

ORDER OF MINISTRY

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest

**Central Area
COMMISSIONED
MINISTRY**

**Program: Central Area School
of Theology (CAST)**

Updated 10.9.10

Calling and Nurture

Central Area Program for Nurture, Calling and Preparation of Ministers

All calling initiates with God in individual hearts. The Central Area recognizes and affirms this reality. Yet accountability, nurture, affirmation, education and continual review are vital to ministry. Our collective service to Christ requires that we exercise responsibility for these elements in the calling and nurture of ministries. This manual outlines policies and procedures for licensed ministry in the Central Area. All licensed ministry is under the direction and care of the Central Area Committee on the Ministry.

Policies and Procedures of the Central Area Committee on the Ministry

The Central Area Committee on the Ministry serves the Central Area by promoting and overseeing the calling and nurture of the ministry in the Central Area. It cooperates with the Southwest Region in matters of standing for licensed ministers and seeks to encourage the continued nurture of all ministers in the Central Area.

Matters of standing as an ordained minister are the responsibility of the Southwest Regional Committee.

Matters of standing as a licensed minister are the responsibility of the Central Area Committee on the Ministry as delegated by the Southwest Regional committee. Licensing is screened by the Central Area and recommended to the Southwest Region, which officially licenses the candidates. All licensed ministers are accountable to the policies and criteria for ministry established by the Southwest Region. The Central Area Committee on the Ministry observes the policies and procedures of the Southwest Region, which are supplemented in the Central Area by the policies and procedures in this document.

The Order of Ministry for which the Central Area Committee on the Ministry exercises specific responsibility is Licensed Ministry. The Central Area Committee on the Ministry understands that Licensed Ministry is an order of ministry relating to specific situations and callings. It is a limited standing granted for the purposes of specific ministries within the Central Area.

The Central Area Committee on the Ministry understands that the calling of God initiates all ministries. All aspects of the church—Individuals; Congregations; Area, Regional and General expressions of the church—respond to that calling through *affirmation followed by support and nurture*. The Central Area must respond to all ministry authorized by the church with support and nurture.

Although calling initiates with God in individual hearts, affirmation of confirmation is necessary for *standing* in ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Central Area Committee on the Ministry is charged with the awesome responsibility of listening to and praying with individuals who believe they are called into ministry. The purpose of this listening

and prayer is to corporately affirm the calling of God in that person's life. It is not our purpose to judge who is or is not called, but to determine to whom standing as a licensed minister should be granted upon careful and prayerful deliberation. This task is vital when the history is considered, for many have claimed to be "called" and proclaimed themselves to be ministers whether anyone else agreed or not. Because we see ministry as a gift of God to the church and or the witness of Christ through the church rather than as a gift exclusively to and for an individual, this extensive licensing process is necessary. Standing as a licensed minister is, therefore, a cooperative matter between the individual, the local congregation, and the Central Area (which acts on behalf of the Southwest Region and the General church). (It should be noted that standing is the issue decided by the Central Area Committee on the Ministry, while employment is the issue decided by the local congregation or organization. The Central Area Committee on the Ministry does not hire or fire ministers.)

Persons having standing in other denominations may apply for license to specific ministry settings in the Central Area. *However, "recognition of standing" for an ordained minister may be granted only by the Southwest Region.* Ordained ministers in other denominations may apply for standing as Licensed ministers in the Central Area through the Central Area Committee on the Ministry, provided their service is intended only in the specific situations for which the license is granted and only within the Central Area. License in this case is not to be used as a means of circumventing the Southwest Regional Committee on the Ministry or as a means of avoiding issues properly belonging in that arena.

The Central Area Committee on the Ministry considers many important factors when deciding to recommend a person for license. Among these issues are: calling, character and competence. Special attention is paid to ethical behavior, continued preparation for and growth in skills and disciplines necessary for ministry, personal theological development and openness to other points of view, dedication to the service of Christ within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), personal emotional and spiritual stability and maturity.

When a congregation calls a minister who does not have standing within the church, the new minister is asked to meet with the Central Area Committee on the Ministry at its next scheduled meeting. A temporary license may be granted until paperwork and enrollment concerns can be completed. All licenses are granted for one year at a time.

