

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE ORDINATION COUNCIL**

**INTRODUCTION.** The following guidelines are intended to assist congregations and ministerial candidates in the development, formation, and functions of an ordination council. The act of ordination is authorized by the Region and is ordinarily enacted in conjunction with a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) including the one in which the candidate's membership is held.

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of the Ordination Council is to provide an additional means for the ordaining congregation(s) and the Regional representative to assess the ordination candidate's qualification for ministry; and to recommend to the Region's Commission on Ministry the ordination of the candidate.

**COMPOSITION OF THE ORDINATION COUNCIL.** The Ordination Council is to be composed of the following persons:

1. Representatives from the host congregation (including host pastor)
2. Representatives from the other sponsoring congregation(s)
3. Representatives from the Commission on Ministry
4. Ecumenical representatives

The Ordination Council shall be composed of duly appointed representatives of the congregations (normally elders or ministers, but not limited to them) who have voted to sponsor and/or endorse the candidate for ordination. Ordinarily this will include at least two congregations. The host congregation is to be a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana. In situations where it is not possible to include representatives from all sponsoring congregations, one of the congregations may submit written statements concerning the candidate. The Council shall normally include at least two representatives from the Commission on Ministry. Preferably, one of the Commission representatives will be a person from the candidate's Nurture and Certification Team.

It is recommended that the Council not exceed ten members. Ecumenical representation is encouraged. It is especially recommended that a person from the United Church of Christ be invited to be part of the Council. The U.C.C. representative may be selected by the host pastor.

The minister of the host congregation shall be the convener and shall ordinarily preside at the Ordination Council, but there may be exceptions to this guideline.

**SPONSORING CONGREGATION.** A sponsoring congregation is defined as a congregation who, by action of its governing body or elders, has voted to endorse and/or sponsor the candidate for ordination and agrees, where possible, to participate in the Ordination Council and ordination service. A congregation that has been asked to be a **sponsoring congregation**, may, if it deems necessary, invite the candidate to meet with them for an interview. The sponsoring congregations shall report their endorsement to the Regional Office.



**FORMATION OF THE ORDINATION COUNCIL AND MEETING DATE.** After the ministerial candidate has been approved for an ordination council by his or her nurture and certification team, the candidate shall contact the minister of the church the candidate desires to be the host congregation for the ordination service. The invited host congregation may desire an interview with the candidate in order to process the request. After the congregation and host minister will meet to begin consideration of the formation of an Ordination Council.

[Prior to the Ordination Council, the candidate is to contact the Regional Minister about possible dates for the ordination service. See the Ordination Service Manual for more complete information on the policies and procedures for the Ordination Service.]

The host minister is to extend the invitation to persons to be participants in the Council. The date for the meeting of the Council shall normally be at least on month prior to the meeting of the Commission on Ministry meeting at which final approval will be considered.

The host minister may use the Appendix Items, (I) Theological Resource and (II) Ministerial Qualification and Preparations, as a resource for the Council members.

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE ORDINATION COUNCIL.** The ministerial candidate shall supply the presiding minister with the following written material at least two weeks prior to the meeting date for the council:

1. A copy of the Personal Information Schedule and any other pertinent biographical data, especially about experiences in ministry.
2. A copy of the statement of the candidate's concept of ministry. The statement previously supplied to the Nurture and Certification Team is acceptable. Normally, it is not to be longer than two, double-spaced typewritten pages.
3. A copy of the statement concerning the candidate's call to ministry. The statement previously supplied to the Nurture and Certification Team is acceptable. Normally, it is not to be longer than two double-spaced typewritten pages.
4. Three to five letters of endorsement or references. It is advised that these references include a faculty person, a minister, and a lay member of the church.

The host minister is to facilitate the duplication of written documents in quantities necessary for an expedient review.

The host minister shall convene the participants in the Ordination Council one-half to one hour prior to the scheduled meeting with the candidate. During this time the participants shall review the written material and clarify the interview procedures. The host minister shall instruct the participants as to the nature of the "actions" they may take.



