candidate's fitness for ministry.
4. Issues invitation and hosts the ordination service and reception.
5. Participates in the ordination service.

**THE PROCESS FOR ORDINATION OF INDIVIDUALS
TRAINED AT NON-DISCIPLS SEMINARIES**

Description of the Process for Ordination of Non-Disciples Trained Individuals

1. This process applies to individuals seeking ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), whose training has been completed in a seminary not affiliated with the Disciples of Christ.
2. The intent of this process is to recognize and affirm the theological training that these individuals have received and to educate and prepare these individuals in the life of Disciples through a course of study and mentoring.
3. The process begins with personal contact with the regional minister and subsequent submission of application materials. The process will be administered by the Commission on Ministry of the Northwest Region.

The Process

1. Application for Consideration
 - a. An individual seeking ordination in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), whose training has been completed in a seminary not affiliated with the Disciples of Christ shall submit an application to the regional minister, who shall forward it to the Commission on Ministry. The application should contain:
 - a.1. A letter of motivation and intent to become ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
 - a.2. A listing of all educational training and degrees (dates, institutions, locations);
 - a.3. Transcripts from undergraduate and seminary programs;
 - a.4. Letters of reference from at least two professors in seminary;
 - a.5. Letter of reference from pastor and lay leader of recent congregation;
 - a.6. Listing of work history for past five years (include a contact person for each place of employment).
 - b. All applicants for licensing or ordination must consent to a criminal background check.
2. Upon completion of all items of the application and following evaluation of individual's training and work history, the Commission on Ministry will request an in-person interview, regarding background education and faith journey. At this interview, the individual should be prepared to:
 - a. Give a statement of faith.
 - b. Explain why he/she was not ordained in the faith tradition in which the individual

was trained;

- c. Explain why he/she wants to be ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- d. Following the interview, the Commission on Ministry will complete its evaluation of the application. Upon approval, the applicant will be assigned an advocate from the Commission on Ministry and enter a period of education and training.

Period of Education and Training in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The applicant is asked to engage in an approximately one-year period of training and education, in which the goal is to acquaint the applicant with the Disciples of Christ, its history and polity, its church life and Christian education, its role in the community and with people and the focus of communion, the Bible and service within its congregations.

Upon approval for education and training, the applicant will present to the Commission on Ministry a proposal of his/her process to accomplish the following objectives. This proposal should be made with the concurrence of the applicant's home congregation and the applicant's mentor. The individual must:

1. Participate in the church life in the Northwest Region by:
 - a. Joining and participating in the life of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.
 - b. Attending three Disciples of Christ congregations for four Sundays each (contiguous, if possible).
 - c. Engaging in regional events, such as the regional assembly (General Assembly, if possible); clergy retreats/lectureships; area clergy meetings; and outdoor ministries.
2. Participate in the mentoring program for one year.
 - a. With the concurrence of the Commission on Ministry, the individual shall engage in a mentoring relationship with a minister in the region, probably the minister of his/her home congregation.
 - b. The candidate must complete a process of reading and study from a reading list provided by the Commission on Ministry.
 - c. The candidate must participate in regional and area education events.
3. Prepare papers on his/her experience in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and statement of theology.
 - a. Process Paper.

A paper will be submitted to the Commission on Ministry that represents the

individual's reflection on experiences in Disciples fellowship through the home congregation, visits with other congregations and participation in regional events.

b. Position Paper

The individual will submit to the Commission on Ministry a paper on his/her statement of theology, the nature and mission of the church and the role of professional ministry.

4. Undergo evaluation of the period of education and training in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

a. At six months:

The applicant will submit a progress report to his/her advocate.

The applicant's mentor will be asked to communicate with the advocate about the applicant's progress.

b. At nine months:

The applicant will submit the process paper to the Commission on Ministry for review.

c. At 12 months:

The applicant will submit the position paper to the Commission on Ministry for review.

The mentor will submit a written report on the applicant's progress to the Commission on Ministry.