Licensed Minister Training: Central Area Program for Nurture and

Education of Ministers

The Central Area understands that ministry begins with the calling by God. That calling must be nurtured by the participation of all members of the body of Christ seeking to be attentive to and supportive of Christ's calling in ministry. *In local congregations the elders bear a special responsibility for listening for, encouraging and nurturing the calling in individuals. Elders are encouraged to share in the process of calling and to pray for, support, exhort and nurture all ministers in the church.*

Nurture for ministers must include preparation for ministry in the basic skills and arts of ministry as vocation and continuing education in ministry. The Central Area School of Theology (CAST) consists of the following elements:

1. All Licensed Ministers will be assigned a Mentor, if necessary or if possible. Mentors are Ordained Ministers who meet with their assigned Licensed Minister regularly, at least monthly, to discuss ministry settings, share wisdom and pray with and for the Licensed Minister.
2. **Training for all Licensed Ministers in the Central Area is a required four year program.** The Training will be conducted three times each year. There will be a Fall, Winter and Spring Retreat. There are required reading and written papers for each retreat. Please refer to the detailed curriculum at the end of this manual. Curriculum for the training is reviewed annually.
3. **All Licensed Ministers are required to attend all three Retreats.** Absents must be explained in written form. Required written papers and a book report for the required reading are to be turned in one week following the missed Retreat.
4. Once a Licensed Minister has completed the four year program, the Licensed Minister is asked to continue their training by repeating the program. The program is upgraded at various points for those repeating the program.
5. **All Licensed Ministers must attend the course prescribed by the Southwest Region for the prevention of clergy Sexual Misconduct.**

Application for Licensed Ministry

Persons interested in preparing for licensed ministry or wanting to engage in a training process as a means of exploring a calling into ministry should complete and submit the following application process:

APPLICATION FOR LICENSE GUIDELINES

1. An Application for licensing is enclosed in this packet that needs to be filled out completely.
2. There are three questions that need to be answered in written form:
 - A. Explain your understanding of the Christian faith - particularly your call to ministry?
 - B. What is the nature and purpose of the Church?
 - C. How do you see yourself fulfilling the purpose of the Church?
3. All completed forms and answers to questions are to be returned to the following address:
Central Area Committee on the Ministry
Central Area CCSW
1420 North Third
Abilene, TX 79601
4. **When ALL OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION has been received in the Central Area office, an interview with the Central Area Committee on the Ministry may be scheduled.** A letter consisting of 1) the next scheduled date for the Central Area Committee on the Ministry, 2) a response card expressing your desires and 3) a map of Abilene, Texas where all the Central Area Committee on the Ministry meetings are held will be sent to all interested persons.

**REQUEST FOR LICENSED MINISTRY IN THE CENTRAL AREA
OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION**

I, _____, do hereby make a request to be a Licensed Minister in the Central Area of the Southwest Region so that my name may be submitted to congregations for appropriate positions that might, from time to time, be available to non-ordained people.

_____ (Signature)

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip Code: _____

We, the Official Board of _____,
(Local Congregation and City)

declare that we will sponsor and support _____,
Name of Licensed Minister

as a Licensed Minister.

_____ (Signature of Chairperson, Official Board)

Date of Official Board action: _____

**COMPLETE AND SEND TO: Central Area of the Southwest Region
1420 North Third Street
Abilene, Texas 79601-5641**

Curriculum

1st College Student: Those who are attending for their first four year session.

2nd College Student: Those who have attended during the previous four year session.

Year A:

Theme: Identity—as Disciples of Christ and as a minister

Scheduled for 2010-2011

Fall Retreat: Foundations: Who Are We as Disciples

October 9, 2010 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College Student** - *Handbook for Today's Disciples* by D. Duane Cummins

2nd College Student – *The Faith We Affirm* by Ronald E. Osburn

Paper: Why I am a Disciple....

What I believe is most distinctive about the...Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Winter Retreat: Deeper study: Disciple History

January 22, 2011 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College Student** – *Joined in Discipleship* by Mark Toulouse

2nd College Student – *Barton Stone* by D. Newell Williams OR

Journey In Faith by Lester G. McAllister & William E. Tucker

Papers: My favorite character from Disciple history is.

...because...

