

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

**(OPERATIONAL, POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL)**

**WHEREAS** the Standing Rules of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada require that the Governance Committee of the General Board "... shall review *The Design* and other governance documents for suggested changes and modifications;" and,

**WHEREAS** the General Assembly adopted GA-2343 AMENDMENTS TO THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) in Louisville, Kentucky in 2023, and,

**WHEREAS** an Implementation Team appointed by the Moderator of the General Assembly, as called for in GA-2343, has identified additional changes necessary to support the previously adopted amendments,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the 2025 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 12-15, 2025, in Memphis, Tennessee, adopt the following ***PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)***; and,

**FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED** that these changes be implemented following the conclusion of the 2025 meeting of the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**BACKGROUND**

Following several years of work by the Governance Committee of the General Board, along with opportunities for conversation across the church, the General Assembly meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in July 2023, adopted GA-2343, making significant changes to the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

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48 In fall 2023, the Moderator of the General Assembly appointed an Implementation  
49 Team, as called for in GA-2343, to work toward enacting these changes. Part of their  
50 work including reviewing the Design for any additional amendments that needed to be  
51 made in support of the changes called for in GA-2343.

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53 The proposed amendments to the Design include:

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- Clarification of the activities and meetings of the General Assembly
  - Changes to the membership of the General Board
  - Minor changes in wording and formatting to ensure consistency throughout the document
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64 ***PROPOSED 2025 AMENDMENTS TO THE DESIGN OF THE***  
65 ***CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE***  
66 ***UNITED STATES AND CANADA***  
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69 ***Proposed insertions are indicated with underlined text; proposed deletions are indicated***  
70 ***with strikethrough text.***  
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74 ***THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)***  
75

76 **PREAMBLE**  
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78 As members of the Christian Church,  
79 We confess that Jesus is the Christ,  
80 the Son of the living God,  
81 and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.  
82 In Christ's name and by his grace  
83 we accept our mission of witness  
84 and service to all people.  
85 We rejoice in God,  
86 maker of heaven and earth,  
87 and in God's covenant of love  
88 which binds us to God and to one another.  
89 Through baptism into Christ  
90 we enter into newness of life  
91 and are made one with the whole people of God.  
92 In the communion of the Holy Spirit  
93 we are joined together in discipleship  
94 and in obedience to Christ.  
95 At the Table of the Lord  
96 we celebrate with thanksgiving  
97 the saving acts and presence of Christ.  
98 Within the universal church  
99 we receive the gift of ministry  
100 and the light of scripture.  
101 In the bonds of Christian faith  
102 we yield ourselves to God  
103 that we may serve the One  
104 whose kingdom has no end  
105 Blessing, glory, and honor  
106 be to God forever. Amen.  
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108 1. Within the whole family of God on earth, the church appears wherever believers  
109 in Jesus the Christ are gathered in His name. Transcending all barriers within the human family,  
110 the one church manifests itself in ordered communities bound together for worship, fellowship,  
111 and service; in varied structures for mission, witness, and mutual accountability; and for the  
112 nurture and renewal of its members. The nature of the church, given by Christ, remains constant

through the generations, yet in faithfulness to its nature, it continues to discern God's vision and to adapt its mission and structures to the needs of a changing world. All dominion in the church belongs to Jesus, its Lord and head, and any exercise of authority in the church on earth stands under His judgment.

2. Within the universal Body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is identifiable by its testimony, tradition, name, institutions, and relationships. Across national boundaries, this church expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations, regions, and general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by God's covenant of love. Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority, rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal manner, to the end that all expressions will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission. We are committed to mutual accountability. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and constantly seeks in all of its actions to be obedient to his authority.

3. We commit ourselves to one another and to God in adopting this *Design* for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in order that we may faithfully express the ministry of Christ, made known through scripture; provide Christian witness, mission, evangelism, and service from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth; furnish means by which all expressions of the church may fulfill their ministries with faithful Christian stewardship; assure unity in Christ while respecting diversity; and work as partners in ecumenical and global relationships.

4. In keeping with this *Design*, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall establish, receive, and nurture congregational ministries; provide for regional and general ministries and such other organizations as may be required; have a General Assembly and a General Board; define policies and criteria for its Order of Ministry; develop or recognize new forms of ministries for mission and witness; maintain appropriate relationships with institutions of higher education historically related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); provide appropriate consultation and procedures whereby existing organizations may make any necessary transition within the provisions of this covenant; and engage in continuing renewal, reformation, and adaptation as necessary to minister in the world.

## **NAME**

5. The name of this body shall be the CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST).

## **MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION**

6. As a member of the whole Body of Christ, every person who is or shall become a member of a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) thereby holds membership in the region in which that congregation is recognized and in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

7. Regions and general ministries may develop procedures of recognition whereby other persons and groups who support the purposes of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) can participate in regional and general work.

