

**The Journey Toward
The Order of Ministry
As a Commissioned or Ordained Minister**

with

**The Oklahoma Commission on Clergy
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma**

THE ORDER OF MINISTRY

“The church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole people to fulfill their corporate ministry” (Paragraph 86, Design of the Christian Church).

In its ordering of ministry, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes a Commissioned ministry and an Ordained ministry. The church expects the women and men it Commissions and Ordains to demonstrate educational qualifications and competencies in several areas of personal integrity and pastoral practice, as well as a clear call to and passion for ministry. The church is called to provide significant Congregational and Regional support for those seeking to serve in ministry, whether Ordained or Commissioned.

It bears reiteration that throughout history, Disciples have recognized various methods of preparation for ministry. Over the course of the 20th century, Disciples placed increasing emphasis on a graduate seminary degree as a credential for Ordination, even while recognizing that for some individuals other methods of preparation might be more appropriate in consideration of certain circumstances such as life situation, community, ministry setting, and cultural and ethnic context.

It is strongly encouraged that you become familiar with: Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). See: disciples.org/Portals/0/PDF/TFPCOM/TFPCOM-Final.pdf.

STEPS IN THE JOURNEY

Step One:

Contact a member of the Pastoral Staff of the Christian Church in Oklahoma to request a copy of the “Application for Admission to Candidacy” packet. The Regional Minister will provide a Regional Directive so the candidate may complete a Ministerial Profile, which includes a criminal background check. (Contact information for Regional staff can be found on page 12.)

Step Two:

Complete the application materials and send them to the Regional Office. (For a check list of materials to be turned in, see page 6)

Step Three:

Upon receipt and review of all application materials interviews will be scheduled with a Regional Pastor, two or more members of the Commission on Clergy and/or a representative of the Commissioned Ministry Training Program Board, as appropriate. (For information on the Oklahoma Commission on Clergy and its responsibilities in the Commissioning and Ordination process, see pages 9 & 10)

In consultation with the Regional Pastor and the Commission on Clergy, you will be assisted in discerning your fitness for ministry and developing a “Journey Toward Ministry Plan.” This will include an assessment of your spiritual, emotional, moral, intellectual and educational capacities for the practice of ministry.

The church looks to candidates for:

- the personal, inward call from God, which leads persons to seek such ministry,
- the God-given gifts and graces,
- the personal characteristics and aptitudes, and
- the preparation and promise (e.g., educational, skills, etc) that they have for effective ministry.

The educational portion of your plan will include a consideration of the academic course of study appropriate to your circumstances and needs. Your course of study may include:

- **Master of Divinity** through an accredited seminary toward Commissioning or Ordination.
- **Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture** or its equivalent through an accredited seminary toward Commissioning or Ordination.
- **Commissioned Minister Training Program** toward Commissioning
- **Commissioned Minister Training Program (Apprentice Track)** toward Ordination.

For more information on each track, see pages 7 & 8.

Step Four:

The Commission on Clergy will take action on your application. If approved, you will come under the care of the Commission on Clergy as a *CANDIDATE* for the Order of Ministry. Then:

Step Five: As a CANDIDATE, you will be expected:

- A. To maintain contact with the Regional Pastor and the Commission on Clergy by:
- B. Meeting deadlines for requested material and keeping all scheduled appointments with the Commission on Clergy. This will typically involve at least one IN-CARE interview annually with members of the Commission on Clergy.
- D. Keeping the Regional Pastoral Staff informed of current residence, change in educational institutions, or vocational plans.
- E. Relating to and maintaining membership with an Oklahoma congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ.
- F. Completing a “Stole Camp” experience and a “Healthy Boundaries” workshop, both sponsored and required by the Region. (See information on page 11)
- G. To meet other requirements that apply to all members of the Order of Ministry including:
 - a. Perform faithfully the duties of a minister in whatever ministry site to which you are called.
 - b. Participate in regular study, growth and renewal by completing and reporting at least 16 hours of Continuing Education each year, and completing a Healthy Boundaries training program every three years.
 - c. Adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church. (Included in your Application Packet)
 - d. Meet the personal qualifications for admission to the Order of Ministry. (See page 16 of the Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry. This can be found at: disciples.org/Portals/0/PDF/TFPCOM/TFPCOM-Final.pdf)
 - e. Make Personal Disclosures required on the Application for Candidacy form and on the annual Request for Standing Form you will receive from the Regional Office each November.

