

Commissioned Ministry Manual



**Christian Church in Indiana
(Disciples of Christ)**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
1100 West 42nd Street
Indianapolis, IN 46208
(317) 926-6051

COMMISSIONED MINISTRY: AN OVERVIEW AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Introduction. Commissioned ministry is an office of ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The qualifications for the office are described in the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* and in the Commission on Ministry Manual. Generally speaking, it is an office recognized and endorsed for persons who have gifts and personal qualities for ministries, but have not attained a Master of Divinity degree in preparation for ministry.

Persons who meet the qualifications and who have been called to a position with a church, or a church-related agency, are issued a commission, usually on an annual basis. Commissioned ministers are required to participate in an annual review for the purpose of renewing the commission. Persons newly entering Commissioned ministry are strongly encouraged to enter into a mentor relationship with an ordained pastor for support, study, and spiritual and professional growth. All Commissioned ministers are strongly encouraged to engage in on-going programs of study and renewal.

The process of review for the recognition and endorsement of commissioned ministry is conducted by Nurture & Certification teams of the Commission on Ministry. They meet periodically to conduct the annual review and interview and review applicants.

Application Procedures. Persons interested in attaining recognition and endorsement for commissioned ministry are asked to complete the following:

1. Contact the Regional Office to (a) receive application materials; and (b) set up an interview with the associate regional minister who works with the Commission on Ministry.
2. Submit a letter of call or intent to call for a ministerial position from a church or church agency.
3. As of January 2018, new commissioned ministers will need to undergo psychological testing before being taken under care of the region. Please consult with the Carolyn Reed for more information on this process.
4. Complete all application materials and reference requirements
5. Meet with a Nurture and Certification team for a review of the application
6. Following completion of the application materials and interview with the associate regional minister and the Nurture and Certification team, the Commission on Ministry will receive the action of the team to grant or deny a commission.
7. If approved for commissioned ministry, participation in the annual review process is required to maintain standing.

COMMISSIONED MINISTRY CHECKLIST

Following are the items to be completed prior to your interview with the Commissioned Ministry Nurture and Certification Team. The items are to be in the Regional Office thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled interview.

1. Commissioned Ministry Application
2. Psychological Testing Completed
3. 4 Reference Forms
4. A 2-page statement about your Call to Ministry – When and how did you know you were called to Ministry? What does being commissioned mean, and why do you want to go through this process?
5. A 2-page statement about your Church Life – Describe your experiences in congregations and other communities of faith.
6. Recent picture
7. Academic Transcript (when requested);
8. Personal Information Schedule;
9. Have an interview with the associate regional minister who works with the Commission on Ministry, prior to meeting with a Nurture and Certification Team.
10. Letter from congregation/agency requesting commissioning including job title and a brief job description.

For your information and use, a copy of the Disciples reading/resource list is enclosed.

EXCERPTS FROM THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY MANUAL

1. Commissioned Ministry

- a. **Description:** Commissioned ministry provides the Church opportunity for creativity and imagination in acknowledging the fresh work of the Holy Spirit, recognizing the gifts and graces for ministry in persons without the Master of Divinity degree. These ministries may include: pastors, evangelists, Christian educators, ministers of music, youth ministers, parish nurses, chaplains, bi-vocational ministers, recognized congregationally-based community ministers, or others, where Regional nurture and authorization are deemed appropriate. Commissioned ministry is of four types: student ministry, congregational ministry, specialized ministry, and the apprentice track to Ordained ministry.
- 1) **Commissioned Student Ministry.** Commissioned student ministers are persons who are enrolled in a seminary degree program and who have a covenantal relationship with a congregation or church agency. Ordinarily these persons are preparing for ordination.
 - 2) **Commissioned Congregational Ministry.** Commissioned congregational ministers are persons who have a covenantal relationship with a congregation to provide general ministerial functions. These persons are not ordinarily seeking ordination.
 - 3) **Commissioned Specialized Ministry.** Commissioned specialized ministers are persons who are certified to perform a specialized function of ministry such as music ministry, counseling, and administration. These persons shall demonstrate that they have the proper training and skills to provide for the specialized ministry. These persons shall have a covenantal relationship with a congregation or agency and are not ordinarily seeking ordination.
 - 4) **Apprentice Track to Ordination.** Persons on the apprentice track to Ordained Ministry are serving in a Congregationally- or Regionally-authorized ministry, under care of the Region and are involved in a specified program of study and formation in preparation for Ordination.
- b. **General Qualifications.** The following qualifications are expected of persons who seek to serve as Commissioned Ministers:
- 1) Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;
 - 2) A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
 - 3) An understanding of pastoral identity;
 - 4) Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
 - 5) Strong moral character and personal integrity;
 - 6) Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
 - 7) Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
 - 8) Responsible personal financial management;
 - 9) Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts;

- 10) Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.