At the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission on Ministry, the individual will appear before the commission to defend the position paper and for final assessment by the commission.

5. Book List

Following are some materials to be read:

a. "Journey in Faith: History of the Christian Church" by Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker

b. "People of the Chalice: Disciples of Christ" by Colbert S. Cartwright

c. "The Faith We Affirm: Basic Beliefs of Disciples of Christ" by Ronald E. Osborn

d. "Baptism and Belonging" edited by Keith Watkins

- e. “Joined in Discipleship” by Mark G. Toulouse (revised and expanded version)
- f. “From Mainline to Frontline” by Richard L. Hamm.
- g. “Seeking an Identity” by D. Duane Cummins and Robert L. Friedly.
- h. The Holy Bible
- I. DisciplesWorld magazine

THE OFFICE OF LICENSED MINISTER

1. The candidate for licensing shall send a letter of request to the regional minister, stating the situation and the need. An official transcript of academic achievements and a curriculum vita also shall be submitted. All applicants for licensing or ordination must consent to a criminal background check.
2. The candidate shall have submitted letters of recommendation from the local congregation, providing information regarding the situation and the need leading to the request for licensing and/or letters of recommendation from two persons. These names shall be sent to the regional minister and forwarded to the Commission on Ministry.
3. The candidate shall be interviewed by either a special licensing committee of the Commission on Ministry or the whole commission.
4. Following the interview, the licensing council will make recommendation to the Commission on Ministry, which shall be responsible for issuing the license. The Commission on Ministry also shall be responsible for the annual review of license.

MINISTERIAL STANDING

1. Standing will be reviewed annually.
2. The review shall be made by the Commission on Ministry and the regional minister.
3. Standing for ordained/licensed persons in special church or non-church related ministries shall be continued as long as accountability is maintained by:
 - a. Continuing to perform the duties of a minister either in an occupation recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose or in service recognized by the church as ministerial in purpose.
 - b. Maintaining a program of professional and ministerial growth.
 - c. Maintaining a relationship with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including participating membership in a recognized congregation in the person’s community where feasible.
 - d. In cases where ordained/licensed persons are not accountable to a congregation, region or general unit of the church, the Commission on Ministry, in consultation

with the regional minister and the person involved, will select a four-person committee to enter into an accountability process.

- d.1. This committee will report annually in writing to the Commission on Ministry with the results and recommendations of its accountability process.
- d.2. This committee would be selected initially for one and two bienniums, i.e. two persons for two-year terms and two persons for four-year terms. Selections thereafter would be for a four-year term.
- d.3. Either the Commission on Ministry or the committee could request a joint meeting.

Temporary Recognition:

- 1. The person desiring temporary recognition will write a letter of request to the Commission on Ministry through the regional minister.
- 2. The applicant will submit the following:
 - a. A letter of recommendation or introduction from an appropriate official of the denomination from which he or she comes.
 - b. A resumé of ministerial service or curriculum vita and transcripts.
 - c. Letters from two individuals who are personal references and letters from two individuals who are professional references.
 - d. The Commission on Ministry will review the information submitted, interview the applicant and, where appropriate, grant temporary recognition.
 - e. Temporary recognition will be granted for one year, at the end of which time the status of the applicant will be reviewed.
 - f. At the end of the year of temporary recognition, the applicant will be asked to reaffirm his/her request for standing.
 - g. The Commission on Ministry then shall take appropriate steps to determine that the requirements for standing have been met.
 - h. It is suggested that the appropriate announcement be made of the granting of standing by the region and congregation.

Dual Standing:

Standing may be granted to persons ordained or licensed by other churches (denominations) when serving in a position which combines a congregation or entity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and another denomination. Such standing shall be terminated automatically when the relationship with the combined congregation or entity is terminated.

1. The person desiring dual standing shall write a letter of request to the Commission on Ministry through the regional minister.
2. The following shall accompany the letter:
 - a. Evidence of the person's ordination or licensing and standing in present denomination and a curriculum vita.
 - b. A statement of the position which makes the dual standing desirable.
3. Upon action by the Commission on Ministry, immediate standing may be given, subject to the above stated limitations.