## **CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES**

8. Congregations constitute the primary expression of the community of faith within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Through congregations, individuals are brought to the saving grace of Christ, baptized into the Body of Christ, nurtured in their faith, and gather together at the Lord's Table. Joined in discipleship, congregations partner with their regions and the general ministries of the church to share the good news from their doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

## RECOGNIZED CONGREGATIONS

9. All congregations listed in the latest *Year Book and Directory* of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be recognized congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Other congregations desiring recognition and congregations desiring to withdraw from recognition in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall follow established procedures for *Year Book and Directory* listing. Congregations that follow the procedures for listing after the publication of the latest *Year Book and Directory* and that are recorded in the *Year Book and Directory* office shall also be recognized congregations.

a. A congregation seeking recognition takes congregational action expressing its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and be listed in the *Year Book and Directory*.

The congregation then provides its regional office with a copy of a document containing the declaration of its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The document may be the congregation's charter, constitution, bylaws, or a notarized statement of the congregation's action.

Regional endorsement of the congregation's request for recognition and listing, attested by the regional minister, is sent to the Office of [the](#) General Minister and President for filing with the *Year Book and Directory*.

b. Once a congregation has been listed, it can be omitted from the *Year Book and Directory* if:

i. The congregation has taken action to withdraw as a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Office of [the](#) General Minister and President has received a notarized statement from the congregation of its action, which the regional minister has certified; or

ii. There has been no congregational activity reported in the *Year Book and Directory* of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for a period of five (5) consecutive years and the regional minister certifies that the congregation does not participate in or contribute to area, regional, or general church program(s), including participation in the church-wide mission funding system.

iii. A congregation may also be omitted from the *Year Book and Directory* by action of a region if the region can demonstrate actions or statements on the part of the congregation that are deemed detrimental to the covenantal relationship with all expressions of the church. When a region takes action to omit a congregation for either of the above stated reasons, the region will send notification of the intent to remove the congregation's listing to the congregation via certified letter. If within

thirty (30) days of the notification, the congregation makes no objection to its removal from the listing, then the removal will be final.

iv. Regardless of which entity initiates the action, reasonable attempts will be made to renew the relationship between the congregation and the region before removal is finalized. Once the removal is final, the region will notify the congregation that it has been removed from the *Year Book and Directory*. A congregation may appeal the region's action in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 64e of this *Design*.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10. In adopting this *Design*, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affirms that congregations in their freedom in Christ have both rights and responsibilities. As part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), congregations share creatively in the church's total mission of witness and service. Equally, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its general and regional ministries sustains congregations through commitment to their welfare and needs. Thus, concern for the integrity of each expression is shared and witness is given to the interrelatedness of the whole church.

11. Among the rights recognized and safeguarded to congregations are the rights to manage their affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; to adopt or retain their names, corporate documents, and organization of ministry; to determine, in faithfulness to the gospel, their practices; to own, control, and encumber their property; to organize for carrying out the mission and witness of the church; to establish their budgets and financial policies; to call their ministers; and to participate through voting ~~representatives~~ delegates in forming the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

12. Among the responsibilities by which congregations demonstrate their mutual concern for the mission and witness of the whole church are the responsibilities to proclaim the gospel and administer baptism and the Lord's Supper; to provide for the spiritual nurture of their members and families; to grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship, transcending all barriers within the human family, working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines; to engage in evangelism; to sustain their ministers in faithfulness and honor and, in matters pertaining to relationships with them, to seek counsel from the regional minister; to be faithful in Christian stewardship, striving to share proportionately in providing the resources for the total life, work, and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to choose voting ~~representatives~~ delegates to the General and Regional Assemblies; to share with other ministries of the church in the establishment and nurture of new congregations; and to seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other congregations and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

13. While congregations are responsive to the needs of general and regional ministries, as established through the participation of the congregations' ~~representatives~~ delegates in the General and Regional Assemblies, all financial support of the general and regional programs of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by congregations and individuals is voluntary.

## REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

14. Congregations ~~are represented~~ participate in the General Assembly ~~by through~~ voting ~~representatives~~ delegates of their choosing. Each congregation is entitled to ~~be~~

~~represented in the General Assembly by three (3) voting delegates~~representatives in the General Assembly. These voting ~~delegates~~ representatives shall be in addition to the congregation's ordained and commissioned ministers, who are voting members as provided in paragraph 39c.

15. Congregations may submit items for consideration by the General Assembly by filing such items with the General Board through the Office of the General Minister and President. Congregations will receive from the Office of the General Minister and President notification of a meeting of the General Assembly ~~meeting~~ and items to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance.

16. Congregations ~~are represented~~ participate in their Regional Assemblies according to the provisions of the corporate documents and organization of their respective regions.

17. Congregations and individuals exercise their rights and responsibilities by participating through their voting ~~delegates~~ representatives in the General and Regional Assemblies, of which they are a part. In the fulfillment of their ministries, congregations are encouraged to hold in high regard the actions, decisions, and recommendations of these Assemblies, expressing in love any dissent from such actions or positions. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by congregations and individual members through the Office of the General Minister and President to the Executive Committee of the General Board, as provided in paragraph 642e.

## REGIONAL MINISTRIES

18. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) also expresses itself in geographic ministries called regions. The following principles shall guide the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the development of its regions.

