

Ordination Service and Guidelines for Ordination



**For the Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)**

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THEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Theological Perspectives - God calls all of humanity to receive the good news of the Gospel and to accept their call to be God's people. In a divided and unbelieving world, those who accept this good news and are baptized are drawn into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of a new community, the church. In this body, the Holy Spirit unites those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world. The church's mission is to proclaim and prefigure the justice and joy of the Kingdom of God. In order to fulfill this mission faithfully, the members of the Body of Christ are given forms of witness, service and ministry.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada, along with other churches within the Body of Christ, believes all ministry in the church begins and ends in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus' ministry -- of loving, liberating, reconciling, healing, serving -- which defines and shapes all ministries in his church.

This essential ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God through baptism. Through baptism all members of the church become part of the covenant community and are commissioned for their servant ministry; they become participants in the priesthood of all believers. The gifts (charisms) of the Holy Spirit are different and diverse, but in tremendous and simple ways they proclaim the mighty acts of God and mediate God's loving and reconciling work to and in the world. They may be gifts of communicating the gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, caring, praying, teaching, giving, and working for peace and justice. Every baptized person is called to witness to Christ in whatever situation he or she lives; to express in their daily lives the ministry of Christ.

Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early church, representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive functions. Authority and blessing to perform this ministry are celebrated in ordination. In ordination -- through prayers invoking the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands -- the church confirms in women and men the call of God, acknowledges in them the necessary gifts and graces, and accepts this ministry in and for the church. "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the Body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry." (Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: Ministry, paragraph 13.)

Ordination sends forth a company of servants of the servant Lord. These ministries are given for the common good of the whole world. The authority and authenticity of ordained ministers flow through their faithful intercessions, loving leadership and servanthood before God on behalf of all people.

Disciples of Christ accept ordination as a gift of the Holy Spirit at work in the community of faith. In every service of ordination we, therefore, seek to witness to at least four dimensions of this ordering ministry:

- (1) The ordained enter the **apostolic** ministry. By this we mean they receive their authority and commission from the risen Christ. The first Christian ministers were the apostles in the New Testament, to whom the living Lord revealed himself and sent "to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Ministers in every generation preach, celebrate, witness, and gather disciples in continuity with those early apostles.
- (2) Ordination witnesses to a **representative** ministry. Those who accept the ministry of the Word, sacrament, and mission are responsible for re-presenting, showing forth, to the world and to all baptized Christians the character of their ministry and witness. A central task of such

representative ministry is personally and publicly to point the church to its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its faith, mission, and unity.

- (3) Those who receive ordination enter a **collegial** ministry. Ministry is inherently a shared responsibility. No minister is independent or autonomous, all seek to teach and work together to express *koinonia* in support and care for each other. This collegiality relates ordained and lay persons in common ministry. The ministries of all members of the believing community are complementary, given to one to be supportive of the other. All are to build up the Body of Christ in love. No differences of vocation, function or education should obscure the fact that the one ministry of Christ is shared by the whole people of God. Lay and ordained are partners together in governance and witness; together they empower the church for effective participation in discovering God's will for all humanity.
- (4) Most appropriately, ordination is a rite of the **Church Universal**. While ordination is normally done by a particular denomination, and standing is limited to a particular communion, the intention is that no one is ever ordained into a particular denomination or tradition, certainly not into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Those ordained are representative ministers of the Church Universal. While we serve with the vision of universality, the Church lives with the pain of a divided ministry. Nevertheless, all ministers are called to point out the community of Jesus Christ, to work to bring new expressions of the one universal Church into being, and to search for forms of unity which the divided churches cannot yet express.

Historical Perspective- Since the early 1800s, when the Disciples began, our understanding of the ministry and practices of ordination have gradually changed. In many congregations the ministry consisted of local elders and deacons who were ordained by the congregation to be its leaders. In addition to these permanent local ministers, Disciples maintained evangelists who traveled from place to place, preaching, founding new congregations, and organizing them permanently for their congregational life. In other congregations a pastor was the primary, and sometimes only, ministerial leader. By the middle years of the century, the pattern stabilized with elders and deacons in every congregation and with the expectation that congregations that were strong enough would also have a settled, full-time pastor.

Ordination was continued as an action of the congregation; pastors- - and elders and deacons- - were set apart by the laying on of hands with prayer. Even in these early years, however, there were examples of the ordination of ministers at colleges and area assemblies of the churches. Thus from early days the Disciples have had some form of ordination at a level other than the congregation.

Our ministerial system has continued to change so that today the normal pattern of congregational leadership consists of an ordained pastor and elders and deacons who probably have not been ordained. Our theological understandings of church, ministry, and sacraments are only now catching up with our practices.

Two processes have been at work since the 1950s. First, new relationships have developed between congregations, regions, and the church at the general level. With respect to ordination, policies and criteria concerning the ministry are established by the church at the general level. The nurture and supervision of candidates for ordination, the authorization of ordination, and a significant role in the ordination service are primarily the responsibilities of regions. Congregations also participate directly in the examining of candidates and conducting of services of ordination.

Disciples practice has been affected by our serious participation in theological conversations with other churches. As a result we have clarified and witnessed to our own theology and practice of ministry. We have also learned from and been influenced by other churches. Both in theology and in practices concerning ministry, churches of several traditions are more alike now than they have

been at any time in the past two centuries, as witnessed in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry and The COCU Consensus.