REINSTATEMENT OF STANDING

Ordinarily, persons ordained to the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will retain that ordination for the rest of their lives. Ministerial standing, however, incurs obligations for both the ordained minister and the church, which require periodic review and adjustment. Commissions and committees on the ministry are called to perform this review.

A decision to affirm or deny reinstatement of standing to any individual must come after careful and prayerful consideration of the qualifications and motivation of the person seeking ministry in the Disciples' tradition. The regional Commission on Ministry must work within the instructions and procedures of the specific region, as well as the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The original termination of standing of the individual by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) needs to be examined by the commission. Copies of records pertinent to prior standing should be obtained from the individual's permanent file with the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or another region and from the general office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This information should tell the commission about the candidate's schooling, past ministry, why standing was withdrawn or what happened in the minister's life or work that caused the lapse in standing. Confidentiality, of course, will be observed.

The individual shall be asked to:

1. Provide a letter of application for reinstatement of standing.
2. Show active membership and participation in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation.
3. Write a paper, detailing personal pilgrimage of faith, the meaning of the church and ministry in the world today and the role of the minister in the church.
4. Provide documentation of ordination and previous standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
5. Solicit three letters of reference from both clergy and lay persons with recent knowledge of the individual, including the writer's opinion on the individual's current fitness for ministry.

6. Undergo a psychological evaluation by a qualified agency recommended by the commission, if requested by the commission. The evaluation will be done at the individual's expense, and the individual will sign a release of permission for the evaluator to give the report to the chair of the Commission on Ministry. Confidentiality pertaining to the report will be observed.

The Commission on Ministry must examine with great care the qualifications and circumstances of each individual asking reinstatement of standing, endeavoring to be both pastoral to the individual and responsible to the faith community in which standing is being sought. Ministry requires skill, preparation, fitness, multiple gifts and an evident commitment to the Christian faith and community. This entire review process likely will require some time. It is neither wise nor appropriate for any person seeking standing again to expect to receive it immediately. During the time of waiting, the individual will be given a suggested reading list prepared by the commission and shall be asked to participate in regional events.

Upon recommendation by the Commission on Ministry, standing will be granted which will be reviewed annually according to the policy of the Northwest Regional Christian Church. A letter of recognition will be given to the individual.

AMENDMENT PROCESS

Amendments to these Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northwest Region may be made by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Regional Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northwest Region present and voting, providing such amendments shall have been mailed to the members of the regional board at least 30 days prior to the time of the vote.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

MINISTERIAL CODE OF ETHICS of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, proclaiming Him Lord and Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as an ordained or licensed minister. Through dedication and discipline I will lead and serve with integrity and, relying on the grace of God, I commit myself to the following ethical code:

Personal Conduct

- Witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- Dedicating time, strength, vitality and energy or effective ministry
- Growing in faith, knowledge and the practice of ministry through spiritual disciplines, study, continuing education, and service
- Living a life that honors my commitments to my family, including the need for privacy and time together

- Taking time for physical and spiritual renewal, recreation, and vacation
- Being a faithful steward of God's gifts to me by managing time, talents and financial resources responsibly and generously
- Accepting responsibility for all debts which I incur
- Keeping physically and emotionally fit and refraining from substance abuse and other abuse behaviors
- Using my position, power and authority for good and never for exploiting another
- Maintaining high moral standards in my sexual behaviors
- Regarding all persons with equal respect and concern and undertaking to minister impartially

Relationship to the Church I Serve

- Nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry to the church.
- Calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others in the church and joining their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the church.
- Preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor and speaking the truth in love.
- Administering the sacraments and services of the church with integrity and not for financial gain.
- Working cooperatively and collegially with those whom I serve in the particular ministry to which I have been called.
- Administering the corporate finances of the church with personal integrity.
- Refraining from accepting any gift which would compromise the church's ministry
- Honoring all confidences which come to me in my role as minister and refraining from gossip.
- Encouraging and participating in the regular evaluation of my ministry and cooperating with the region in the periodic review of my ministerial standing.
- Seeking the counsel of the regional minister, should divisive tensions threaten my relationship with those I serve.

