**POLICY DRAFT for CONGREGATIONS REQUESTING AFFILIATION WITH**

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) CAPITAL AREA**

**Current Draft: October 31, 2015**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area 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.

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 party may conclude the process at any point; the

congregation, or the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area. 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 informally explore in many ways 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 church.
* The Commission On Congregational Life suggests visits with local Disciples churches, reading books about the Disciples of Christ, and a review of the general church and regional church websites (www.disciples.org; www.[cccadisciples](http://www.cccadisciples.org).org).

Members of the Commission On Congregational Life and/or the Regional Minister may

* also be invited to visit for worship and fellowship with the interested congregation.

If the congregation wishes to explore the possibility of affiliation more deeply:

a) The Regional Minister and congregational leaders meet to discuss details about the affiliation process.

b) Sharing of mutual expectations between the congregation and the regional church.

c) 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 Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the theological diversity and ecumenism characteristic of Disciples witness.

d) The congregation and its leaders will 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, after the period of exploration, the congregation wishes to formally enter the Affiliation Process, the following describes the next steps:

a) The congregation’s leadership fills out a Preliminary Affiliation Application, and sends it with a Letter of Intent expressing the congregation’s desire to formally enter the Affiliation Process with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The congregation notifies its current denomination, if any, of its intention to pursue affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b) The regional Commission On Congregational Life reviews the Preliminary Affiliation Application and the Letter of Intent requesting affiliation. The Regional Minister and Commission On Congregational Life inform the Regional Board and make a recommendation

c) 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 last for at least one year, during which the congregation agrees to learn more about Disciples of Christ history and practice, and participate where possible with local, regional and general Disciples of Christ ministries. Members of the congregation and the region are strongly encouraged to pray for one another during this time. Also during this time, the congregation may be listed in the Disciples yearbook as an Affiliating Congregation.

a) The congregation learns more about specific local, regional and general church ministries. This may include trips to the regional office, other Disciples congregations and institutions, and regional or general church events such as Regional and General Assemblies, and Hope Partnership events.

b) Members of the Regional Board, the Commission On Congregational Life, or other members of Disciples congregations will attend worship, fellowship, and service or mission events with the applicant congregation.

c) As the congregation and its leaders learn about Disciples of Christ history and practice, special emphasis is placed upon two areas:

1. Disciples of Christ understandings of 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.

2. Gaining a working understanding of the concept of “No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but Love,” the covenant relationship of the local, regional, and general churches which is somewhat unique to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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

At any point during the Nurturing phase, the congregation may submit a Final Application for Affiliation and Recognition. In completing and submitting this application, the congregation expresses its serious commitment and desire to become a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A checklist of items addressed in the Final Application include the following:

a) Review information on legal aspects for congregational ministry. These legal aspects include the following::

1. Recording of Employee Identification Number

2. Insurance coverage (property, liability, workers compensation and unemployment)

3. Filing of Articles of Incorporation with Secretary of State, Constitution and Bylaws

4. Requirements for non-profit organizations in the state of Maryland, West Virginia, Delaware, the Commonwealth of Virginia or the District of Columbia, verification or establishment of non-profit status

5. Review of title if congregation owns property

6. Securing of a local business license (if required)

7. Confirmation that the congregation’s meeting space meets local and state conditional use requirements, and applicable building codes.

8. Key leadership have received appropriate boundary training and Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism training.

9. Disclosure of any other pertinent legal issues to Regional Minister.

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 Finance Council, 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) Disciples of Christ polity and financial support of Disciples mission causes are established as normal practices for the congregation.

d) The congregation approves any necessary revision to their congregational bylaws to achieve consistency with the Design of the Christian Church.

e) 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 On Congregational Life and Regional Minister.

f) The question of ministerial standing is discussed between both parties, including the regional Commission on Ministry if appropriate.

g) As a part of the Final Application, a time table for decision-making will be mutually determined by the congregation, Commission On 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 On 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, members of the congregation, the Commission On Congregational Life, and/or the Regional Minister will meet to review the completion of Steps, 1, 2, 3, and 4.

i) The New Church Ministry Team 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.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Moderator)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Regional Minister)