## NATURE AND PURPOSE

19. The primary nature of regions is drawn from the Acts of the Apostles in Paul's desire to nurture, support, and engage congregations as unique entities and as gatherings of congregations related to one another in their mission. Regions should embody the character of the ministry to which Christ calls His people in their mutual commitment to Him and to one another.

20. The primary purpose of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in regions is twofold:

- a. to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region; and
- b. to establish, receive, and nurture congregations in the region, providing help, counsel, and pastoral care to members, ministers, and congregations in their mutual relationships, and relating them to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church.

## MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

21. As a member of the whole Body of Christ, every person who is or shall become a member of a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) thereby holds membership in the region in which that congregation is recognized.

## FUNCTION

22. Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) perform within their established boundaries the function of the church related to their two-fold purpose of mission and nurture:

23. *Mission.* In fulfilling the mission of the church, regions are sensitive to the needs of the world about them and lead their members in identifying and serving such human needs. Regions take initiative in developing new forms of ministries in mission, witness, and service, and in dealing creatively with their roles in the whole task of the church. Wherever ecumenical action is possible to fulfill their mission, regions should join with similar geographic units of other religious bodies and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

24. *Nurture.* Regions are concerned for the continuing renewal of the life of congregations, members, and ministers, and offer leadership in matters of mutual concern. Within policies developed by the General Assembly, regions provide help, counsel, and pastoral care to ministers and congregations in such matters as standing and credentialing of ministers, ministerial search and call, ordination, commissioning, establishment and dissolution of pastoral relationships, and installations of ministers. Regions seek to supply ministry for congregations without full-time pastoral services and to offer counsel and assistance in cases of difficulties between ministers and congregations.

25. As an integral part of the whole church, regions witness to the unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by calling congregations to an awareness of their opportunities and responsibilities beyond local concerns. They also help to relate congregations to the total ministry of the whole church including working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines. By calling the general expression of the church to an awareness of the needs both of congregations and of regions, the regions help to relate the general expression to the life and work of congregations.

26. Governing and enabling documents of regions shall be in harmony with this *Design*. Updated copies should be filed with the Office of the General Minister and President.

## SHAPE AND BOUNDARIES

27. Identifiable geographic, cultural, sociological, and political factors provide boundaries, which the church may use to establish its own regional structures:

- a. by which the church carries out regionally its ministry of mission and nurture;
- b. in which congregations and ministers find their primary relationships of mutual support and encouragement;
- c. which provide opportunities for regional fellowship, worship, and assembly for the consideration of matters of mutual concern; and



d. which help to relate the three expressions of the church — congregational, regional, and general — to one another in the functioning of the whole church.

Regions may vary in size and shape. It is recognized that, in response to the changing imperatives of mission and the conditions of human life, new expressions of the church may emerge in the process of developing the shape and boundaries of the regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

28. The General Board shall provide procedures for the continuing modification of the shape and boundaries of existing regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in keeping with the principles set forth in this *Design*.

29. In the development of any new regional boundaries, existing regional organizations shall remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the regions involved, in the light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Board. The process of reshaping regional boundaries (even if only one (1) congregation is affected) includes the participation and approval of the parties involved, and the General Board.

## STRUCTURE AND STAFF

30. Regions develop their particular structures and organization for the most effective fulfillment of their ministry and mission. Regions may establish or recognize area or district organizations within their boundaries. Regions secure or retain their own governing documents and formulate their declarations of covenantal relationship, consistent with the principles of this *Design*. With due regard for the welfare of the other expressions of the church as a whole, regions exercise rights and responsibilities as they share creatively in the total mission of witness and service. Regions own and manage their property, determine their budgets, and administer regional finances within the limits of resources available. Through their Assemblies, regions provide for worship, for the education of their members, for fellowship, and for the transaction of business by voting ~~representatives~~ delegates from the congregations.

31. Regions call regional ministers as their spiritual and administrative leaders serving as the chief executive officers of the regions. Each region develops stated processes for nominating and electing its regional minister, including procedures for seeking counsel from the Office of the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Regions are encouraged to use current Disciples search processes and safeguards, as established by the General Board so that all qualified ministers might be considered. Regions employ other regional staff as required to meet their responsibilities in mission and nurture and so the whole church's commitment to be a pro-reconciling/anti-racism body can be fully honored in each region.

32. Regions are represented in the General Assembly as provided in paragraph 39b. Regions may submit items for consideration by the General Assembly, filing such items with the General Board through the Office of the General Minister and President. Regions will receive from the Office of the General Minister and President notification of a meeting of the General Assembly ~~meeting~~ and items to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance.

33. Regional ministers will provide advice and counsel to the General Nominating Committee when the Nominating Committee is selecting names of persons for possible membership on the General Board.

34. In the selection of the General Nominating Committee, as provided in paragraph 81, regions may submit to the Executive Committee of the General Board names of persons for possible membership on the General Nominating Committee.

35. As provided in paragraph 55, the budgetary procedures for financing the various regions, general ministries, and institutions of higher education shall have regular review and evaluation by the General Board.

36. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by regions through the General Minister and President to the Executive Committee of the General Board, as provided in paragraph 64e.