Ministry among Disciples continues to change. Currently we are clear concerning our understanding and practice with respect to ministers of word and sacrament, leadership in the church and witness in the world. We are less certain with respect to two other aspects of ministry--elders and regional ministers. Elders continue to be leaders of congregations, with responsibilities to offer the church's prayers at communion. In most places elders are not ordained even though they are a part of the spiritual leadership of the congregation. The clarification of the eldership is one task still before Disciples.

We are continuing the redefinition of the regional ministry. The questions before us are these: Is the regional minister primarily the executive officer of a missionary and program agency? Or is the regional minister primarily pastor and teacher of the Christian faith, leader of worship, and representative in the region of the Church of all times and places? As the second of these understandings comes into focus, the regional minister represents the Church as it transmits Christ's commission to those being ordained.

Disciples theology and practice continue to grow, and this service and guidelines have been written in a way that provides flexibility in regions and congregations. Even so, certain directions are clear already--and this book points in that way. In years ahead, the role of the regions will be consolidated; and the central responsibility of regional ministers for ordination will become clearer. All three manifestations of the Church will continue to participate collegially in the ordination of ministers. This book has been written with these assumptions as guiding principles.

God's Spirit has worked with the Church across its history to bring it to clearer discernment of God's intentions and actions in Christ's ministry. Our theological and historical reflections affirm that the Holy Spirit continues to be urgent and patient with us.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

A. Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has given additional expression to its theological understanding of ministry through its statement, "Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry." This statement was first adopted by the General Assembly in 1971, and amended in subsequent Assemblies. Following are some key paragraphs from this statement that begin to identify some of the procedures for the service of ordination.

1. **The Ministry of Jesus Christ-** Within the church the fundamental ministry is that of Jesus Christ, whose servanthood, offered to God on behalf of humanity, defines and gives character to all ministry expressed in His name. (*"Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry," I.A.*)
2. **The Corporate Ministry-** As head of His body, the Church, Christ calls upon His people to participate in His ministry, and thus to make known in the life of the world the reality of God as Creator, Lord of History, Judge, Savior, Parent. By baptism, all Christians are inducted into the corporate ministry of God's people and by sharing in it fulfill their own calling as servants of Christ. (*"Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry," I.B.*)
3. **The Order of Ministry-** Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been from the beginning, a representative ministry called of God and authorized by the church. While all Christians share in the corporate ministry, the term minister particularly describes a person to whom the church entrusts representative responsibility. Through the centuries this Order of Ministry, in various offices, has been responsible to lead in transmitting the Christian tradition from one generation to another, translating and interpreting the Scriptures, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, administering the sacraments, serving to maintain a company of Christians in continuity with the life and faith of the Apostles, and acting as pioneers and leaders in the church's reconciling mission in the world. (*"Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry," I.C.*)
4. **Authorization to Ordain on Behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)-** Within these policies and criteria, established by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the regions and their related congregations share responsibility of ordination. Specifically assigned to the regions is the responsibility to establish procedures and evaluate applicants, admit them to candidacy, care for their nurture, authorize ordination, and supervise the act of ordination. (*"Policies and Criteria for the Order of ministry," III.B.*)
5. **The Act of Ordination**
 - a. The act of ordination shall be under the authorization and guidance of the region.
 - b. The candidate shall be recommended for ordination by a recognized congregation or congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including the one in which membership is held.

- c. Representatives of the recommending congregation or congregations, the region, and, if possible, the general and ecumenical church ordinarily shall participate in the act of ordination.
- d. The service shall ordinarily take place in the congregation.
- e. The certificate of ordination shall be issued by the region and signed by officials of the church and participants in the ceremony.

(“Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry,” III.D.)

B. The Character of the Ordination Service

The service of ordination is an act of the whole Church rather than of an individual. The service celebrates the setting apart of a person for representative Christian ministry. It is a service of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts of ministry. It includes solemn covenants, the laying on of hands, prayer invoking the Holy Spirit, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The service gives witness to God's continuing care for the world through the Church and its leadership. It is a time to give witness to our wholeness in God and the unity of the Church. Representatives of congregations, the region, the general and ecumenical church ordinarily participate in the service.

The service deserves the utmost care and preparation in order to give glory to God and to uphold the sacred calling of the office of the ministry.

PREPARATION FOR THE SERVICE

A. Spiritual Preparation

The tradition of preparation for ordination includes engaging in prayer, fasting, or retreat just prior to the service of ordination. Candidates are encouraged to find time in the midst of the many details of planning the service to focus spiritually through reflection and prayer.

B. Procedures

This document presumes that the ordination candidate has fulfilled, or soon will fulfill, the requirements for ordination by the region. (This document does not consider matters pertaining to authorization for ordination.) It is advisable to alert and consult with the region and the proposed host congregation four to six months in advance of the prospective date for the ordination service. This will enable the region and the proposed host congregation to begin to make preparations and schedule the ordination service. However, **no public announcement of the ordination service should be made prior to regional authorization for ordination.** This protocol protects and preserves the integrity of the nurture and certification process.

