

**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). This can be found at <https://disciples.org/gcom/>

STEPS IN THE JOURNEY

Step One:

To begin this process, please go to <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry/> to download “The Journey Toward the Order of Ministry”, the “Application for The Order of Ministry for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma”, and the Ministerial Code of Ethics.

Step Two:

Complete the application and submit the application and attachments to the Regional Office via email at ebeer@okdisciples.org. The Regional Office will open a file and begin collecting the required documents from others. (For a check list of materials to be turned in see [page 6](#))

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., education, skills) he/she has for effective ministry.

Step Three:

Upon receipt and review of **all** application materials, the Regional Minister will schedule an initial interview with the potential candidate. During this interview a “Journey Toward Ministry Plan” will be completed, including a recommendation as to the appropriate educational track for the candidate. This will be reported to the Commission on Clergy for action. (For information on the Journey Toward Ministry Plan see pages 5 and 6 of the *Incare Handbook*. Download <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry/>) (For information on the Oklahoma Commission on Clergy and its responsibilities in the Commissioning and Ordination process, see [pages 10 & 11](#) of this document.)

In consultation with the Regional Minister 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 educational portion of your plan will vary depending on personal circumstances and needs. (A description of the preferred educational tracks and some alternatives may be found on [page 7](#) and following this policy.)

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.

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

- A. To maintain contact with the Regional Minister and the Commission on Clergy.
- B. Meet deadlines for requested material and keeping all scheduled appointments with the Commission on Clergy. This will typically involve at least one INCARE interview annually with members of the Commission on Clergy.
- D. Keep the Regional Office informed of current residence, change in educational institutions, church membership, or vocational plans.
- E. Relate to and maintain membership with an Oklahoma congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) or the United Church of Christ.
- F. Complete a Healthy Boundaries seminar, a Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism (PRAR) seminar, and a Ministerial Practices seminar sponsored and required by the Region. (See information on [page 12](#))
- G. 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. Adhere to the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church.
 - c. 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 <https://disciples.org/gcom/>)
 - d. 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:

At this point in your preparation if you do not already have a sponsoring congregation you will need one. This is a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that prayerfully discerns 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:

Following the Ordination or Commissioning 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. Please DO NOT SCHEDULE your Ordination or Commissioning date until after this approval.

Step Nine:

It will be your responsibility, working with your Sponsoring congregation and the Regional Minister 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.

- The Journey Toward the Order of Ministry document (download <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry/>)
- Application for the Order of Ministry (download <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry/>)
- Ministerial Code of Ethics (2 copies; one to be signed and returned, one for the applicant.) (download <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry/>)

Check List of Items to be Submitted to the Regional Office

___ Application for The Order of Ministry completed and submitted to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

___ Ministerial Code of Ethics signed and submitted to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

___ College and seminary **official** (not copies) transcripts requested which shall be sent directly to the Regional Office either by USPS or via email to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

___ Request a letter of reference from an elder of the congregation where you hold membership to be sent directly to the Regional Office either by USPS or via email to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

___ Request a letter of reference from a Disciples of Christ or UCC minister to be sent directly to the Regional Office either by USPS or via email to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

___ Request a letter of reference from a lay member of a Disciples of Christ or UCC congregation who may speak to your gifts of ministry to be sent directly to the Regional Office either by USPS or via email to ebeer@okdisciples.org.

Regional Office contact information:

Christian Church in Oklahoma
301 NW 36th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73118-8661

Phone: (405) 528-3577

EDUCATIONAL TRACKS TOWARD COMMISSIONING OR ORDINATION

Ordination Tracks

Please note: The Master of Divinity is the recommended track for all who are seeking ordination. Other tracks, as illustrated below, will require confirmation that the candidate meets specific qualifications, as listed for each alternative and has the approval of the Commission on Clergy.

- **Master of Divinity** through an accredited seminary.

This is the preferred degree program. This degree is designed to provide the foundational theological academic preparation for an educated ministry. Admittance will typically require a Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, a 2.5 GPA in undergraduate work, and a completed Application for the Order of Ministry. Specific requirements may vary slightly from seminary to seminary.

- **Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture** (particular to Phillips Theological Seminary) or an equivalent degree.