c. **Application for Commissioned Ministry.** Persons may apply for commissioned ministry status through the Commission on Ministry. Applications for commissioning are available through the regional office. Applicants shall meet the following criteria:

- 1) The person shall demonstrate a definite and informed decision, in response to God, to serve in the order of ministry;
- 2) The person shall be a baptized and participating member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- 3) The person shall provide a written endorsement of his or her candidacy for commissioned ministry through official action of the congregation or agency with whom the person seeks to do ministry.
- 4) The person shall have at least a high school diploma or equivalent.
- 5) The person shall demonstrate maturity and leadership potential.
- 6) The person shall meet with the Regional Ministry Staff for a personal interview prior to meeting with a Nurture and Certification Team.
- 7) The person shall complete the information schedule, supply references and provide other information required by the Commission.
- 8) The person shall meet with a Nurture and Certification Team for review of his or her application for commissioned ministry.
- 9) The person shall be assigned to and meet with a mentor and peer group at least three (3) times per year when such a group is available.

d. **Regional Response.** The Region, through its ministerial staff, an assigned Nurture and Certification Team, and its Commission on Ministry, shall assess the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and educational capacities of the applicant for the practice of ministry. This assessment will be accomplished through such avenues as personal interviews, letters of reference, background checks, psychological and vocational testing, consultations with congregations, and, as appropriate, coordination between Regions in reciprocal relationships, and communications with educational institutions. Upon the recommendations of the regional staff, and the Nurture and Certification team, the Commission on Ministry may make one of the following decisions:

- 1) Recommend the person be commissioned and granted standing.
- 2) Recommend the person be taken under care either with or without privilege of call.
- 3) Recommend the person not be taken under care, but continue the application and assessment process, asking the applicant for more information and additional interview time.
- 4) Recommend the application not be approved when, in the judgment of the Staff, Team, and Commission on Ministry, it appears the person

cannot, in the foreseeable future, fulfill the requirements for commissioned ministry.

Upon approval, the Region brings the candidate under care and commissions her/him for a particular ministry

- e. **Authorization for Commissioned Ministry.** The authorization for commissioned ministry is through the Commission on Ministry and the specific congregation or church-related organization with which the person has a covenantal relationship.
- f. **Periodic Review.** All commissioned ministers shall engage in periodic review of their ministry. Ordinarily this shall be done annually. The Commission on Ministry shall ordinarily conduct the review through its Nurture and Certification Teams. The review will entail both written reports and a personal interview. Persons failing to engage in a periodic review may lose their commission and standing.
- g. **Educational Requirements.** Persons entering commissioned ministry are expected to engage in educational preparation and participate in continuing education programs to develop competence in the sixteen Areas of Ministerial Practice identified in *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry* (see Appendix F). These programs shall ordinarily include, but not be limited to: Biblical studies, church history [including the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)], personal and social ethics, clergy ethics [including Healthy Boundaries training], theology, and practical ministry [e.g. preaching, teaching, pastoral care, worship, church organizational management, stewardship, and evangelism]. It is the responsibility of the Commissioned minister to seek these out, keep records, and report to his/her mentors and Nurture and Certification team.
 - 1) All Commissioned ministers must complete an Indiana Commission on Ministry approved Healthy Boundaries training event every five years.
 - 2) All Commissioned ministers must complete a regionally approved Anti-Racism and Pro-Reconciliation training event every five years.
- h. **Professional and Personal Development.** The person shall be able to demonstrate sufficient development for the practice of ministry in the following areas:
 - 1) Skills in human relations, such as getting along with people, ability to accept criticism, and ability to manage conflict constructively.
 - 2) Strength of character, such as self-esteem, integrity, security, poise, confidence, self-motivation, and spiritual depth.
 - 3) The ability to manage personal finances effectively.
 - 4) The ability to manage time effectively.
 - 5) The ability to lead an organization effectively.

APPLICATION FOR COMMISSIONED MINISTRY

To the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana Region:

On the basis of the facts given below, I request to be commissioned to serve as a minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana. **PLEASE NOTE: The licensing process also requires that the church you are serving make written request that you be commissioned.**

Personal Information

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Home Address _____
street city zip

Phone (_____) _____ Birth date _____

Email Address: _____

Married: ___YES___NO If yes, give name of spouse: _____

Name and ages of children: _____

Local Congregation of which you are a member: _____

Name and Address of Minister (please print) _____

street city zip (_____) phone

Name of position you will (*or now*) hold (*pastor, director of religious education, assistant, etc.*).
Provide a description of the duties and responsibilities if available.

Name and Address of Chairperson of the Board of the Congregation you will serve as a commissioned minister:

Name _____ Address _____
street city zip

Name and Address of Minister of the Congregation you will serve as a commissioned minister (*unless you will be serving as the minister, in which case skip this line*):

Name _____ Address _____
street city zip

Type of Commission requested (*check one*):

___Commissioned Student Minister

___Commissioned Specialized Minister

___Commissioned Congregation Minister

Experience in local congregations (*record offices or positions held; give dates; use separate sheet if necessary*).