The ordination service requires careful planning and preparation. There are participants to invite and schedule. There are numerous details to be arranged with the region, the host congregation and pastor. The process cannot be rushed. Although the candidate is expected to take initiative in making arrangements, the process of preparation and planning will entail close cooperation and will call for a spirit of mutuality among many persons. While the candidate has considerable discretion in selecting participants in the service, the region, the host pastor and congregation are to be respected as well.

C. Regional Participation

The regional minister, by the nature of the office, represents the region which authorizes ordination. Therefore, the regional minister, or designated alternate, ordinarily presides over the act of ordination. The ordination candidate contacts the regional minister concerning the date and time for the ordination service and invites her/him to represent the region.

If the regional minister is unable to represent the region in the service, she or he will designate an alternate representative. Further, the leadership of the regional minister in the service does not preclude the participation of associate regional ministers in the service. However, the candidate should discuss with the regional minister plans for the inclusion of associate regional ministers in the service.

The regional minister or designated alternate ordinarily provides leadership in the following parts of the ordination service:

1. Leads in the service of the "Ordination Covenant."
2. Presides at the service of the laying on of hands including the ordination prayer and presenting of the Certificate of Ordination.
3. Gives the invitation in the service of the Lord's Supper.

The host pastor confirms with the regional minister his or her leadership in the service of ordination.

D. Selecting a Date and Time

Considerations in selecting an appropriate date and time for the ordination service include:

1. The regional minister's (or a designated alternate's) availability.
2. The availability of the host church.
3. The availability of guest participants and family.

The candidate is advised to begin selecting a date as soon as possible, respecting the procedures of the region and working closely with the host pastor. The regular Sunday worship service may serve as an occasion for the ordination. However, this may limit participation due to conflicting schedules.

ARRANGING THE SERVICE

A. Participants

There are a variety of liturgical roles in the ordination service. The candidate and host pastor together are advised to study the service and enumerate the various liturgical roles and functions as a basis for determining the participants needed. The candidate is to work in close cooperation with the host pastor in selecting and inviting persons to participate. Be clear as to who extends each invitation.

1. The host pastor ordinarily conducts the opening and the closing of the service and other portions as agreed upon. The host pastor brings greetings during the time of preparation and states the purposes of the service. The purpose might be stated as follows:

“The purpose of this worship service is to ordain (Name) into Christian ministry. It is a service of thanksgiving and praise in response to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It includes the covenant of ordination and the laying on of hands. This service expresses the unity of the Church and celebrates God's continuing care for the Church and the world, through the anointing of God's servants.”

2. The candidate may invite someone who has been influential in the candidate's life to preach the sermon. Since the host pastor has responsibility for preaching in the congregation, the candidate consults the host pastor about whom she or he wishes to invite to preach. A former minister of the host church may be asked to preach with the consent of the current pastor, in consultation with officers of the congregation. The host pastor extends an invitation to the selected preacher.
3. A representative from the Regional Commission on Ministry is to be invited to present the candidate's credentials. Another person may be designated to do this if a representative is unavailable.
4. Ministers from other Disciples congregations and ministers from other communions are ordinarily invited to participate in the service. Their presence signifies the ecumenical fellowship of the church. These ministers should not be asked to do anything that their own churches would not permit them to do. Specifically, some churches would not allow their clergy to take an active part in the laying on of hands or to participate in the communion service. Inquiry when guests are invited will avoid embarrassment at the ordination service. Ministers wear their usual liturgical attire.
5. If the candidate desires elders from other congregations to participate in the communion service, the candidate expresses these wishes to the host pastor, who will consult with the chair of the local elders and take steps to extend invitations. Also, local elders need an invitation to take part in the laying on of hands.

B. Participants' Dress and Rehearsal

1. **Leader's Attire-** If the clergy participants in the service are to be robed, the clergy participants are to be advised. Stoles are appropriate. The appropriate color is **RED**.
2. **Candidate's Attire-** Normally the candidate would not wear any liturgical vestments until the presentation of the signs of the office.

3. **Rehearsal-** The host pastor is in charge of the rehearsal for the service. All participants are to be advised of the time and place for the rehearsal, scheduled for at least one hour before the service. Special directions for the arrangements for the laying on of hands are given by the regional minister or the designated representative.

C. Music

1. Music is an integral and enriching part of the ordination service. The candidate should discuss music with the host pastor and, where appropriate, with the local music director and/or minister of music. Ample time should be allowed for the choir to prepare for this occasion. The host congregation's musicians may not be able to perform all the music that is desired. Other musicians may be invited, in consultation with the local music director.
2. Hymns, choir anthems, and solos are to be used as an integral part of the service. However, they should not interrupt the ordination rite itself. Sung responses may be used where appropriate.
3. If special music is used, its content, style and performance should be consistent with the purposes of the service.
4. Hymns are an important part of the service. Criteria for selection include faithfulness to the theme of ordination, particularly hymns invoking the Holy Spirit, personal significance to the candidate as well as the congregation, and showing inclusiveness in language and ethnic cultural diversity. The Chalice Hymnal (Chalice Press, St. Louis, 1995) contains a section dealing specifically with the ministry on pages 451-457.

Congregations are to write to the publisher to secure permission to publish copyrighted materials.

D. Scripture Readings and The Sermon

1. **Scripture Readings-** The following passages are suggestions. The preacher may wish to select other readings.