This degree will require less hours than a Master of Divinity (MDiv) and thus a preparation that is not as broad or deep as the MDiv. In order to be approved by the Commission for this track, a candidate must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Admission to the Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture, or its equivalent, by an accredited seminary.
2. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
3. A minimum of three years ministry or significant leadership in a congregation or other approved ministry site.
4. Minimum of 35 years of age.
5. Recommendation of a clergy in good standing with the Region from a local congregation.
6. Approval of the Commission on Clergy.

- **Minister Training Program (Apprentice Track)**

This track requires less hours and academic preparation than either the MDiv or Master of Arts and Culture degree. It does not result in an academic degree but in a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from the Center for Ministry and Lay Training. In order to be approved by the Commission for this track, a candidate must meet all of the following three criteria:

1. Minimum of 35 years of age
2. Recommendation of a pastoral staff member from a local congregation
3. Approval of the Commission on Clergy

And 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.

Commissioning Tracks

Please note: The Ministry Training Program offered by the [Center for Ministry and Lay Training](#) is the recommended track for all who are seeking commissioning. The other tracks listed are typically chosen by those who are seeking ordination but would also qualify a candidate for commissioning. The selection of one or another of these tracks must be approved by the Commission on Clergy.

- **Ministry Training Program**

This course of study will result in a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from the [Center for Ministry and Lay Training](#). It is not an academic degree program. Admission to the Ministry Training Program must be accompanied by Commission on Clergy approval for you to enter the Incare process toward Commissioning.

Other possible tracks: In some cases, a candidate for Commissioning may want to work toward an academic degree for personal enrichment. The recommended degree programs would be:

- **Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture** (particular to Phillips Theological Seminary) or an equivalent degree.

This degree will require less hours than a Master of Divinity and thus a preparation that is not as broad or deep as the MDiv. In order to be approved by the Commission for this track, a candidate must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Admission to the Master of Arts in Ministry and Culture, or its equivalent, by an accredited seminary.
2. Baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
3. A minimum of 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 clergy in good standing with the Region from a local congregation.
6. Approval of the Commission on Clergy.

- **Master of Divinity** through an accredited seminary.

This degree is designed to provide the foundational academic preparation for an educated ministry. Admittance will typically require a Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, a 2.5 GPA in undergraduate work, and a completed Application for the Order of Ministry. Specific requirements may vary slightly from seminary to seminary.

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.

The Commission on Clergy's Responsibilities

- A. For those who have discerned a call from God to consider ministry as a vocation, the Commission on Clergy will make available either by USPS, in person, or through <https://okdisciples.org/clergy/journey-to-ministry>: the Application for The Order of Ministry, the *Journey Toward the Order of Ministry* document, Ministerial Code of Ethics, and the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry*.
- B. Make a decision, based on all information received, regarding the status of the applicant.
- C. Schedule an initial interview with the Regional Minister.
- D. Arrange for annual "Incare" interviews.
- E. Schedule a Commissioning or Ordination Council once the candidate has substantially completed her/his "Journey Toward Ministry Plan".
- F. Provide information and support to the candidate's sponsoring congregation.
- G. Offer guidance for a Liturgy of Commissioning or Ordination, and arrange for the Regional Minister or one designated by the Regional Minister to be present to lead in the Act of Commissioning or Ordination and a member of the Commission on Clergy to attest to the candidate's preparation and readiness.
- H. 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.

HEALTHY BOUNDARIES AND PRO-RECONCILIATION ANTI-RACISM SEMINARS

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.

Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism Seminar

Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism training fosters an understanding of the importance of dismantling systemic racism and poverty in the community where you serve and do mission.

MINISTERIAL PRACTICES/STOLE CAMP SEMINAR

All new candidates in Incare as of May 3, 2021 will be required to take the Ministerial Practices Seminar during their Incare experience. Those who have been in Incare previously will have the option of taking the Ministerial Practices Seminar.

PASTORAL STAFF

**The Christian Church in Oklahoma
(Disciples of Christ)**

301 NW 36th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73118
(405) 528-3577

<https://okdisciples.org>

Rev. Pamela Holt, Regional Minister, pholt@okdisciples.org

Rev. Michael Davison, Associate Regional Minister, mdavison@okdisciples.org