**THE ORDINATION COUNCIL INTERVIEW.** The Council shall interview the candidate in order to assess the person's qualifications and readiness for ministry. Appropriate subjects for discussion may include, but are not limited to, the following:

*Review of the person's experience in ministry. What is most satisfying, what is least rewarding?*

*Candidate's personal journey to this point, including his/her spiritual development.*

*Candidate's concept of ministry.*

*The candidate's sense of call to ministry.*

*The candidate's theology, e.g., concepts of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Lord's Supper, Baptism, Scriptures.*

*Candidate's perception of the priorities of the church.*

*Candidate's doubts, concerns, sensitive points.*

*Primary moral issues of the times.*

*Family or spouse's feelings or relationship to the person's vocational choice.*

*Prospective benefits or concern about the family in the church.*

*The candidate's personal habits, strengths, weaknesses, or any special circumstances surrounding the person's candidacy.*

*If the person is planning to enter a non-parish ministry, special questions may be developed to explore the person's interest and experiences in the area of specialization.*

*Questions or concerns the candidate has about the church or the Christian faith.*

**PROCESS SUGGESTIONS.** An effective way to inquire into some of the above matters is to pose situations or present case studies for the candidate to analyze. Then the candidate could describe how he or she would approach and respond to the situation or cases.

The interview should not last longer than two hours. The presiding minister is to ask the candidate to leave the room while the Council considers its decision.

The Ordination Council is not to plan the ordination service. This planning is to proceed separately. No public announcement of a date for the ordination service is to take place until after the Ordination Council has acted, but with the understanding that the ordination is contingent on the Commission on Ministry's final approval.



**ACTIONS OF THE ORDINATION COUNCIL.** The council shall seek to arrive at a consensus decision. If the Council cannot reach a consensus, a majority vote shall determine the Council's action. The Council has two actions it may take:

- (1) approve the candidate for ordination; or,
- (2) disapprove the candidate for ordination.

The candidate is to be informed of the decision.

**APPROVAL.** If the Council approves the candidate for ordination, the host minister shall report the action to the Commission on Ministry through the regional office, and the candidate and host congregation may proceed with tentative plans for the ordination service. If the candidate has not already confirmed a date with the Regional Minister, the candidate is to contact the Regional Minister concerning the date for the ordination service. NOTE: Candidates whose approval is contingent upon the completion of the Master of Divinity degree must receive the degree before the ordination.

**DISAPPROVAL.** In event that the Ordination Council does not act favorably, the Council is to report this action immediately to the Regional Minister or the regional ministerial staff person responsible for the Commission on Ministry. If the Council acts to disapprove, the host minister shall inform the candidate of the decision and give the candidate a verbal explanation for the decision. Further, if the Council acts to disapprove the ordination, the host minister shall prepare a statement that indicates why the council disapproved. This shall be submitted to the Regional Office within ten days after the Council meeting. The Regional Office will make a copy of this statement available to the candidate. The host minister shall also be available to meet with the Committee on Reference and Counsel to give the reasons for the Council's disapproval. No preparations are to be made for an ordination service.

An action of disapproval shall be referred to the Committee on Reference and Counsel for further consideration. Reference and Counsel shall consider the action of the Ordination Council and make a recommendation to the Commission on Ministry for consideration and action. Such a recommendation shall take into account whether the candidate desires to appeal the council's decision. In a situation where the Commission on Ministry decides to authorize ordination, over the Ordination Council's disapproval, a new Ordination Council shall be formed. In a situation where the Commission on Ministry upholds the Ordination Council's action of disapproval, the candidate will have the right to an appeal process as stated elsewhere in the Order of Ministry manual.

**THE ORDINATION SERVICE.** In order to prepare for the Ordination Service, the minister of the host congregation and the candidate are advised to consult: A Manual, Provisional Ordination Service and Guidelines.