Law:

Exodus 18:13-23
Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 6:4-9

Prophets:

Isaiah 6:1-8; 40:1-11; 42:1-9; 43:1-7;
Isaiah 52:7-10; 58:6-12; 61:1-6a
Jeremiah 1:4-10
Ezekiel 33:1-9

Psalms:

16; 27; 84; 95;
96; 99; 113;
132:8-19; 133

Epistles:

Acts 8:26-40; 20:17-35
Romans 1:16-17; 10:1-17; 10:13-17; 12:1-12
I Corinthians 12:12-16
II Corinthians 4:1-18; 5:17-21
Ephesians 4:7-16; 6:10-18
Philippians 2:1-16
Colossians 3:1-17
I Thessalonians 5:12-23
II Timothy 1:3-14; 3:14 - 4:5; 4:1-7
I Peter 5:5-13

Gospels:

Matthew 9:35-38; 15:13-19; 28:18-20
Luke 4:14-21; 10:1-12, 16-20; 24:44-49a
John 10:1-16; 13:3-11; 13:12-17, 20; 17:6-19; 21:15-17.

2. **The Sermon-** The sermon focuses on the church, the nature of the ministry, the meaning of discipleship, and the role of the Holy Spirit. This is not the time to become sentimental about the ministry or eulogize the candidate and his or her family.

E. Procedures for Presenting the Candidate

1. Congregational representatives may give brief descriptions of the candidate's personal characteristics, and a statement of the congregation's support.
2. The region's representative will present the credentials: this statement is less than one typed page in length and includes a brief background on the person to be ordained; how he or she received a call to ministry; a short survey of preparation, education, experience; and a very brief statement on the region's nurture and certification processes and the region's recommendation.
3. An elder calls the candidate by name to come forward. Preparatory vows are asked. (*See the model service included in this document for the form and content of these preparatory vows.*)

F. Covenant of Ordination and Laying on of Hands

The regional minister leads in the "Covenant of Ordination" and the laying on of hands, including the ordination prayer.

1. The Regional minister or designated alternate moves to a position to speak directly to the candidate. Provision should be made for all persons to hear the words that are spoken. It is not necessary to print the promises of the candidate or the ordination prayer in the worship bulletin, but copies are to be given to the regional minister and the candidate.
2. At the laying on of hands, the regional minister will very briefly relate the significance and meaning of this rite. (See the text on page 21.)
 - a. The ceremony should take place where it can be observed by the congregation and without undue crowding. If the architecture permits, the laying on of hands occurs in the chancel in front of the communion table. A cushion or kneeling pad may be provided.

- b. The inclusion of elders and ministers from other churches is a witness to the wholeness of the church. Ordinarily, one or two elders from each of the sponsoring congregations, designated representatives of the ordained ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and designated ministerial representatives of other churches whose church disciplines permit participating, may be invited to share in the laying on of hands. In addition to the regional minister, or designated alternate, these other participants shall ordinarily be no more than twelve persons.
- c. The weight of the hands directly on the candidate should be firm but gentle, and the candidate should be helped to rise after the prayer.

G. Presentation of the Signs of the Office

The presentations recognize significant dimensions of the office of ministry. The host church usually makes the presentations but may share with the other sponsoring congregations.

1. **The Bible-** The Bible is a sign of apostolic faith that is to guide the person in ministry. The presenter may say, “So live that the word is near you, on your lips and on your heart.”
2. **The Certificate of Ordination-** The certificate of ordination is a sign of the person's authority for ministry, a sign of one's collegial ties with other ministers and of the obligation to uphold the ethics of ministry. The regional minister or designated representative is to present the certificate. The presenter may say, “I present you with this certificate of ordination. May it be a sign of your apostolic authority, your collegial ties with all ministers, and your promise to uphold the sacred calling of the office of ministry. Remember that Jesus said, ‘Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.’ ”
3. **Ministerial Code of Ethics-** The Ministerial Code of Ethics describes the standard of behavior to which the church calls its ministers in their personal and professional conduct and relationships. The presenter may say, “Receive this copy of the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). By signing this Code you affirm your commitment to be a faithful and responsible minister of the gospel performing your ministry in obedience to Christ and the Church.” (At this point the candidate signs the code.)
4. **Liturgical Vestments-** The robe/alb is a sign of the liturgical and sacramental dimension of ministry. The stole is a sign of the yoke of Christ, and thus signifies ordination to vocational ministry. The colors - red, green, purple and white - represent the different seasons of the church year. The presenter may say, in presenting a robe or alb, “Rejoice in God; and may you be clothed in the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of integrity.”
5. **Gifts-** If a robe/alb is given as a sign of office, the giver should prepare in advance to select one that is an appropriate liturgical style, color, size, etc. Robes usually have to be ordered some considerable time in advance. If the candidate already has a liturgical robe, it may be used in the service to symbolize the ministerial function of the celebrant in conjunction with the stole. Since Communion is integral to weekly worship in the Christian Church, the presentation of a chalice and paten is also appropriate as a sign of office. The presenter may say, “I (we) present you with this chalice and paten. May they serve as a sign of the savings acts and presence of Christ.” Other gifts, such as books, plaques, and photographs, are presented at the reception following the service.

H. Communion Service

It is appropriate for the regional minister and the newly ordained person to co-preside at the Lord's Supper. The regional minister gives the invitation to the Table, and the newly ordained minister leads in other presiding functions, including the words of institution.