Step Six:

When, as a candidate, you have a ministry position, you may request that the Commission on Clergy designate you as a COMMISSIONED MINISTER. This designation is specific to your ministry setting and must be renewed annually. This credentialing will authorize you to perform general ministerial functions under the supervision of an educational institution and/or the Oklahoma Region.

Step Seven:

As you approach the completion of your “Journey Toward Ministry Plan”, you will be guided by the Regional Pastor and the Commission on Clergy to update your application for Candidacy form as needed; provide other information as requested, and apply for Commissioning or Ordination.

At this point in your preparation you will need a sponsoring congregation. This is a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that has decided to sponsor you for commissioning or ordination. This will typically be the congregation where the service of commissioning or ordination will be held. The Board of Elders of the sponsoring congregation will have a personal interview with you and send a letter to the Commission on Clergy stating their recommendation of you for commissioning or ordination and agreeing to sponsor you.

Step Eight:

At a meeting of the Commission on Clergy, your application will be considered. If your application is approved, the Commission on Clergy will schedule a Commissioning or Ordination Council.

Step Nine:

Following the Council interview, the Commission on Clergy will take action on the recommendation of the Commissioning or Ordination Council. If approved, a service of Commissioning or Ordination will be scheduled.

Step Ten:

It will be your responsibility, working with your Sponsoring congregation and the commissioned or ordained Ministerial Staff of the Region to plan your commissioning or ordination service. The Regional office will provide you with a copy of “Guidelines for Commissioning and Ordination for Candidates and Sponsoring Congregations” upon your approval for commissioning or ordination..

Application for Candidacy Packet

The Application Packet includes the following documents.

- Letter from the Regional Pastor
- The Journey Toward the Order of Ministry document
- Application for the Order of Ministry
- Ministerial Code of Ethics (2 copies; one to be signed and returned, one for the applicant.)

Check List of Items to be forwarded to the Regional Office

- _____ Application for the Order of Ministry completed
- _____ College and seminary transcripts requested
- _____ Ministerial Code of Ethics signed
- _____ Requests made for letters of reference (to be sent directly to the Regional Office)
- _____ The Board of Elders of congregation where you hold membership

Educational Tracks toward Commissioning or Ordination

- **Master of Divinity** through an accredited seminary toward Commissioning or Ordination. This is the preferred degree program. “Candidates are encouraged to follow the seminary track, unless economic, vocational, or familial circumstances make the apprentice track more appropriate.” At Phillips Seminary, for example, the 82 semester-hour revised Master of Divinity program is the basic graduate professional degree program in the seminary and is designed to provide the foundational academic preparation for an educated ministry. At Phillips Seminary, Qualified applicants for the Master of Divinity program must have a Bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution, a 2.5 GPA in undergraduate work, and a completed application.
- **Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture** or its equivalent through an accredited seminary toward Commissioning or Ordination. The 48 semester-hour Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture (MAMC) is designed to equip persons to fulfill their vocations in providing faithful and effective forms of ministry in congregations and in the world. Criteria for candidates pursuing the MAMC apprentice track to ordination:
 1. Admission to the MAMC program at Phillips Theological Seminary
 2. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university
 3. Three years ministry or significant leadership in a congregation or other approved ministry site, such as directing camps and conferences
 4. Minimum of 35 years of age
 5. Recommendation of a pastoral staff member from a local congregation.
- **Commissioned Minister Training Program** toward Commissioning

This is a multi-track program that includes a “studies only”, a “studies for commissioning”, and an Apprentice Track toward ordination option.

