

**Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia**

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. This document is the working document for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia and takes affect November 13, 2011 after passage at the Regional Assembly. It replaces all former documents and policies related to ministry of the Christian Church in Georgia. It may be amended by the Regional Board. Major amendments and revisions may be made by the Regional Assembly upon the recommendation of the Regional Board.
2. The document is meant to put into practice the spirit and intentions of this Region that the congregations and other ministries be supplied with competent and educated clergy who not only have ministry skills but will help the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) understand and grow towards its calling from God.
3. The Christian Church in Georgia endorses and accepts as its own document, the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* passed by the General Assembly in 2009 and effective August 2011. It will serve as the basic document related to qualifications, and for theological and ecclesial questions about ministry.
4. The Christian Church in Georgia also endorses and accepts, as part of the documents related to ministry within the Christian Church in Georgia, the *Policy And Procedures For Response To And Prevention Of Clergy Sexual Misconduct Of Persons Engaged In Ministry In The Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ) In Georgia* adopted as a provisional document by the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church in Georgia in November 2010.
5. The Christian Church in Georgia will recognize the training and credentials of those who, at the time of this document being adopted, already are ordained or licensed by the Christian Church in Georgia. Licensed Ministers will have two years to apply for Commissioned Minister standing. Granting of Commissioned Minister standing will assume the candidate has done work suitable to the Commission related to each of the competencies listed in the Order of Ministry Document.

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6. The following sets policies and procedures for the Christian Church in Georgia in relation to ministry and ministerial standing. The Christian Church in Georgia will work with the candidate and a sponsoring congregation to jointly and cooperatively see that a person is prepared and qualified to serve as a minister within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It is affirmed that ordination and commissioning are actions of the Church which are the joint responsibility of the candidate, the congregation and the region.
Consequently, the process is intentionally shared, and will involve commitment and expenses on the part of all three partners. This should be known and understood as the process is begun.
7. Upon entry into the process, candidates should be prepared for the amount of time needed to do the proper work in preparation. Normally, this will take three years. A candidate should be recommended to come under the care of the Ministry Commission as soon as the call is verified by the congregation and before preparatory work is begun. Time spans for those seeking transfer of standing will be less than for ordination.
8. Commissioned Ministry Seeking Ordination through the apprentice track, involves a process which will take longer than the normative process of seeking ordination through seminary education. Those in this track should expect to do educational preparation required by the Ministry Commission and to then serve at least 3 additional years performing ministry under the supervision of an assigned mentor.
9. Persons who have been commissioned (licensed) by the Christian Church in Georgia for 10 years continuously, may apply for a permanent commissioned minister status. This status, if granted by the Ministry Commission, would be effective so long as the person serves in the ministry position within Georgia for which it was granted. This status would still require the annual standing report form be filled out.
10. Permanently Commissioned Ministers at the time of their retirement from ministry shall retain the standing of Commissioned Minister (retired). This standing will continue so long as the Personal Qualifications for Ministry (*Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) section IIA*) are met.
11. Ordination, whether obtained through an academic preparation or an apprentice track, is clearly seen as representative ministry with and to the whole church. Commissioned

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Ministry is ministry on behalf of the church in a specified setting (within the Region of Georgia) and a specific ministry. Upon movement to a different ministry or a different location, the Ministry Commission will need to be petitioned for a new commission. It is renewable annually through the standing process administered through the Region.

12. In the case of a congregation seeking affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), upon request, the minister may be granted provisional Commissioned Minister status and then enter with the appropriate process as outlined in this document . That temporary status may be renewed after one year, one time only. By that time the minister needs to be under the care of the Ministry Commission proceeding towards standing as a Disciples Minister.
13. In certain and specific cases, especially but not limited to, clergy of identifiable ethnic groups serving congregations of that ethnicity, the Ministry Commission may amend the procedure related to any candidate based upon the circumstances of the situation and the candidate. Any such exception would be done after conversation with the congregation and the applicant. In all cases of amended procedure, the spirit of this document related to giftedness and preparation for ministry will be upheld.

B. PAPERS REQUIRED BY THE MINISTRY COMMISSION FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION OR COMMISSIONING.