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

37. The general covenantal body of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be the General Assembly. In all of its worship, deliberation, and ministries, the General Assembly shall seek to manifest the wholeness and unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) within the one Body of Christ.

## NATURE AND PURPOSE

38. The General Assembly, whenever and however it meets, shall gather for worship, education, ~~and dialogue,~~ relationship building; ~~shall may engage in learning, dialogue, formation, discernment, and prayer on matters of social witness and other matters deemed essential to the witness and ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);~~ and, when necessary, ~~the shall transaction of~~ transact business. The General Assembly is in perpetual existence and can hold meetings digitally and in-person.

## MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

39. All members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who register for a meeting of the General Assembly shall have all privileges of the Assembly, except that voting privileges shall be limited to the following:

a. Voting ~~representatives-delegates~~ from congregations. Each congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be entitled to have three (3) voting ~~representatives-delegates~~. These voting ~~representatives-delegates~~ from congregations shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry.

b. Voting ~~representatives-delegates~~ from regions. Each region shall be entitled to three (3) voting ~~representatives-delegates~~. These voting ~~representatives-delegates~~ from regions shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry.

c. *Ministers.* Persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in accordance with the policies and criteria established by the General Assembly through its General Commission on Ministry.

d. *Exceptions.* Members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) not otherwise voting members, who are the chief administrative officers of institutions of higher education and general ministries that are recognized by the General Assembly; members of the General Board not otherwise voting members; and former Moderators and Vice Moderators not otherwise voting members.

40. Voting members of the General Assembly, who are ~~representatives-delegates~~ from congregations and regions, shall serve a ~~three-year~~ term of three (3) years with one (1) ~~representative-delegate~~ being selected by the congregation ~~and/or~~ region each year. Terms begin January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. No person shall have more than one (1) vote in the General Assembly, and no person shall vote *in absentia* or by proxy. Congregations and regions may name alternates to replace voting ~~representatives-delegates~~ who are unable to attend.

41. Members of churches ecumenically or historically related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), upon invitation of the Chair, may have the privileges of the floor of the General Assembly, except the vote.

#### MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ~~MEETINGS~~

42.44. The General Assembly will meet at least one time every calendar year for an Annual Meeting, set by the General Board, of which the first two will be held digitally. These meetings will be held digitally. Every third year the Annual Meeting will be known as the Triennial Meeting and will regularly be a meeting will be held both in-person and digitally. The Triennial Meeting in-person meeting will be held at a time and place fixed by the General Board. Participants (voting and nonvoting) can attend the business sessions of the Triennial Meeting in-person meeting digitally or in-person.

4243. The General Assembly will: conduct Assembly programs for worship; provide education of its members; engage in dialogue, formation, discernment and prayer on matters of social witness and other matters deemed essential to the witness and ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and transact business. The business agenda for the in-person Assembly held every three years will include: The regular election of the officers of the General Assembly Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the General Minister and President, election of the General Board members; and election of the General Nominating Committee shall occur during the a Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly; and The General Assembly may consider operational, policy, and/or organizational business forwarded by the General Board for action including but not limited to the following: accountability for the church's work toward racial justice and inclusion; determining the basis of cooperative relationships of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with other religious bodies, organizations, and agencies; being responsible for authorizing unity and union conversations, consultations, and negotiations with other Christian communions; and maintaining appropriate national ecumenical relationships in both Canada and the United States.

4344. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada, which is related to the General Assembly both through congregations and through the All-Canada Committee, shall be responsible for matters pertaining to the ecumenical and Christian unity concerns of national bodies in Canada, and may take the initiative in relating itself to any and all Canadian and world ecumenical bodies.

44. ~~The General Assembly will meet at least one time every calendar year. These meetings will be held digitally. Every third year a meeting will be held in-person. The in-person meeting will be held at a time and place fixed by the General Board. Participants (voting and non-voting) can attend the business sessions of the in-person meeting digitally or in-person.~~

45. The General Assembly shall have such committees as it may deem necessary, including the Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall serve as the business committee during the meetings of the General Assembly, and the Assembly Program and Arrangements Committee. Committee membership where the election procedures are not further defined by *The Design* or the Special Rules of the General Assembly shall be elected by and report to the General Board.

46. All items of business to be considered by the General Assembly shall be received by or originate with the General Board. Items of business may be filed with the General Board by any congregation, region, institution of higher education, general ministry, or organization with recognized relationships with the general expression of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or by the governing board of any such body. Such items of business shall be filed through the Office of the General Minister and President. All items of business shall be made available among the congregations, regions, and general ministries by the Office of the General Minister and President at least 60 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly ~~meeting~~.

47. A quorum for the transaction of business by the General Assembly shall be the voting members present and voting at each business session of the Assembly.

## OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

48. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall have two kinds of officers: non-salaried officers of the General Assembly and salaried general officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

49. *Non-salaried officers of the General Assembly.* The non-salaried officers of the General Assembly shall be a Moderator, ~~a Moderator-Elect~~, a First Vice Moderator, a Second Vice Moderator, a Moderator-Elect, and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. These officers shall be nominated by the General Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly for terms of three (3) years, unless otherwise noted.

a. The Moderator shall preside at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Executive Committee of the General Board, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

b. The Vice Moderators shall assist the Moderator in presiding at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Executive Committee of the General Board, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

c. The Moderator-Elect shall serve for three (3) years and then serve as Moderator for three (3) years. The Moderator-Elect shall assume other responsibilities as may be assigned by the General Board or the Executive Committee of the General Board.

d. The Moderator, Vice Moderators, and Moderator-Elect shall be active members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall include at least one (1) lay leader and (1) one minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with a commitment to gender diversity and representation and shall include persons from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. These officers shall take office upon the adjournment of the ~~regular in-person meeting~~ Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly ~~in which they are elected~~, and shall hold office until their successors have been elected and installed.

e. A Parliamentarian shall be appointed by the Moderator with the approval of the Executive Committee of the General Board. The Parliamentarian shall serve during the business sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Executive Committee of the General Board, advising on parliamentary questions that may arise. Unless otherwise provided, all proceedings shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised*.

50. *Salaried officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).* The salaried officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be a General Minister and President, a Corporate Secretary, a Corporate Treasurer, and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. The Corporate Secretary and Corporate Treasurer shall be designated from the Office of the General Minister and President. The Corporate Secretary shall keep the record of the proceedings of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Executive Committee of the General Board; shall serve as the Corporation Secretary as may be required by law; and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to this office. The Corporate Treasurer shall be the Corporation Financial Officer and shall perform such duties as may be assigned to this office. The Corporate Secretary and the Corporate Treasurer shall be elected by the Executive Committee of the General Board on nomination by the General Minister and President for terms of three (3) years and may be re-elected.

51. The General Minister and President shall be recognized as pastor to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and president of the organization.

52. As pastor to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the roles for the General Minister and President are to:

- a. Provide spiritual leadership to the church in all of its diverse manifestations and exercise pastoral authority over concerns of the church in times of crisis.
- b. Embody the spirit of *The Design*.
- c. Articulate and interpret *The Design*.
- d. Serve as the primary ecumenical representative for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- e. Lead and give oversight to the continual discernment of God's vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).<sup>57</sup>
- f. Give oversight to mutual accountability among all expressions of the church.

g. Represent the whole church in collegial leadership in gatherings of regional, general, and congregational ministries.

h. Offer advice and counsel to commissions, committees, and task groups of General Board and regional bodies.

i. Convene various congregational, regional, educational, and general church executives and pastors for dialogue and reflection on the whole life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

53. As chief executive officer of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the presidential roles of the General Minister and President are to:

a. Have full access to boards of general ministries and regions with voice and vote, as appropriate.

b. Hold fiduciary responsibility for the Office of the General Minister and President's finances.

c. Give oversight of the Office of the General Minister and President in all of its functions.

d. Serve as primary spokesperson for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

e. Sign official documents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

f. Serve as corporate Resident Agent for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

g. Designate Office of the General Minister and President executive staff to serve in representative capacities, as appropriate.

54. Qualifications and accountability for the General Minister and President are:

a. The General Minister and President shall be an ordained minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

b. The General Minister and President shall be elected and called to this ministry by the General Assembly upon nomination by the Executive Committee of the General Board through the General Board, for a term of six (6) years and may be elected to one (1) additional term.

c. The General Minister and President is accountable to the Executive Committee of the General Board, General Board, and General Assembly.

d. The General Minister and President may be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Board upon recommendation of the Executive Committee of the General Board.

e. In the nomination and election of the General Minister and President, a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the Executive Committee of the General Board, the General Board, and the General Assembly shall be required. In the event of a



vacancy in the position of General Minister and President, the Executive Committee of the General Board shall name the person to fill the vacancy until the next Triennial Meeting of the in-person General Assembly.

## THE GENERAL BOARD

55. The General Assembly shall establish and elect a governance board responsible to the General Assembly that shall be called the General Board. The General Board is called to be in covenantal relationship with the whole church as connective tissue in doing its worshipful work and will manage its work in at least these three committees: Mission, Finance, and Executive. The General Board shall:

- a. Receive topics/issues for dialogue and education from the Church and establish the agenda for meetings of the General Assembly ~~meetings~~.
- b. Establish procedures for the Church to dialogue about topics/issues of interest to the church and society including education on the topic/issue and ways to take action.
- c. Establish mission priorities after dialogue, formation, discernment, and prayer of the General Assembly.
- d. Take action on matters of social witness after dialogue, formation, discernment, and prayer of the General Assembly.
- e. Coordinate, review, and evaluate the work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in accordance with its recognized mission, including general ministryies, regional ministryies, and other ministries, and enact structural reform when necessary.
- f. Establish policies as needed.
- g. Establish procedures for review of The Design and all Special and Standing Rules at a minimum of every three (3) years and make recommendations for changes.
- h. Create and establish the church-wide mission funding system and review and evaluate the program for effectiveness at a minimum of every three (3) years and make recommendations for changes as appropriate.
- i. Receive, review, approve, and give oversight, advice, and counsel to the financial status of the ministry organizations of the Church. Create procedures to allocate and reallocate funds based on mission priorities.
- j. Elect or confirm the governing bodies of general ministries for which it is responsible.
- k. Recognize a new Administrative Officer in an appropriate act (elect, confirm, affirm) based on the governing documents of the General Ministry, following election.
- l. Approve regional boundary changes (even if only one (1) congregation is involved) once all parties involved have participated and approved (congregations and regions impacted).

