

## **POLICY for CONGREGATIONS REQUESTING AFFILIATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) CAPITAL AREA**

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area (CCCA) provides this process for congregations who wish to affiliate with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the Capital Area Region. Upon successful completion of this affiliation process by the congregation and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area, the congregation will be received, becoming a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

A congregation seeking affiliation may be:

- A congregation that is currently or formerly related to another denomination.
- A congregation previously unrelated to any denomination.
- A congregation or significant group of members of a congregation that was previously Disciples Of Christ, became disassociated with the Disciples, and seeks to re-associate.

In addition, a congregation seeking affiliation must be:

- A congregation confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- Located within the state of Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia (in consultation with the West Virginia Region), northern Virginia (in consultation with the Virginia Region) or the District of Columbia
- Willing to participate fully in a manner consistent with the operating principles and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In the steps outlined below, either the congregation or the Region may terminate the process at any point.

These guidelines may be amended at a future date by the Regional Board of the Christian Church Capital Area or its Administrative Committee.

*Note: Newly formed or forming congregations seeking to join with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may refer to the Policy for Congregations in Formation.*

### **Step 1: Exploration, or Getting Acquainted**

An interested congregation may explore the possibility of affiliating with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):

- They may visit with the Regional Minister, other ministers or members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to begin learning about the denomination.
- They may visit with local Disciples churches, read books about the Disciples of Christ, and review the general church and regional church websites ([www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org); [www.cccadisciples.org](http://www.cccadisciples.org)).
- They may confer with one of the leaders of the Disciples of Christ racial/ethnic general ministries, such as NAPAD, National Convocation, or Obra Hispana.
- They may invite the CCCA Regional Minister or other Disciples to visit for worship and fellowship.

If the congregation wishes to explore the possibility of affiliation more deeply, the pastor(s) and congregational leaders will:

- a) Meet with the Regional Minister to discuss details about the affiliation process.
- b) Share mutual expectations between the congregation and the regional church.
- c) Conduct a mutual assessment of theological compatibility between the congregation and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This will include congregational acceptance of the good confession (recognizing faith in Christ as Savior), the preamble to the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (<https://disciples.org/our-identity/the-design/>), and the theological diversity and ecumenism that is characteristic of Disciples witness.
- d) Be encouraged to participate in local, regional, and/or general church events such as new church gatherings and trainings.

### **Step 2: Preliminary Request to Enter the Formal Affiliation Process**

If the congregation wishes to formally enter the Affiliation Process, it will fill out a Preliminary Affiliation Application (check website for form) and send it with a Letter of Intent to the CCCA Regional Office expressing the congregation's desire to formally enter the Affiliation Process with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The congregation will notify its current denomination, if any, of its intention to pursue affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The regional Commission for Congregational Life reviews the Preliminary Affiliation Application and the Letter of Intent requesting affiliation. The Regional Minister and Commission for Congregational Life will inform the Regional Board and will make a recommendation to the Board. If approved by the Regional Board to begin the formal affiliation process, the congregation and region will proceed to Step 3, the Nurturing phase.

### **Step 3: Nurturing**

The Nurturing Phase shall typically last for at least one year. Members of the congregation and the region are strongly encouraged to pray for one another during this time. Also, during this time the congregation will be listed in the Disciples yearbook as an Affiliating Congregation.

The congregation will learn more about specific local, regional and general church ministries. This may include visits to the regional office and to other Disciples congregations and institutions, and participation in regional or general church events such as Regional and General Assemblies, Salt & Light Leadership Training Days, Martin Luther King, Jr. Tributes, and Retreats, Camps, and Conferences, and other Regional events. Members of the Regional Board, the Commission for Congregational Life, or other members of Disciples congregations will attend worship, fellowship, and service or mission events with the affiliating congregation.

During this time, all clergy and key lay leaders will take the Disciples of Christ Polity and History class. They should also learn about how to financially support the Disciples mission causes and how to establish them as normal practices for the congregation.