1. During the application for candidacy process, a paper describing the sense of call to ministry a candidate feels. If the candidate is seeking a transfer of standing the paper should deal with why the candidate is requesting standing as a Disciples minister.
2. A paper of no more than 3 – 5 pages outlining the candidate’s theological position and how that compares with Disciples theology and practice.
3. Prior to the final interview with the Ministry Commission, a description of the preparation and experience leading to competency in each of the 16 areas set forth in the Order of Ministry document.

C. CANDIDACY FOR ORDAINED OR COMMISSIONED MINISTRY

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A person becomes a candidate for ordained or commissioned minister following the process outlined below. Once a candidate, they are considered “under care and nurture for ministry by the congregation and the Regional Ministry Commission”

1. Meeting with the Regional Minister
2. A letter from a recognized (Disciples of Christ) congregation requesting entry into candidacy. This recommendation should be based upon a call to ministry, and refer to the moral qualification for ministry, evidence of gifts and abilities for ministries observed as well as activity in the life of the congregation. It should also include biographical information about the candidate.
3. An information form filled out by potential candidate
4. Paper #1 (above) dealing with the candidate’s understanding of call to ministry
5. After the above steps, a meeting with the Ministry Commission
6. Decision about admission to candidacy and commissioning if needed

**D. CHECKLIST FOR ORDINATION TO THE MINISTRY (NOT IN
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)**

1. Accepted as a candidate for ministry
2. Meeting, if needed, with Ministry Commission, candidate, and congregation to determine preparation route and track
3. Assignment of mentor by the commission
4. Educational process laid out in step 2 is embarked upon and completed
5. Submission of papers required by the commission
 - a. call to ministry paper – during application for candidacy
 - b. theological position - during second year under care
 - c. preparation for competencies – at conclusion of second year
6. Annual meeting between representative of commission, candidate, and representative of congregation
7. Meetings with the Ministry Commission
 - a. first meeting – during candidacy
 - b. second meeting – during first or second year

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- c. additional meetings as may be required by the Ministry Commission
8. Psychological assessment by a body approved by the Ministry Commission completed and submitted to Ministry Commission (cost of this assessment is equally shared by congregation, Region and candidate)
9. Attend Regional and/or General Assembly
10. Completion of approved Workshop on Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
11. Ordination Council formed upon direction of Ministry Commission
12. After approval to form an ordination council the candidate should fill out Search and Call papers for future use in process
13. Recommendation from Ordination Council received by Ministry Commission
14. Ordination service approved and date set
15. Ordination

E. CHECKLIST FOR COMMISSIONED MINISTRY (NOT IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

1. Accepted as a candidate for ministry
2. Meeting, if needed, with commission and congregation to determine appropriate educational preparation
3. Assignment of mentor by the commission
4. Educational process determined in step 2 is embarked upon and completed
5. Submission of papers required by the commission
 - a. call to ministry paper – during candidacy
 - b. theological position – during second year
 - c. preparation for competencies – at the conclusion of second year
6. Annual meeting between representative of commission, candidate, and representative of congregation
7. Meetings with the Ministry Commission
 - d. first meeting – during candidacy
 - e. second meeting – at end of second year
 - f. additional meetings as may be required by Ministry Commission

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8. Psychological assessment by a body approved by the Ministry Commission completed and submitted to Ministry Commission (cost of this assessment is equally shared by congregation, Region and candidate)
9. Attend Regional and/or General Assembly
10. Completion of approved Workshop on Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
11. Decision made by Ministry Commission related to Commissioned Minister standing

F. CHECKLIST FOR TRANSFER OF STANDING

1. Application to Ministry Commission with supporting materials
 - a. Reference from Disciple pastor currently in good standing
 - b. Recommendation from Disciple congregation outlining
 - i. Membership
 - ii. Activity level
 - iii. Other information
 - c. Evidence of good standing in previous denomination
 - d. Evidence of educational preparation for ministry
 - e. Evidence of ordination
 - f. Paper describing reason for desire to become Disciple minister
2. Interview with Regional Minister
3. Interview with Ministry Commission
4. Completion of an approved course in Disciple History and Polity
5. Psychological assessment by a body approved by the Ministry Commission completed and submitted to Ministry Commission (cost of this assessment is equally shared by congregation, Region and candidate)
6. Completion of any educational work recommended by the Ministry Commission
7. Completion of approved workshop on Clergy Boundaries and Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
8. Paper outlining candidate's understanding of ministry, theology and the relation of those to Disciples of Christ
9. Second interview by Ministry Commission