m. Act on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to maintain 501 (c) (3) tax status with the Internal Revenue Service on behalf of the General Assembly, congregations, regional ministries, and general ministries in good standing with the Church. Upon dissolution of any organization under this section, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

n. Set time, place, and format of meetings of the General Assembly ~~meetings~~.

o. Take action on policies and procedures of the General Assembly when timely action is needed between ~~assemblies~~ meetings of the General Assembly.

p. Assume and discharge such other responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Assembly.

q. Fill vacancies in offices elected by the General Assembly, subject to ratification by the General Assembly.

r. Have an Executive Committee which will serve as the Board of the Office of the General Minister and President.

s. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by congregations, individual members of congregations, and regions through the Office of the General Minister to the Executive Committee of the General Board for final decision.

56. The General Board shall consist of 52-50 members, plus one (1) member from each full communion partner, elected by the General Assembly for terms of six (6) years. Such elected members shall include laity and ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), not more than one-half nor less than one-third of whom shall be ministers. They shall be elected in the following manner:

a. The General Nominating Committee shall nominate, ~~and the General Assembly shall elect, 50 members~~ with attention to the full diversity of the church. With all due diligence, the General Nominating Committee will make an effort to receive nominations from every recognized region during each 3-year nomination cycle, to ensure that no region shall go without representation for more than one 3-year cycle. including but not limited to diversity across geographical regions, and its geographical regions, and the General Assembly shall elect 50 members, one (1) member from each region and one (1) member from the current or former membership of each general ministries' board.

b. The General Nominating Committee shall nominate, and the General Assembly shall elect ~~two (2) members from ecumenical partners,~~ one (1) representative from each full communion partner.

The General Board shall also include the following members:



~~e. Two (2) members ex officio, one (1) from seminaries and one (1) from colleges and universities. These members will be selected by the Council on Theological Education and Council of College and University Presidents respectively.~~

~~d. c.~~ The officers ~~ex officio~~, with vote: the Moderator, First Vice Moderator, Second Vice Moderator, ~~and the~~ Moderator-Elect of the General Assembly and the General Minister and President.

~~e. d.~~ Each regional minister will serve ~~ex officio~~ without vote.

~~f. e.~~ The chief administrative officer of each general ministry will serve ~~ex officio~~ without vote.

f. The Council on Theological Education shall select one (1) member from seminaries to serve ex officio without vote and the Council of College and University Presidents shall select one (1) member from colleges and universities to serve ex officio without vote.

~~g. Three (3) members ex officio without vote: The~~ Corporate Secretary, Corporate Treasurer, and Parliamentarian of the General Assembly will serve ex officio without vote.

57. ~~Terms of the elected members of the General Board shall begin at the close of the Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly during which the member is elected and end at the close of the Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly during which their successor is elected. Twenty-six (26) One half of the elected members shall be elected by the General Assembly at each Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly. Upon serving one (1) full term, elected members of the General Board shall not be eligible for reelection until three (3) years have elapsed. Terms on the General Board begin at the close of the in-person General Assembly where the member is elected, and the member serves until their successor has been elected. Each member serves one (1) six-year term. One half of the Board membership is elected at each in-person General Assembly. The moderator-elect is elected to one (1) three (3) year term in that role and then serves one (1) term of three (3) years as moderator. The General Minister and President may be elected to two (2) six (6) year terms. The other elected officers serve one (1) three (3) year term. Elected members of the General Board who have served two full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until three years have elapsed.~~

58. *Ex officio* members are on the General Board due to their roles. If they no longer serve in the role from which they were elected, their position on the General Board becomes vacant.

59. The General Nominating Committee will seek advice and counsel from regional ministers and general ministry chief administrative officers when nominating General Board members. Nominees are to be involved members of congregations and regional and/or general ministry life. Nominees will be sought with specific gifts ~~of in~~ mission, finance, and/or governance and the full diversity of the Church will be considered.

60. Vacancies shall be filled by the General Board upon recommendation of the Executive Committee of the General Board.

61 Regular meetings of the General Board shall be held at least twice annually at a  
time, place, and format fixed by the General Board. Meetings will be held digitally or in-person.  
When an in-person meeting is held, members can also participate and vote digitally. One-half of  
the voting membership of the General Board shall constitute a quorum. The Moderator may call  
special meetings of the General Board under extraordinary circumstances.

62. In addition to the Mission, Finance, and Executive Committees, the General  
Board may appoint committees as necessary to facilitate the work of the General Board.  
General Board committees, when used, will be assigned to reinforce the wholeness of the  
General Board's job and so as never to interfere with interaction between the General Board  
and its constituencies.

a. General Board committees ordinarily will assist the board by preparing policy  
alternatives and implications for board deliberation.

b. General Board committees may not speak or act for the General Board except  
when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes.