Spring Retreat: My Personal Identity as a Disciple Minister

April 9, 2011 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: *Fit to be a Pastor* by G. Lloyd Rediger, Westminster John Knox Press,

Louisville, Kentucky OR *Re-Calling Ministry* by James E. Dittes

Papers: Who Am I as a Minister?

Who Am I as a Person?

God's call in my life.

My Gifts as a Minister.

Year B:

Theme: Family Systems and Church Dynamics

Scheduled for 2011-2012

Fall Retreat: Practical considerations of the church as an emotional and spiritual system

October 15, 2011 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: *Congregational Fitness* by Denise W. Goodman, Alban Institute Publication

Papers: What Do I Do When I am Criticized by someone in my family?

What Do I Do When I am Criticized by someone in the church?

Winter Retreat: Church Conflict: Listening and Talking Together/Counseling

January 21, 2012 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: *Clergy Killers* by G. Lloyd Rediger

Papers: I understand my Authority in the Church is...

When my Authority is Challenged, I ...

Spring Retreat: Church Administration, Planning and Church Ethics

April 21, 2012 at First Christian Church, Abilene (NOTE: DATE CHANGE)

Text: *Our Gifts* by David P. Mayer, Augsburg Fortress (www.augsburg.org) AND

Your Calling as a Leader by Gary Straub & Judy G. Turner or

Your Calling as an Elder by Gary Straub or

Your Calling as a Deacon by Gary Straub & James Trader II

Disciples Eldership by Peter M. Morgan

Papers: My Vision for my local church is ...

Practical ministry topics for discussions:

The functioning of church boards

Role of elders

Role of deacons

Role of ministries (committees)

Additional Readings for further study:

The Indispensable Guide for Smaller Churches by David R. Ray, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland

Size Transitions in Congregations by Beth Ann Gaede, The Alban Institute

Year C:

Theme: Spirituality

Scheduled for 2012-2013

Fall Retreat: Personal Spirituality

October 6, 2012 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College:** *Changing Life Patterns* by Elizabeth Liebert, Chalice Press

2nd College: *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* by Richard Rohr

Papers: How I nurture my own personal spiritual life—really.

When I need someone to help me in my spiritual life, I...

Additional Assignment: Develop and preach a sermon on spirituality.

Winter Retreat: Corporate Spirituality and the Ministries of Small Groups

January 19, 2013 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: *A Spiritual Formation Workbook* by James Bryan Smith and Richard J. Foster

Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups by Richard J.

Foster and James Bryan Smith

Papers: How small groups have helped hold me accountable for my personal spiritual development.

My vision for growing spiritually as a member of the church.

Discussion topics:

Role of small groups in the life of the church

How worship traditions change—or don't change

Practical elements of a spiritual discipline

How small groups can be helpful and hurtful in church life

Additional readings for further study:

Return of the Prodigal by Henri Nouwen

Spring Retreat: Corporate Spirituality: Worship and Church Traditions

April 13, 2013 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College:** *So You're Thinking About Contemporary Worship* by Tim and Kathy Carton

2nd College: *Everything Belongs* by Richard Rohr

Chalice Worship (Everyone needs to purchase this book)

Papers: During a worship service I feel myself closest to God when...

In my own congregation worship is...

Year D:

Theme: Biblical and Theological Studies

Scheduled for 2013-2014

Fall Retreat: Biblical/Theological Foundations

October 5, 2013 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College:** *How to Think Theologically* by Howard Stone and James O. Duke

2nd College: *Lay Theology* by John B. Cobb, Jr. or
Why Study Theology by Donald G. Luck

Additional readings: Entry level: *Heritage of Biblical Faith* by J. Phillip Hyatt

Advanced level: *Christian Theology: An Introduction* by McGrath

Papers: What I believe about...

...the church

...the Bible

Winter Retreat: The Bible in Preaching and Teaching

January 25, 2014 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: *Disciples and the Bible* by M. Eugene Boring

Papers: What I believe about...

...God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

...Ministry, Baptism, Communion

Spring Retreat: Christian Education in the Local Congregation

April 26, 2014 at First Christian Church, Abilene

Text: **1st College:** *Basics of Christian Education* by Karen B. Tye

2nd College: *Teaching the Bible in the Church* by John M. Bracke & Karen B.

Tye

OR *How Do Our Children Grow* by Delia Halverson

Papers: How you understand Christian Education in the life of the church?

All dates – books – assignments are subject to change