Relationship to Ministry Colleagues

- Engaging in covenant relationships with colleagues which involve nurture, discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning and spiritual formation.

- Supporting colleagues in ministry and their families and not exploiting their problems or crises.
- Performing pastoral services within a congregation or for a member of a congregation only at the invitation of the pastor of that congregation.
- Supporting, and at no time speaking maliciously of, the ministry of my successor, or another minister in the congregation in which I hold membership.
- Encouraging the ministry of my successor upon my retirement or departure from a ministerial position by refraining from interference or intrusion and making it clear to former parishioners that I am no longer their minister.

Relationship to the Community and the Wider Church

- Participating responsibly in the life and work of my community, bearing prophetic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and working toward a just and morally responsible society.
- Participating faithfully in the life and work of all manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Seeking to know, understand and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Being a responsible representative of the one Church of Jesus Christ and participating in activities which strengthens its unity, witness, and mission.

Signature

APPENDIX II

POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ETHICS FOR PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

". . . but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:12-16, NRSV)

The nature of the ministry is such that the professional is in a unique and special relationship with those she/he serves. Professional clergy are in a position of power over congregational members or others who seek counsel, leadership, support or service. Any time professional clergy use the influence of the power entrusted to them to coerce or engage in suggestive behavior or sexual activity with those they have been called on to serve, they involve themselves in irresponsible and unethical acts which take advantage of vulnerable persons. Sexual exploitation or misconduct may take a variety of forms and is almost always secretive. These actions in the professional-client relationship damage the bonds of the covenant that tie Christians together as a community of faith.

For these reasons, the Northwest Regional Christian Church, Disciples of Christ adopted a policy on sexual ethics at the Regional Assembly in May, 1987. The policy reads as follows:

"Because the professional clergy person has the responsibility to exercise the power inherent in his/her position only in the authentic service of the constituent/client, and not to use the prerogatives of the position in any exploitation of the constituent/client, it shall be the policy of the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that sexual exploitation/misconduct in the professional-client relationship between clergy and the constituent/client is condemned and calls for intervention by the regional minister."

Implementation Procedures for the Northwest Region: Sexual Ethics Policy

The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall deal with any complaint alleging sexual misconduct or exploitation in the following manner:

The task of the assessment of the complaints or allegations shall be carried out by the regional minister or person(s) designated by the regional minister and approved by the chairperson of the Commission on Ministry. Frequently, allegations of improper conduct will arrive in the form of verbal, secondhand reports or requests for assistance from individuals with elected responsibility in a particular congregation. Occasionally, complaints will be received directly from involved parties. Because of the sensitivity of such charges, it shall be the responsibility of the regional minister or designee to use the following guidelines in the investigation and resolution of all such complaints, allegations or requests for assistance.

1. The regional minister should inform the professional clergy person/counselor, against whom the allegations are made, of the reported misconduct or exploitation and allow the individual an opportunity to provide an explanation of his/her behavior in question.
2. The regional minister shall ensure the privacy of the individuals involved in the activity is

protected until he/she believes there is reasonable evidence of misconduct. At that time, the regional minister will use his/her discretion, but is free to disclose evidence and details to appropriate parties involved in the resolution of the misconduct.