As the congregation and its leaders learn about Disciples of Christ history and practice, special emphasis is placed upon these Disciples of Christ understandings:

- a. the Lord's Supper, baptism, the priesthood of all believers, and the interpretation of scripture in the life and witness of the church in today's world.

- b. the concept of “No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but Love,” and the covenantal relationship with the local, regional, and general churches which is unique among mainline denominations.

Similarly, the clergy and key leadership will receive appropriate Clergy Healthy Boundary training and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism training.

#### **Step 4: Final Application and Steps for Affiliation and Recognition**

To conclude the Nurturing phase, which is anticipated to not extend beyond five years, the congregation will submit a Final Application for Affiliation and Recognition. In completing and submitting this application, the congregation expresses its formal commitment and desire to become a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). At any point, the congregation seeking affiliation may request assistance from the Regional Office in filling out this paperwork or obtaining the documents below. The Final Application will include submission of the following:

- a) Submission of proof of the following:
  1. Employer Identification Number
  2. Insurance coverage (property, liability, workers compensation and unemployment)
  3. Background checks on pastors and employees
  4. Articles of Incorporation with Secretary of State,
  5. The congregation’s Constitution and Bylaws or other governing documents to verify or establish non-profit status
  6. Title if congregation owns property
  7. Local business license (if there are retail sales on church property)
  8. Use and Occupancy Permit
  9. Certificates showing the pastors and key leadership (moderator/board chair, officer, etc. have received appropriate Clergy Healthy Boundary training and Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism training.
  10. Statement of any pending legal matters regarding the church or pastor.
- b) Meet with regional representative to review congregational financial practices, including:
  1. Distinction between operating and designated funds
  2. Payroll and withholding issues
  3. Opening of checking and savings accounts
  4. Financial records and acknowledgment of contributions
  5. Regular review of finances by governing body of congregation
  6. Discussion regarding the ministries of Disciples Mission Fund, special offerings, Church Extension and Christian Church Foundation.
  7. The congregation will share any other pertinent financial circumstances, including all contractual obligations, with the Regional Minister.
- c) The congregation approves any necessary revision to their congregational bylaws to achieve consistency with the Design of the Christian Church.
- d) The congregation adopts a mission statement consistent with the Design of the Christian Church. An outreach plan is developed by the congregation in concert with the Commission For Congregational Life and Regional Minister.
- e) The question of ministerial standing is discussed between both parties, including the regional Commission For Ministry if appropriate.

f) As a part of the Final Application, a timetable for decision-making will be mutually determined by the congregation, Commission For Congregational Life, and the Regional Minister, including:

1. How the congregation has made the final decision to apply for affiliation (examples: decision of pastor, decision of congregation's leadership, consensus, congregational vote by what percentage majority)
2. Approximate schedule for remaining decisions in the final steps of the affiliation process, including the consideration of the Final Application by the Commission For Congregational Life and the Regional Minister(s), the giving of a recommendation to the Regional Board, the final decision by the Regional Board, and if approved, the projected timeline for moving from being an Affiliating Congregation to a Recognized Congregation.

h) Upon successful completion and submission of the Final Application and steps outlined above, members of the congregation, the Commission For Congregational Life, and/or the Regional Minister will meet to review the completion of Steps, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

i) The Commission For Congregational Life and the Regional Minister(s) review the Final Application, and give a recommendation to the Regional Board.

j) If approved by the Regional Board, the congregation will become a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Preparations will then be made for Step 5, the celebration of Recognition and Receiving of the congregation.

#### **Step 5: Recognition and Chartering**

a) Having been approved for affiliation as a recognized congregation, the congregation is chartered and holds a service of Covenanting and Celebration with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b) The newly affiliated congregation is officially recognized at the next Regional Assembly.

c) The newly affiliated congregation will be listed as a Recognized Congregation in the next Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

This policy was adopted by the Regional Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area at the Board Meeting, June 13, 2020.