63. The General Board shall maintain Standing Rules that guide and govern its work  
as assigned in *The Design*.

#### THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL BOARD

64. The General Board shall establish an Executive Committee of the General  
Board. The Executive Committee shall serve as Executive Committee of the General Board and  
the Board of the Office of the General Minister and President.

The Executive Committee of the General Board shall:

a. Implement policies and actions of the General Board.

b. Fulfill duties and functions assigned to it by the General Board.

c. Prepare the business agenda for the meetings of the General Assembly and the  
General Board.

d. Appoint committees not otherwise provided for.

e. Where other procedures have not been provided by the General Assembly or the  
General Board, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by individual members,  
ministers, congregations, regions, or general ministries to the Executive Committee for  
final decision.

The Board of the Office of the General Minister and President shall:

f. Approve the budget and policies for the Office of the General Minister and  
President and other organizations that relate to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
through the Office of the General Minister and President.

g. Provide guidance and oversight to the General Minister and President.

h. Handle grievances filed against the General Minister and President.

65. The Executive Committee of the General Board shall be elected by the General Board from the membership of the General Board. This Executive Committee shall consist of twenty-one (21) persons:

a. ~~Nine (9)~~ members from the voting membership of the General Board;

b. ~~nine (9)~~ Five (5) members ~~as ex-officio with vote: (The General Minister and President; the Moderator; the Moderator-elect; and the two (2), First Vice Moderators, Second Vice Moderator, and Moderator-Elect of the General Assembly and the General Minister and President; two (2) regional ministers, ex-officio without vote, and two (2) general ministry presidents, ex-officio without vote); and~~

c. ~~three (3)~~ Seven (7) members ~~as ex-officio without vote: (the Corporate Secretary, the Corporate Treasurer, and the Parliamentarian of the General Assembly, two (2) regional ministers, and two (2) general ministry chief administrative officers).~~

66. Executive Committee of the General Board members shall be elected to a term of three (3) years, beginning at the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the General Board following their election to the position. A member may be elected to one (1) additional term to the Executive Committee of the General Board, but not to extend beyond the member's service on the General Board. Members of the Executive Committee of the General Board who have served two (2) full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until three (3) years have elapsed.

67. The Executive Committee of the General Board shall meet at least two times each year and shall be organized to carry out its work in committees. The Executive Committee of the General Board may call on additional members of the General Board, and others as it deems necessary, to serve on subcommittees and task forces needed to accomplish its work.

68. Two-thirds of the voting members of the Executive Committee of the General Board shall constitute a quorum.

## GENERAL MINISTRIES

69. The General Assembly, upon recommendation of the General Board, shall establish or recognize general ministries for broad areas of work, central administrative functions, and specialized study and service to meet responsibilities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its mission of witness and service to the world. It is an imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that general ministries are created to strengthen congregational life for the church's mission.

70. The National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), ~~the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship~~ Obra Hispana, and the North American Pacific Asian Disciples witness to the diversity within the church. These ministries, with their unique historical relationships within the Christian Church and the rich cultural gifts they share, are empowered to speak to particular cultural contexts within the ecclesial needs of Disciples in the United States and Canada and are charged with the development of their particular ministries.

These ministries make reports and are represented in places where general ministries are called upon to serve the life of the church through reports and representation. Their executive ministers shall serve in partnership and collaboration with regional ministers and other leadership groups throughout the church.

71. The General Board shall approve the purpose and function of each general ministry and shall elect or confirm the members of the governing body of each. The responsibilities, manner of selection, and tenure of office for the members of the governing body of a general ministry shall be determined with reference to its purpose and function and shall be specified in its bylaws or rules of procedure, which shall be filed with the Office of ~~the~~ General Minister and President.

72. Each general ministry shall select its officers and staff using the current Disciples search processes, as established by the General Board. Each board shall be called upon to enter into an agreement with the General Board or to include in its bylaws or rules of procedure a provision for any new chief administrative officer to be elected by its board following consultation with the General Minister and President, as provided for in paragraph 55, and with the advice and counsel of the Executive Committee of the General Board. Following election, recognition by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be bestowed upon a new ~~c~~Chief ~~a~~Administrative ~~o~~Officer by the General Board in an appropriate act.

73. A general ministry may be incorporated and shall administer its program and financial affairs and establish or retain its bylaws or rules of procedure in accordance with provisions established by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the General Assembly.

74. Each general ministry shall facilitate policy decisions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), accounting for its work through regular reports of its plans and actions to the General Board.

## RECOGNIZED MINISTRY PARTNERS

75. The Executive Committee of the General Board may recommend to the General Board relationships of ministry partners and other organizations whose mission and ministry support the overall mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The General Assembly, as coordinated by the Office of the General Minister and President and the Ministry Partner's sponsor(s), shall appropriately celebrate newly recognized ministry partners.

76. A ministry desiring such recognition shall request such a relationship through an appropriate general ministry. Each General Ministry shall establish evaluation criteria for recommending ministry partners to the Executive Committee of the General Board, but shall include at a minimum action by the General Ministry's governing board.