3. If the victim(s) of sexual misconduct or exploitation has no viable resources available for counseling or therapy, the regional minister will suggest possible resources for the victim(s) to gain access to counseling and/or treatment. Because each professional is individually responsible for his/her actions, the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will not necessarily assume financial responsibility for counseling assistance in such cases.
4. If the regional minister believes there is reasonable evidence that sexual misconduct or exploitation has occurred, the regional minister shall counsel with the professional individual involved to provide pastoral care, seek resolution or treatment and follow appropriate legal procedures.
5. The regional minister shall execute appropriate follow-up actions as necessary and document the incident to the extent he/she determines appropriate in the professional's file.
6. If it is determined that the professional's standing in the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should be affected, the regional minister will discuss the case with the chairperson of the Commission on Ministry. If the chairperson agrees, consideration and action on the individual's standing will be placed on the agenda for the next commission meeting and the individual notified of the pending consideration.
7. If the regional minister believes there is no reasonable evidence of sexual misconduct or exploitation and further evidence is not secured, investigation of the allegation will be suspended and no record of the complaint placed in the individual's file.
8. If it is clear there are no reasonable grounds for the complaint, the professional involved may request a statement from the regional minister, or designee, exonerating him/her of any misconduct or exploitation. In some cases, the professional clergy person/counselor may become a victim of false allegations. Individuals in this situation are to be cared for as victims. The regional minister will suggest possible resources for counseling or treatment to assist in recovery. The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will provide a reasonable level of financial assistance to such individuals to gain access to appropriate counseling or treatment.

Policy Statement of Sexual Ethics adopted by the Commission on Ministry-January 1992

Process for Alleged Pastoral Misconduct

History: The Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) adopted a policy statement addressing Sexual Ethics for Professional Ministry (revised, 1992), published in the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Current Situation: In January 1997, the Region's Commission on Ministry appointed a working group to [a] examine the continuing relevance of the policy statement, and [b] develop a more specific process for implementing the policy as circumstances may demand.

Findings: The working group concluded that the policy continues to be relevant but believes that its implementation needs to involve more persons than the regional minister. It is the recommendation of the working group that the regional minister be fully involved in the process, but not to the degree that it may prevent him/her from exercising the pastoral duties of the office.

The working group is concerned that a process be constructed to take advantage of the multiple gifts of lay and clergy persons throughout the region.

Following is the process recommended to the commission by its pastoral misconduct working group.

Assumptions

1. From time to time, it is expected that pastoral misconduct will be alleged in the region.
2. Any alleged pastoral misconduct deserves to be treated with great seriousness.
3. The Northwest Region has been fortunate in experiencing few incidents of this nature. There is no need for constructing an overly-complicated implementation process disproportionate to the caseload anticipated.
4. The implementation process should involve people beyond the regional minister. Unless these people bring professional expertise to the task, they should undergo training.
5. Each member of the region's Commission on Ministry should undergo training.

Key Objectives

The objectives of an intervention process in all alleged pastoral misconduct cases should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. The highest aim of this process shall result in the spiritual reconciliation of all parties.
2. The civil and personal rights of each party shall be honored and respected, and that due process will prevail.
3. The process designed and implemented by the region's Commission on Ministry shall be considered helpful by each party (vs. further complicating the problem), and not create a situation in which the region becomes vulnerable to criticism.

How the Process Works

1. All complaints are to be submitted in writing to the regional minister. No action will be taken by the Commission on Ministry without a written complaint. The written complaint should contain the following information:
 - a. Description of the event or experience during which the alleged inappropriate or unethical behavior has taken place.