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10. Endorsement by elders of the congregation
11. Complete ministerial profile in Search and Call process for later use
12. Decision related to Standing by Commission

G. CHECKLIST FOR TRANSFER OF STANDING FROM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. Application to Ministry Commission with supporting materials
 - a. Recommendation from Disciple congregation
 - i. Membership
 - ii. Activity level
 - iii. Other information
 - b. Evidence from Conference Minister of good standing
 - c. Most recent ministerial profile from United Church of Christ
2. Interview with Regional Minister
3. Interview with Ministry Commission
4. Completion of an approved course in Disciple History and Polity
5. Completion, if not previously done, of a Psychological assessment by a body approved by the Ministry Commission and results submitted to Ministry Commission (cost of this assessment is equally shared by congregation, Region and candidate)
6. Completion of approved workshop on Clergy Boundaries and Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
7. Paper outlining understanding of ministry, theology and the relation of those to Disciples of Christ
8. Endorsement by elders of the congregation
9. Decision related to standing by Commission

H. PROCESS FOR ANNUAL REVIEW OF STANDING.

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1. The Christian Church in Georgia will require an annual written or electronic report on ministry. Those reports will be reviewed by the Ministry Commission prior to standing being reaffirmed. Processes for suspension or termination of standing may be initiated for failure to submit the annual report.

Additional requirements for active ministers seeking standing with the Christian Church in Georgia:

- a. Annual participation in continuing education
- b. Completion of workshop in clergy boundaries including prevention of clergy sexual misconduct, every 5 years

2. Process for review of standing with possibility of termination of standing.

- a. Process outlined in General Policy. (Section II.F Theological Foundations And Policy And Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry Of The Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ))
- b. Meeting with subcommittee of the Ministry Commission. (Failure to respond to an invitation for a meeting with the Commission will move the process to the next step.)
- c. Recommendation for action will be conveyed to the Ministry Commission and to the minister,
- d. Decision will be made by Ministry Commission

3. Appeals of decisions related to the annual review of standing made by the Ministry Commission may be made to the Regional Board.

- a. There shall be a written appeal to the Regional Board
- b. A sub-committee of the Board shall be appointed by the moderator
- c. This sub-committee shall meet with the Appellant, with representatives of the Ministry Commission, and others which this sub committee may feel they need to meet in order to render a fair decision
- d. Decision recommended to and acted upon by the Regional Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting
- e. News of the decision shall be communicated in writing to the appellant.

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- f. An appeal will not be considered if legal action has been initiated or threatened
 - g. The appeal process shall be conducted in a timely manner
4. Process for restoration of standing (other than standing removed for clergy sexual misconduct).
- a. Written application must be made to the Ministry Commission of the Christian Church in Georgia
 - b. There must be an accompanying recommendation from the body which removed standing
 - i. In the case of standing which has lapsed, there must be a recommendation from the Region where standing was last held
 - c. The Ministry Commission will review the case and make a decision regarding standing

In the case of standing removed due to a finding of Clergy Sexual Misconduct the following shall be the process:

Any application to have standing reinstated by the Christian Church in Georgia will need to be supported by the following: *Additional information, on a case by case basis, may be required by the Commission.*

- Letter from licensed pastoral counselor to the Ministry Commission indicating the number of sessions of therapy, and dealing with the applicant's response to the incident leading to the termination of standing, the applicant's relationship with family, the applicant's progression in dealing with the incident, and an opinion regarding the applicant's fitness to return to ministry.
- Results from psychological assessment for ministry conducted by the Pastoral Institute or other such testing agency approved ahead of time by the Ministry Commission
- Completion of an approved workshop on clergy boundaries and sexual ethics which is at least one day long. This should have been done within one year of the application for reinstatement of standing

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- Letter from pastor of congregation where the applicant has been worshipping indicating level of activity and participation
- 3 – 5 page paper by the applicant discussing motivation for return to ministry and the sense of call within the life of the applicant
- Opportunity shall be given for a written statement by the victim related to restoring standing of the minister
- Personal interview by the applicant with the Ministry Commission