 - **Studies Only track:** The Certificate of Completion “studies only” will include courses in biblical study, theology, church history and Disciples of Christ history and polity.
 - **Commissioning track:** In addition to the requirements for the Studies Only track the commissioning track also requires additional courses for the “practice of ministry” (e.g., preaching, pastoral counseling and church administration).
 - **Commissioned Minister Training Program (Apprentice Track)** toward Ordination. This track includes the classes required for the Commissioning Track. Criteria for candidates pursuing the CMTP apprentice track to ordination:
 1. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university
 2. Minimum of 35 years of age
 3. Recommendation of a pastoral staff member from a local congregation
 4. Meet at least one of the following

- a. Economic: Must have total annual income at the date of application below 150% of the current, applicable Federal poverty guideline; or, must be eligible for or receiving Section 8 housing and food stamps according to State of Oklahoma guidelines.
- b. Linguistic: English is not the first language
- c. Vocational: Must have served at least 10 years as a licensed or commissioned minister in a recognized ministry setting.
- d. Familial: Must have an immediate family member for whom the candidate is providing primary care who has a debilitating, chronic medical condition.

IV. WHO IS THE OKLAHOMA COMMISSION ON CLERGY?

- A. The Commission on Clergy consists of 15 clergy and laity who are appointed for three-year terms by the Executive Committee of the Regional Board.
- B. The purpose of the Commission on Clergy shall be:
 - a. To grant or revoke standing to ministers in concert with the policies and criteria of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and the policies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma as determined by the Regional church.
 - b. To provide help, counsel and pastoral care in matters such as commissioning and ordination.
 - c. To encourage enlistment of candidates for the Order of Ministry and to be supportive of candidates in preparation for the ministry.
 - d. To be concerned for such matters as continuing education, emergency financial assistance, personal and professional crises, etc. and to assist the Regional Pastoral Staff, as requested, in the area of pastoral care.
- C. The Commission on Clergy upon the recommendation of a Commissioning or Ordination Council, approves or revokes candidates for the Order of Ministry.

III. THE COMMISSION ON CLERGY'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. Send an "Application for Admission to In-Care Packet" to those wanting to apply for admission to In-Care. (For contents of the packet see page 9.)
- B. Make a decision, based on all information received, regarding the status of the applicant.
- D. Schedule an initial interview with the Commission on Clergy, Regional Pastor and/or a Commissioned Ministry Training Program board member as appropriate..
- E. Work with the candidate to develop a "Journey Toward the Order of Ministry Plan."
- F. Issue an identification card indicating the status of the Candidate, once they have been taken under care. If requested and needed send a letter of recommendation and/or endorsement to the appropriate educational institution, ministry site and candidate.
- G. Engage in mutual dialogue with the educational institution where the candidate is doing their academic preparation to assess their progress.
- H. Arrange for annual "In-Care" interviews.
- I. Schedule a Commissioning or Ordination Council once the candidate has substantially completed her/his Journey Toward Ministry Plan.
- J. Provide information and support to the candidate's sponsoring congregation.
- K. Offer guidance for a Liturgy of Commissioning or Ordination, and arrange for an ordained member of the Regional Pastoral Staff will be present to lead in the Act of Commissioning or Ordination.
- L. Give guidance for redirection if at any time, in the opinion of the Commission on clergy, the person should be encouraged to pursue a vocation other than ministry.

Stole Camp and Healthy Boundaries Seminar

Stole Camp – Focuses on the church year, weddings, funerals, memorial services, the celebration of Holy Communion/the Lord's Supper, baptism, and ministerial ethics. Candidates will actually practice baptism by immersion. The regional Commission on Clergy will only consider commissioning for those who have completed Stole Camp.

Healthy Boundaries Seminar – Introduces guidelines for appropriate sexual conduct for pastors and other church leaders in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma. The seminar also clarifies policies and procedures that govern misconduct as well as providing tools and information to deal with sexual/physical abuse. This seminar is required of all those who seek standing in the Oklahoma region.

PASTORAL STAFF

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(Disciples of Christ)**

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