- b. Explanation of how the complainant or other people were affected by the behavior.
 - c. Identification of the elements of the region's sexual ethics policy which have been violated.
 - d. Statement of what action is requested or suggested to be taken by the Commission on Ministry, or by some other church body or church officer.
2. In the case of allegations of improper professional conduct which are rumored, it is the responsibility of the regional minister to pursue them and, if finding them to actually exist, to encourage the complainant to file a written complaint.
3. Upon receipt of a written complaint, the regional minister shall:
 - a. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint, determine the bounds of confidentiality, outline the process which will be followed by the Commission on Ministry and offer his/her pastoral support.
 - b. Inform the chairperson of the Commission on Ministry of receipt of the complaint and encourage him/her to appoint response teams to investigate the allegations.
 - c. Inform the pastor against whom the complaint has been registered, providing him/her with a summary of the complaint and encouraging him/her to prepare a written response, outline the process which will be followed by the Commission on the Ministry and offer his/her pastoral support.
4. The chairperson of the Commission on Ministry shall appoint two response teams within 72 hours of receiving the complaint, Team A to meet with the complainant and Team B to meet with the pastor charged. Each response team shall be comprised of two persons, male and female, one of whom shall be a layperson and the other a clergy person.
5. Response Team A meets with the complainant.
 - a. The purpose of the meeting is to outline the process which will be followed and to provide opportunity for the complainant to tell his/her story. The complainant may have a support person present. It is essential that the team take the complainant seriously, express the concern of the wider Christian community and offer pastoral and/or professional counsel, if desired.
 - b. Response Team A shall also:
 - b.1. Appoint a recorder who will maintain an accurate record of the complainant's statement.
 - b.2. Determine if the complainant is aware of other persons who believe they have experienced similar unethical conduct by the pastor in question.
 - b.3. Determine what restrictions, if any, the complainant places upon the sharing of this information and clarify how and to whom the complainant wishes to

have this matter made known.

- b.4. Clarify the extent and limits of confidentiality in these procedures, being sure the complainant understands that confidentiality, while desirable, cannot be fully assured.
- b.5. Ascertain the extent to which the complainant is willing to participate in the investigation and proceedings.
- c. Response Team A prepares a written report of its findings.
 - c.1 A copy of the report is shared with the region's attorney.
 - c.2. With the attorney's approval, the report is shared with the pastor who is invited to comment upon its accuracy in writing.
 - c.3. The report is also shared with Response Team B, the chair of the Commission on Ministry and the regional minister.
- 6. Response Team B meets with the pastor against whom the allegations have been brought.
 - a. The purpose of the meeting is to outline the process which will be followed and to provide the pastor opportunity to tell his/her story. The pastor may have a support person present. It is essential that the team take the pastor seriously, to express the concern of the wider Christian community and offer pastoral and/or professional counsel, if desired.
 - b. Response Team B shall also:
 - b.1. Appoint a recorder who will maintain an accurate record of the plaintiff's statement.
 - b.2. Discourage the pastor from initiating contact with the complainant at this time, nor to disclose the name of the complainant to others; to do so, will be considered a breach of professional ethics and can become the basis for an additional complaint.
 - b.3. Draw a distinction between the church's jurisdiction in terms of ministerial authorization from civil and criminal jurisdictions.
 - b.4. Clarify the extent and limits of confidentiality in these procedures, being sure the pastor understands that confidentiality, while desirable, cannot be fully assured.
 - b.5. Reserve the right to meet with and share the complaint with appropriate representatives of the minister's church or calling body.
 - c. Response Team B prepares a written report of its findings.

- c.1. A copy of the report is shared with the region's attorney.
 - c.2. With the attorney's approval, the report is shared with the pastor who is invited to comment upon it in writing.
 - c.3. The report is also shared with Response Team A, the chair of the Commission on Ministry and the regional minister.
7. Response Teams A and B meet with the chair of the Commission on Ministry, the regional minister, the region's attorney and any other specialist deemed important to the process by the regional minister. The purpose of this meeting is to determine [a] the veracity of the allegations and [b] the next steps to be pursued.

Next steps can include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. Substantiation of the charges
 - b. Meeting with the leadership of the pastor's congregation
 - c. Enrolling either or both parties in a program of therapy
 - d. Recommending disciplinary action to the Commission on Ministry
 - e. Finding the allegations to be without merit
 - f. Other
8. A meeting is called involving the two parties where these findings are reported. Each party may bring a support person. The primary objective of this meeting shall be the reconciliation (if possible) of the two parties. Any further recommended actions will be shared with the two parties at this time.
9. Next steps, if any, will be implemented following that meeting.

APPENDIX III

A Guideline for Amorous Relationships Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Drafted in April 1998, Revised in April 2009

Over the years, clergy have created for themselves varying standards regarding friendships with parishioners. Some friendships have become amorous relationships. A significant number of pastors have been united in marriage with persons from within their own congregations. Many of these relationships have proved sound and have endured.