Appendix 1

Responsibilities for Ordination or Commissioned Ministry

Candidate Tasks

Approach congregation (elders) expressing desire to enter ministry

- Fill out information sheet provided by the Region
- Prepare paper requested by Ministry Commission
- Meet with Regional Minister
- Meet with Ministry Commission

Congregation Tasks

After meeting with candidate, sends a letter to the Regional Ministry Commission recommending the person be accepted as candidate. Recommendation should be based upon call to ministry, moral qualifications for ministry, evidence of gifts and abilities for ministry and activity in the congregation. It should also include biographical information regarding the candidate

Set up a program of continued nurture and care for the candidate through the preparation phase

Regional Tasks

Regional Minister meets with candidate after receiving recommendation from congregation

Ministry Commission meets with candidate to decide on candidacy and determine the preparation and track towards ministry the candidate should take

Assign mentor to guide candidate through preparation and act as liaison with the Ministry Commission

Annual meeting between candidate, congregational representative and Ministry Commission representative to update all on progress. At this point, if needed, Candidates for Ordination may be given recognition as Commissioned Ministers Seeking Ordination.

- Meet regularly (annually) with the Ministry Commission
- Works towards completion of educational requirements
- Attend Regional and General Assembly Obtain Psychological Assessment and submit to the Regional Ministry Commission

Annual interview based upon papers submitted each year

If candidate is seeking Commissioning, a decision is made related to that.

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For those seeking ordination the processes continue as outlined below

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit transcript of final marks to Regional Ministry Commission 		<p>Recommendation to candidate to form ordination council</p>
<p>Form ordination council on recommendation from Ministry Commission</p>	<p>Ordination council consisting of elders and 2 members of the Ministry Commission along with mentor and Pastor (chairs the Council) to examine the candidate</p>	<p>Supply guidelines to ordination council</p> <p>Act upon recommendation of the ordination council</p>
<p>IF recommended for ordination, plan ordination service at date convenient to congregation and regional minister</p>	<p>Plan reception and appropriate participation in ordination service including gifts of office</p>	<p>If recommended, open access to Search and Call for the candidate and supply candidate with guidelines for planning ordination service</p>
<p>Fill out Search and Call papers for immediate or future use in relocation</p>		<p>Following ordination, change status with Search and Call office to Ordained Minister</p>

Appendix 2

Process for Transfer of Standing for minister from denomination other than United Church of Christ

Individual	Congregation	Region
Apply with the following supporting material: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- reference from Disciples pastor in good standing- recommendation from a Disciples congregation- evidence from judicatory official of good standing in prior denomination- educational preparation for ministry- reason for desire to transfer standing into Disciples of Christ	Recommend for standing transfer citing membership in congregation, activity in congregation and any other pertinent information	Upon application, receipt of references required, evidence of good standing in former denomination, and adequate educational preparation the Region may grant permission for individual to enter Search and Call process within the Georgia Region
Interview with Regional Minister		Interview with Regional Minister
take an approved course in Disciples History and Polity		Initial interview with the ministry Commission
complete Psychological assessment		
write paper outlining Philosophy and understanding of ministry comparing and relating that to Disciples of Christ		
complete an approved workshop on Clergy Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Abuse		Second interview related to the paper submitted
	Endorsement by the Elders of the congregation	Decision on standing

Process for Transfer of Standing for minister from United Church of Christ

Individual

Congregation

Region

Apply with the following supporting material:

- evidence from a Conference Minister of the United Church of Christ of good standing in prior denomination
- most recent ministerial profile from United Church of Christ
- recommendation from a Disciples congregation

Recommendation for standing transfer citing activity in congregation and any other pertinent information

Upon application, receipt of required documents, evidence of good standing in former denomination, the Region may grant permission for individual to enter Search and Call process within the Georgia Region

Interview with Regional Minister

Interview with Regional Minister

Initial interview with Ministry Commission

complete an approved course in Disciples History and Polity

Psychological assessment

Paper outlining Philosophy and understanding of ministry comparing and relating that to Disciples of Christ

Either complete a workshop on Clergy Boundaries and Prevention of Sexual Abuse or present evidence of completion of such course within the previous three years

Endorsement by the Elders of the congregation

Second interview related to the paper submitted

Decision on standing