I. Worship Bulletin

1. Complete, accurate information regarding the service is to be submitted to the host pastor two weeks prior to the service. The candidate and host pastor will work closely together. The use of titles of participants should follow a uniform pattern.
2. It is appropriate to include a brief biographical paragraph about the candidate.
3. Not all of the liturgy needs to be printed in the bulletin. In the model service which follows, material printed in italics is for the principals, and does not need to be printed for the congregation.
4. The candidate and host pastor are to select the worship bulletin cover in consultation with one another.
5. The names of the sponsoring congregations are to be listed in the worship bulletin.

J. Seating

The host congregation makes arrangements for ushers to help with the seating of guests and the distribution of worship bulletins. Arrangements are made for special seating for family and special guests of the church and the candidate. The candidate and the host pastor plan the seating arrangements in advance of the service.

K. Length of Time

It is recommended that the service be no more than 75 minutes.

L. Signing the Ordination Certificate

The host pastor will have the responsibility for securing the signatures of all designated participants.

A MODEL SERVICE IN OUTLINE

The Preparation

- Prelude
- Hymn of Praise
- Call to Worship
- Opening Prayer

The Service of the Word

- Statement about the Service
- A Reading from the Old Testament and/or the Epistles
- A Psalm, Hymn, or Anthem
- A Reading from the Gospel
- The Sermon
- Hymn or Anthem

The Presentation of the Candidate

- Statement
- Presentation by a Representative(s) of the Congregation(s)
- Presentation by a Representative(s) of the Region(s)

The Ordination Covenant

- The Promises of the Candidate for Ordination
- The Promises of the People
- The Affirmation of Faith
- Hymn Invoking the Holy Spirit

The Laying on of Hands with Prayer

- Statement
- The Ordaining Action
- Greetings and Blessings
- Presentation of the Signs of Office
- Response of the Newly Ordained
- The Peace

The Service of the Lord's Supper

- The Invitation
- The Offering of the Gifts
- The Great Thanksgiving
- Prayers of Thanksgiving & Remembrance
- Prayer of Consecration
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Words of Institution and the Breaking of the Bread
- Sharing the Bread and Cup
- Prayer after Communion

The Dismissal

- Recessional Hymn
- Blessing
- Postlude

A SERVICE OF ORDINATION TO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY A MODEL ORDER OF WORSHIP

The Preparation

Prelude

Hymn of Praise- *Leaders of the service may enter in procession during this hymn.*

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, let us worship God. There are different gifts,

***People:* but it is the same Spirit who gives them.**

Leader: There are different ways of serving God,

***People:* but it is the same God who is served.**

Leader: Each one is given a gift by the same Spirit,

***People:* to use for the common good.**

Leader: Together we are the Body of Christ,

***People:* and individually members with one another.**

Opening Prayer

Leader: Holy God, you give the church varied gifts and ministries and call forth women and men to receive and fulfill them. Open us to the power of your Holy Spirit as we gather to offer you our thankful praise. Be present with us, we pray, as we ordain our *sister/brother* to your service. All these things we ask in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

The Service of the Word

Statement about the Service

The host pastor states that the church has gathered to ordain (Full Name) to Christian Ministry. Representatives of the sponsoring congregation(s), the region(s) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the ecumenical Church may be acknowledged.

A Reading from the Old Testament and/or the Epistles

Psalm, Hymn, or Anthem

A Reading from the Gospel

The Sermon

Hymn or Anthem

The Presentation of the Candidate

Statement

Leader: Ordination to Christian ministry is preceded by study, work, and prayer, guided by the Spirit of God. I now call on representatives of the sponsoring congregation(s) and of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in (*region*) to present (*Full Name*) and to offer their witnesses to *his/her* readiness for ordination.

Presentation by a Representative(s) of the Congregation(s)

The person to be ordained is presented by name to the presiding minister and a few sentences testifying to the candidate's life in the church may be offered.

Presentation by a Representative(s) of the Region(s)

A representative of the region states that the person to be ordained has been nurtured through a process of preparation for public leadership in the church, has been examined concerning the Christian faith and manner of life, and has been approved for ordination.

The Ordination Covenant

The Promises of the Candidate for Ordination

Regional Minister: My *sister/brother* in the faith, do you believe that you are truly called by God and the Church to the life and work of ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Candidate: I do.

Regional Minister: Paul the apostle testified, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." Will you endeavor to be diligent in your practice of the Christian life: reading the Bible, continuing steadfastly in prayer, and taking up your cross daily to follow Christ?

Candidate: I will, with the help of God.

Regional Minister: Scripture teaches that the Church was devoted to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Will you endeavor faithfully to fulfill your calling among the people committed to your care: by preaching the word of God and the apostolic faith; and by presiding at the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper?

Candidate: I will, with the help of God.

Regional Minister: In scripture, ministers are exhorted to tend the flock of God committed to their care, not by constraint but willingly, not for selfish gain but eagerly, not by domineering over those in their charge but by example. Will you endeavor to care for the people of God: nourishing, teaching, and encouraging them; giving direction to the life of the congregation; counseling the troubled; declaring God's forgiveness of sin; and proclaiming victory over death?

Candidate: I will, with the help of God.