Experience in Denomination and/or Interdenominational work (*record offices held and services given, if any; use separate sheet if necessary*).

Summer camps and conferences (*record any experience of this kind, giving dates, names and places*).

Your special interest or skill (*please state the area(s) of church work in which you believe you have special interest, skills, or competence*).

Miscellaneous (*record any other experience or training you have had which you believe qualifies you to have a Commission for service in the church on a professional basis*).

PERSONAL INFORMATION

PERSONAL

Full name _____ Gender Identity: Male ____ Female ____

Mailing address _____

Street	city	zip
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E-mail address: _____ Birth Date: _____

Telephone: home/cell: (____) _____ work: (____) _____

Marital status: ____ Single Number of children ____ General Health: ____ excellent ____ good
 ____ Married at home ____ ____ fair ____ poor
 ____ Engaged
 ____ Divorced
 ____ Widow / Widower

Present occupation _____ City _____

Size of home community: ____ town/city under 10,000 ____ 10,000 -50,000 ____ 50,000 -100,000
 ____ over 100,000

FAMILY

Name	Date of birth	Occupation	Living?
1			
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3			
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Father _____

Mother _____

Brothers/Sisters in family *(begin with oldest and include yourself)*

1. _____ 3. _____ 5. _____

2. _____ 4. _____ 6. _____

Name	Date of birth	Occupation	Highest education	Living?
1				
2				
3				
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Spouse: _____

Children: _____

CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

Baptized:

date

congregation

city

state

Current membership:

congregation

city

state

Pastor:

Describe your relationship with this congregation in the last ten years and how you have participated in it.

What contact do you still maintain?

List other congregations you have participated in, with approximate years and description of participation.

What minister or other religious leader has influenced you most?

How?

On a separate sheet list and describe volunteer experiences you have had in church leadership. Include following:

Worship

Board

Committees

Sunday School

Social life

Committees

CampingRel. Education

Regional/General

Other

What experiences in paid leadership have you had in churches?

EDUCATION

Summarize your schooling thus far. Include high schools, colleges, special schools, and graduate schools.

Name

City

Dates attended

Date of graduation

Degree or # hours completed

Majors:

Minors:

Was your course of study interrupted while in high school or college? _____ For how long? _____

For what reason? _____

What education are you currently pursuing? _____

How do you intend to use it? _____

FUTURE PLANNING

As you look ahead, are there any questions, problems, etc., that you have in preparing for a church vocation which you wish to bring to the attention of Nurture and Certification personnel?

COMMISSIONED MINISTER'S REFERENCE FORM

DATE _____

TO THE APPLICANT: Give one of these forms to each of the persons you have selected, but including at least your local pastor, another pastor or lay leader, present employer and someone who knows you well and is familiar with your skills.

TO THE REFERENCE: Please complete this form and return it to:

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 150
Indianapolis, IN 46208

APPLICANT'S NAME _____

REFERENCE'S NAME _____

REFERENCE'S ADDRESS _____

_____(_____)_____
City State Zip Phone

	Above Average		Average		Below Average		Do not know
Pastoral qualities (<i>genuine interest and concern for people, accessible, gives consistent care to all</i>)							
Knowledge of the program of the Christian Church and commitment to it							
Maturity (<i>Spiritual, ethical, intellectual, emotional</i>)							
Resourcefulness and creativity							
Willingness to work hard							
Skill in administration							
Skill in Christian Education							
Skill in leadership development							
Preaching ability							
Ability to develop and lead public worship							
Commitment to stewardship							
Commitment to social justice							
Commitment to personal, professional and spiritual growth							
Professional interest and concern (<i>use of newsletters, media, etc.,</i>) to communicate church program							
Demonstrates an understanding of, and a capacity to articulate the Christian faith							

How long have you known the applicant? _____

In what relationship? _____

Please indicate in a manner of your own choosing your estimate of her/him in the following categories:

1. Character (*moral integrity, general behavior*): _____

2. Emotional stability and flexibility: _____

3. Personality: _____

4. Appearance and presence: _____

5. Family: _____

Please give any comments which would assist a personnel committee in making an employment decision regarding this person.

Signature _____ Date completed _____

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Commitment to social justice							
Commitment to personal, professional and spiritual growth							
Professional interest and concern (<i>use of newsletters, media, etc.,</i>) to communicate church program							
Demonstrates an understanding of, and a capacity to articulate the Christian faith							

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In what relationship? _____

Please indicate in a manner of your own choosing your estimate of her/him in the following categories:

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4. Appearance and presence: _____

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REFERENCE'S NAME _____

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_____(_____)_____
City State Zip Phone

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Please give any comments which would assist a personnel committee in making an employment decision regarding this person.

Signature _____ Date completed _____

A Bibliography for Commissioned Ministers and Others Learning of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

March, 2005

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Christian Theological Seminary

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