The purpose of this document is to assist those who find themselves in this situation—to guide them on an ethical path. This difficult journey requires a high level of maturity for the two in relationship and for the community of faith to which they are related. It is advisable for the congregations of this region to establish commonly accepted standards for amorous relationships between ministers and people with whom they are in professional pastoral relationships. Included among the reasons requiring greater specificity are the escalating number of single persons entering parish ministry, the escalating number of divorced clergy continuing to serve in the same parish and a more sharply developed sense of pastoral ethics.

Such standards acknowledge that ministers inherently hold power over parishioners with whom they are in pastoral relationship. Amorous relationships between a pastor and parishioner who are each single must include the valid consent of both parties, if they are to be ethically sound,

For the purposes of this document, the word *amorous* is used to connote a romantic relationship between two persons. The Commission on Ministry believes that an amorous or romantic relationship is possible between a single pastor and a single parishioner provided certain standards are observed and honored. Some of those standards which must be met before such a relationship can be sanctioned are:

1. An ethical amorous relationship requires that each party be legally able to give consent. That is, each party must be legally free from any marital tie before entering into an amorous relationship. For example, it is inappropriate and ethically unprofessional for either party to pursue an amorous relationship before each party is legally divorced. It is also inappropriate and ethically unprofessional for a pastor to become involved with any parishioner where the two have been previously involved in a counseling or spiritual direction relationship. Any amorous relationship between an adult and a teenager is clearly irresponsible. Such a relationship is predatory behavior and is totally unacceptable in the life of the church.
2. Any amorous relationship which involves coercion — physical, emotional, spiritual or psychological — is an unethical relationship. Submission to an amorous relationship, either explicitly or implicitly, shall not be made a term or condition of instruction, employment, pastoral care or participation in any church activity.
3. Persons entering into an amorous relationship should contemplate the potentially negative consequences throughout the life of the congregation, whether the

relationship ultimately is sustained or terminated. The two parties should anticipate the impact upon individuals within the congregation and the congregation as a whole. Will the mission of the institution be compromised by the relationship? What potential harm may result? Is the relationship worth risking the well-being of this Body of Christ? Conflict leading to the loss of membership should be anticipated even when the matter is properly handled.

4. Persons engaging in amorous relationship must recognize and understand the inequity of power between pastor and parishioner, and take appropriate steps to bring the two parties into equal power to the degree that this is possible. Such steps may include the following:
 - a. The best counsel is for a pastor who wishes to develop an amorous relationship to pursue it with one who is not a member of the parish s/he has been called to serve.
 - b. If the pastor chooses to develop an amorous relationship with a person in the congregation s/he is serving, it is essential that the pastoral relationship be terminated and arrangements made for the lay person to establish a pastoral relationship with another clergy person.
 - c. The intent of a pastor to develop a mutual amorous relationship with a parishioner should be reported to the regional minister, to the lay leader of the congregation, the chair of the elders, the pastoral relations committee and any other appropriate body of a particular congregation. The pastor and one of these bodies, with the guidance of the regional minister, should develop a methodology for announcing the relationship to the congregation-at-large at some appropriate time.
 - d. When the pastor commits to an amorous relationship with a layperson, the layperson will resign any elected leadership roles for a minimum of one year and for such time as the congregation deems appropriate for the well-being

of the community. It is assumed that non-elected roles of leadership would not necessarily be terminated.

When a pastor and member of the congregation enter an amorous relationship and when they exhibit concern for the well-being of the congregation and for themselves by honoring the foregoing counsel, they shall no longer be considered in professional pastoral relationship by Commission on Ministry and its definitions of inappropriate sexual conduct.

Adopted by the Commission on Ministry Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) September 26, 1997; revised, April 2009

NOTE

The Lane-Salmon Fund was established to assist ministers. Details are available from the regional minister who administers the fund in consultation with the regional moderator.