Regional Minister: The Spirit of God led Jesus to preach good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty the oppressed, and proclaiming the time of God's good favor. Will you endeavor to lead the people of God in their obedience to the global mission of the Church: guiding their concern for justice, peace, and freedom for all people; and taking a responsible place in the governance of the Church and in service to the world?

Candidate: **I will, with the help, of God.**

Regional Minister: The apostle Paul proclaims the Church to be one body with many members. Will you endeavor to live and work in unity with all Christians: witnessing to the visible unity of the Church; cooperating with Disciples colleagues in the ministry of the congregational, regional, general and ecumenical church; and leading the Church in fulfilling its ministry of reconciliation?

Candidate: **I will, with the help of God.**

Regional Minister: Paul also wrote, "For me to live is Christ." Will you endeavor to conduct yourself so that your life is shaped by Jesus Christ, who took the form of a servant for our sake; and will you, with the help of the Holy Spirit, continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you, to make known to all people the gospel of the grace of God?

Candidate: **I will, with the help of God.**

Regional Minister: May God who has given you the will to do these things give you grace to perform them. *(Name)*, God who called you is faithful and will not fail you.

The Promises of the People

Regional Minister: You have heard the promises of our brother/sister. Will you as members of God's Church affirm this call and accept *(Name)* as an ordained minister of the Gospel?

People: ***(Name)*, we accept you as one called to public leadership in the Church and affirm the decision that you be ordained. We pledge our love offer our prayers that together we may glorify God and make Christ known in the world.**

The Affirmation of Faith

Regional Minister: Together, let us renew our covenant with Christ.

People:

**We confess that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of the Living God,
and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.
In Christ's name and by his grace,
we accept our mission of witness
and service to all people.
We rejoice in God,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and in the covenant of love
which binds us to God and one another.
Through baptism into Christ
we enter into newness of life
and are made one with the whole people of God.
In the communion of the Holy Spirit
we are joined together in discipleship
and in obedience to Christ.
At the table of the Lord
we celebrate with thanksgiving
the saving acts and presence of Christ.
Within the universal Church
we receive the gift of ministry
and the light of Scripture.
In the bonds of Christian faith
we yield ourselves to God,
that we may serve the One
whose Kingdom has no end.
Blessing, glory and honor
be to God forever.
Amen.¹**

Hymn - *A hymn invoking the Holy Spirit is sung.*

The Laying On of Hands

Statement

Regional Minister: The laying on of hands with prayer is attested in scripture as a sign of reconciliation, empowering, and sending forth. The church uses this prayerful act to be a visible sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit, to affirm the Church's confirmation of this person's vocation, and to entrust to *her/him* the power and authority to do the work of God in our midst.

¹ *The Preamble from the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).*

The Ordaining Action

The candidate kneels, facing the congregation. The regional minister places a hand on the candidate's head. Other ordained ministers, lay elders, and ecumenical representatives may also place hands on the head or shoulders of the candidate. The regional minister offers the ordination prayer.

Regional Minister: Eternal God, you are worthy of our thankful praise.
In your love you called your church to be
a holy people and a royal priesthood.
Through your Holy Spirit
you have given a variety of gifts,
making some apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
to equip the saints for the work of ministry
and for the building up of Christ's body, the Church.

We pray that you will send your Spirit upon *(Name)*
whom we ordain to the ministry of your Church.
Confirm in *her/him* the grace and power
to proclaim the gospel and celebrate worship,
to lead the church in its faith, life and mission,
and to be an example to your people in love,
patience, and holiness of life.

Grant that through this ministry
your name will be glorified in all the earth
and your people strengthened.
This we ask through Jesus Christ,
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Greeting and Blessings

Regional Minister: Rise, *(Name)*, to the ministry which God gives you and receive the acclamation of the people.

***People:* By the Spirit of God you are worthy of the ministry of Christ.**

As the newly ordained stands, the congregation may welcome her/him with applause. Participants in the laying-on-of-hands may offer one-sentence blessings to the newly ordained.

Presentation of the Signs of the Office

A Bible is given to the newly ordained with this charge:

“So live that the Word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart.”

A robe or alb may be given, with this charge:

“Rejoice in God; and may you be clothed in the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of integrity.”

A stole may be given with this charge:

“Receive this stole as a sign of your being yoked with Christ, remembering his words, ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me.’”

A chalice, flagon, and paten may be given with this charge:

“I (we) present you with this chalice, flagon and paten. May they serve as a sign of the savings acts and presence of Christ.”

The certificate of ordination may be presented with this charge:

“I present you with this certificate of ordination. May it be a sign of your apostolic authority, your collegial ties with all ministers, and your promise to uphold the sacred calling of the office of ministry. Remember that Jesus said, ‘Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.’”

The Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may be presented with this charge:

“Receive this copy of the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), by which you affirm your commitment to be a faithful and responsible minister of the gospel performing your ministry in obedience to Christ and the Church. (If the Code of Ethics is signed in the service, ‘by which’ can be read as, ‘by signing this Code.’)”

Response of the Newly Ordained

The newly ordained may say a brief word of thanksgiving to the congregation and to those who have challenged and sustained her/him in her/his faith journey.

The Peace

Newly ordained to congregation: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And also with you.

The people greet the newly ordained and members of the family and one another.