77. The Executive Committee of the General Board shall maintain the criteria by which Ministry Partners are evaluated for recognition beyond the process of a sponsoring General Ministry.

78. The plans and activities of such an organization will be reported to the General Board through the sponsoring general ministry. A review of such reports and the action of the General Board shall be included in the report of the General Board to the General Assembly. Ministry partners failing to report for three (3) consecutive board meetings will be removed from

status as a Recognized Ministry Partner.

79. The contact information for the ministry partners shall be listed with the sponsoring ministry in the *Year Book and Directory*.

## CONTINUAL RENEWAL AND STRUCTURAL REFORM

80. The General Board shall maintain procedures for continual renewal and structural reform under policies approved by the General Assembly, taking into account implications for racial and ethnic congregations and clergy. To further the process, existing general ministries may be called upon to reassign staff, budget, and functions for this purpose. In any inter-unit adjustment, as well as in development of any new general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), existing organizations remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the organizations involved in light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Assembly. Full protection shall be given to all legal and contractual relationships, including trust funds and pension funds.

## NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

81. There shall be a General Nominating Committee consisting of ten (10) members elected by the General Assembly. The General Nominating Committee shall be widely representative by gender, age, race and ethnicity, and not more than one (1) member shall be from any one (1) region except as may be necessary to ensure representation from the National Convocation, Central Pastoral Office of Hispanic Ministries, the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship, Obra Hispana, the North American Pacific/Asian Disciples and other such ministries that may be recommended by the General Board and recognized by the General Assembly. One-half of the members at the time of their election shall be from the membership of the General Board, and not more than one-half nor less than one-third shall be ministers. Each triennium the Executive Committee of the General Board shall nominate five (5) persons for election by the General Assembly to a term of six (6) years on the General Nominating Committee. A member of the General Nominating Committee may serve only one (1) full term.

82. The General Nominating Committee shall accept suggestions from throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall maintain records of suggested nominees and their qualifications. When selecting candidates for offices, the General Nominating Committee shall consider, but not be limited to, all names suggested.

83. The General Nominating Committee shall select one (1) nominee for each of the following offices to be elected by the General Assembly: Moderator, First Vice Moderator, Second Vice Moderator, Moderator-Elect, and members of the General Board whose election is vested in the General Assembly, as provided in paragraph ~~42~~ 43.

84. The report of the General Nominating Committee on these nominations shall be sent to the congregations and regions at least 60 days prior to the Triennial Meeting ~~meeting~~ of the General Assembly ~~where the election will be held~~. Provision shall be made for nominations from the floor of the Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly. A simple majority is needed for approval.

85. The General Nominating Committee also shall present to the General Board the nominees for positions whose election or confirmation is vested in the General Board, as

provided in paragraphs 55 and 65, including the members of the governing bodies of the various general ministries, members of the Executive Committee of the General Board, and members of committees and commissions, noting terms of service and status (elected, *ex-officio*, *ex-officio* without vote, etc.). The Office of the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall provide staff and counsel for the General Nominating Committee.

## MINISTRY

86. The fundamental ministry within the church is that of Jesus Christ. God calls the church to participate in Jesus' ministry.

87. By virtue of baptism in the church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people. Within the corporate ministry, each Christian fulfills their own calling as a servant of Christ sent into the world to minister. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall seek to provide all of its members with opportunities to exercise this ministry.

88. In addition, the church recognizes an order of ministry, set apart under God, to equip the whole people to fulfill their corporate ministry. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), through the General Assembly, shall approve general policies and criteria for the order of the ministries, within policies developed by the General Assembly; regions certify the standing of ministers and provide help, counsel, and pastoral care to ministers and congregations.

89. The offices of elder and deacon are ordered by the congregations, through election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of certain functions of ministry appropriate to the offices.

a. A person elected elder is authorized to exercise within the congregation which elects them the ministerial functions it assigns for periods of time which it specifies, such as sharing in the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders.

b. A person elected deacon is authorized to serve in the congregation which elects them for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the conduct of worship, and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The diaconate is a voluntary ministry.

## REVISION AND AMENDMENTS

90. Revisions and amendments to this *Design* may be made by a two-thirds vote of voting members present and voting ~~at during a Triennial Meeting of~~ the General Assembly, providing such revision or amendment shall have been circulated among the congregations and regions 60 days in advance of the Triennial Meeting of the General Assembly ~~where the vote will be taken~~.

91. Editorial amendments to this *Design* may be made by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee.

## ASCRPTION



Now to God, who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

— Ephesians 3:20–21

i. The general ministries now recognized are:

~~Central Pastoral Office of Hispanic Ministries~~

Christian Board of Publication

Christian Church Foundation, Inc.

Disciples Church Extension Fund

Council on Christian Unity, Inc. dba Christian Unity and Interfaith Ministry

Disciples of Christ Historical Society

Division of Homeland Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc. dba  
Disciples Home Missions

Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc. dba  
Disciples Overseas Ministries

Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc.

The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

National Convocation of the Christian Church

~~National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship~~

North American Pacific/Asian Disciples

Obra Hispana

Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)