The Service of the Lord's Supper

The Regional Minister offers the Invitation, and the newly ordained minister leads in the other presiding functions.

The Invitation

“My sisters and brothers,
we have been called to live by the truth and in love,
and so we shall grow completely into Christ
who is the head by whom the whole Body of the Church
is fitted and joined together,
every joint adding its own strength,
each part working according to its own function.
So the body grows until it has been built up in love.

“Come now to this table with the gifts of our life and labor,
that we may meet our Savior who promises to unite us
to himself and to one another.”

The Offering of the Gifts

Bread and communion wine, and other gifts, are brought forward while the following hymn or another hymn is being sung.

“From all that dwell below the skies,
let the Creator's praise arise:
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Let the Redeemer's name be sung
through ev'ry land, in ev'ry tongue:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!”²

The Great Thanksgiving

Dialogue

Minister: The Lord be with you.

***People:* And also with you.**

Minister: Lift up your hearts.

***People:* We lift them to the Lord.**

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***People:* It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

² Isaac Watts, “From All That Dwell Below the Skies,” *Chalice Hymnal*, 49. Tune: *Lasst uns erfreuen*

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Remembrance

Over the Bread (*offered by an elder*)

Over the Cup (*offered by an elder*)

Prayer of Consecration

Minister: Holy God, you have blessed your people with gifts of life.

People: You have sent your Holy Spirit to uphold us this day.

Minister: Now let this same Spirit
descend upon these gifts
and upon your people,
that in the breaking of the bread
and the sharing of this cup
we may know the living presence of Jesus.

***People: Feed us with spiritual food
and inspire our thoughts, words, and actions
with your Spirit,
that the world may be renewed.
Blessing, glory, and honor
be yours, O God, for ever and ever.
Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer (*A version which is more familiar to the congregation may be substituted.*)

***Unison: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your Kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

The Words of Institution and the Breaking of the Bread

Minister: On the night before he died for us,
our Lord Jesus Christ took bread;
and when he had given thanks he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, and said,
“Take, eat: This is my Body,
which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After supper he took the cup of wine;
and when he had given thanks,
he gave it to them, and said:
“Drink this, all of you:
This is my Blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this for the remembrance of me.”

Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Prayer after Communion

***People:* O God, we thank you
for uniting us by baptism
in the body of Christ
and by this meal filling us with joy and hope.
Grant that in the days ahead
our lips which have sung your praises
may speak the truth,
our eyes which have seen your love
may look with compassion
on the needs of the world;
our hands which have held
this loaf and this cup
may be servant hands for Jesus Christ;
in whose name we ask it all. Amen.**

The Dismissal

Recessional Hymn

The Blessing

“Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous,
be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

“The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Postlude

Alternate Ordination Prayers

The Ordination Prayer, offered by the regional minister, is the sacred center of the service. The ordination service text includes a prayer. The following are two additional prayers for consideration:

1. Holy God, you speak and the world comes to be.
You touch the people and they are made to be holy.
We stand in awe of your work
in making all that is.
We stand in awe because you have called us
to be your people.

Merciful God, we praise you for your infinite love
in calling us to be disciples of Jesus Christ,
who reveals your eternal and invisible glory.
We are grateful to be a people baptized to serve in Christ's name.
We give you thanks for the gifts
Christ Jesus gives your Church,
making some apostles, some prophets,
some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.
For all who have been ordained to serve in your church,
we thank you.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your servant (*Name*).
Give *him/her* authority to lead the church as one of its ministers.
Fill *him/her* with grace and power to be a devout steward
of your word and sacraments.
Make *her/him* a faithful pastor, a patient teacher,
a wise counselor and a bold witness.
Grant that in all things *she/he* may serve without reproach
so that your people may be strengthened
and your name glorified in all the world.
This we pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God forever and ever.

2. Sovereign God, whose Spirit inspired the prophets of old and touched with celestial fire the tongues of the apostles, we offer you our praise. Age after age, you have raised up for the church passionate heralds of the cross -- missionaries, teachers, preachers, ministers of baptism and communion, pastors. In Jesus' name you have sent them to publish the gospel to all the world and so claim it for your Holy Commonwealth. Today we ordain your servant (*Name*) to the holy office of the Christian ministry to which you have called *him/her* . By your Holy Spirit, make *her/him* to be a minister in your Church and give wisdom and power that *he/she* may lead your people in their worship and witness. Enter increasingly into *her/his* experience so that *she/he* may fulfill this ministry. Grant a growing awareness of your presence that brings joy, revives faith, and recalls *her/him* to the commissioned task wherever you direct. Let neither discouragement, nor sloth, nor weariness ever bring regret.

By this same Holy Spirit enrich *him/her* with good judgement, wholesome humor, kindly insight, gracious utterance and unflagging zeal. Endow *her/him* with patience, genuineness, tolerance, and good will that, following the example of Jesus Christ, *she/he* may fulfill this ministry and at the end be received into glory with you. This we pray, with the Church of all ages, in the name of the One God, Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Adapted from G. Edwin Osborn, ed., Christian Worship: A Service Book, St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1953.)

ADDITIONAL MATTERS

Additional matters surrounding the ordination service also need thoughtful attention. This section contains guidelines on invitations, the reception and expenses. A “Host Congregation Check list” follows.

A. Invitations

Below is a sample of a suggested invitation. The congregation extends the invitation to its members and ordinarily the candidate extends invitations beyond the congregation. The congregation shares in the cost of the invitations and mailing. The candidate and the host pastor consult in advance of the preparation of the invitations to arrive at a mutually satisfactory arrangement on costs.

* * * * *

The [*name of region(s)*] and the [*name of congregation(s)*] of the

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Cordially invite your presence and prayers

For the Ordination to Christian Ministry

of [*candidate's full name*]

on

[*day, date, time*]

at

[*name of host congregation*] Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

of

[*name of town, address*]

Reception at the church following the service

* * * * *

B. Reception

It is appropriate for the host congregation to provide a reception in honor of the newly ordained person.

The host pastor initiates contact within the congregation to make arrangements for the reception. The host pastor also consults with the candidate concerning arrangements for this event. If there are to be special provisions, the candidate is to obtain the consent of the host pastor and congregation before proceeding and shall be prepared to cover any extra costs.

C. General Expenses

The host pastor shall discuss the costs with the candidate. An ordination service is an extraordinary event for a congregation. It can be a time of renewal and significant witness. The host pastor shall encourage the congregation to extend itself generously and fully in celebration of this event. If there are special funds available for such events, the host pastor advises the candidate of such provisions. The following guidelines are intended to provide directions for the customary way in which the expenses are met.

1. Congregation's Expenses

- a. **Gifts and/or Signs of the Office of Ministry-** It is usual and customary for the host congregation and, where desirable, for other sponsoring congregations to pay the costs of such gifts.
- b. **Reception-** It is usual and customary for the congregation to pay for the expenses involved in the reception. However, other collaborative arrangements are appropriate. The host pastor is to help facilitate discussion of these arrangements.
- c. **Invitations-** The congregation prepares and mails invitations to its members. The candidate is responsible for mailing and inviting persons beyond the congregation. A simple style and format for an invitation are suggested in this document.
- d. **Preacher-** If the congregation ordinarily gives guest preachers an honorarium, it is appropriate to give the guest preacher the usual amount. Travel expenses are ordinarily paid by the candidate.

2. Candidate's Expenses

- a. **Preacher-** The candidate is expected to pay the travel costs of the guest preacher. If the congregation normally gives guest preachers an honorarium, the congregation shall give this to the guest preacher in addition to the travel expenses. College and seminary faculty members do not usually have travel allowances for attending ordination services.
 - b. **Musicians-** Honoraria for the organist and paid choir members are paid by the congregation. The candidate may pay for any additional musicians. If the congregation has special provisions for this, or desires to help in this area, the host pastor is to facilitate the congregation's contribution to this aspect of the celebration.
 - c. **Other Guests-** It is usual and customary for the candidate to pay travel costs for other guests. Guests may not expect reimbursement, but the candidate should not presume this. It is appropriate to clarify financial matters with the guests. Further, the congregation may have resources to help in this area. The host pastor shall take the lead in advising the candidate about any such provisions.
3. **Unspecified Expenses-** Costs not identified or anticipated in this document are to be talked about openly and fully. In general it is advised that thorough and thoughtful attention be given to these matters and that good stewardship be exercised in the use of all resources, personnel and material.

HOST CONGREGATION CHECK LIST

The following is a guide to the major responsibilities of the congregation.

(Note: the list may not identify every detail.)

- A. Date and Time-** After the candidate has consulted with the regional minister, the congregation is to establish a date and time for the ordination service in consultation with the candidate. All dates and invitations are to be confirmed in writing.
- B. Ordination Service Consultation-** As soon as it is feasible, the host pastor and other designated persons are to meet with the candidate and review the ordination service and procedures as outlined in this document. This manual is available from the regional office or may be purchased from Homeland Ministries, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206. At this consultation, the plans for the ordination should begin. Some of the items to be considered are: participants, music, scriptures, reception, worship bulletin, etc. The host pastor and candidate are to review together the persons who are to participate and who shall contact whom. Since it is the congregation hosting the service, in most instances it is appropriate that the host pastor extend invitations to participants.
- C. Gifts and/or Signs of the Office of Ministry-** The host pastor in consultation with appropriate persons in the church is to explore the presentation of signs of the office of ministry. If any gifts are to be presented, the presenters are to be selected. The host congregation may invite other sponsoring congregations to share in these acts.
- D. Rehearsal-** The host pastor is to schedule and conduct the ordination service rehearsal.
- E. Worship Bulletin-** The congregation is to prepare the worship bulletin. Information is to be submitted two weeks prior to the service.
- F. Seating-** The host pastor is to select ushers and arrange for appropriate seating arrangements.
- G. Music-** The host pastor is to make sure that music arrangements are complete and fully understood.
- H. Communion Service-** The congregation is to make the arrangements for the communion service, giving attention to recommendations for the service contained in this book.
- I. Reception-** The congregation plans and provides the reception. The host pastor assists in setting up a reception line, if it is desired.

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The working group of the Commission on Theology which has developed this “Ordination Service and Guidelines for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)” is indebted to the following resources for the preparation of this material:

“The Ordination Service: A Theological Explanation, the Suggested Service and Guidelines.” Prepared by the Task Force on Ordination of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky, 1986.

“A Manual: Provisional Ordination Service and Guidelines.” Prepared by the Commission of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana, March, 1987.

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