Clergy Ethics Policy and Procedures
Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin
Adopted March 30, 2019

This document sets forth the Region's understanding of the ethical behavioral standards expected of our clergy with standing and implements the standards and policies of Sections I.C.1, V.B.3.d, V.E.1.e, and VII of the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* as adopted for CCIW in 2003.

The whole church receives the call of God to embody and carry forth Christ's ministry in the world. For the sake of the mission of Christ Jesus, in consideration of their influence as representatives of Christ, and as authentic witnesses to the Gospel, clergy should be willing to dedicate themselves completely to the highest ideals of Christian life. Furthermore, they are called to exercise responsible self-control in personal habits, and to be persons in whom the community can place trust and confidence. Violation of the ministerial relationship by unethical behavior is a sin against God and an offence to the Church, for:

As (God) who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct… tend the flock of God that is your charge… Not under compulsion, but willingly … Not for sordid gain, but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. You know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. (1Peter 1:15; 5:2-3. James 3:1b NRSV)

A. Definitions

1. **Allegation**: A complaint of professional clergy ethical misconduct documented and submitted to CCIW Committee of Ministerial Ethics using the Allegation of Ethical Misconduct Form ***(Appendix #1).***
2. **Clergy:**
   a. This term refers to all those, ordained or commissioned, who have Standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) order of ministry and for this policy who minister with CCIW.
   b. Standing is defined in the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* as a recognition and affirmation of a clergyperson's engagement in a recognized ministry and

accountability therein. Such endorsement is a privilege, not a right, and is dependent on fulfillment of criteria outlined in the **Policies and Criteria Section 5.**

c. One's personal fitness for ministry involves sufficiency for the demands of the office including mental and physical capacities, emotional stability and maturity, and standards of morality ***(P&C I.C.1.c).*** Fitness for ministry is characterized by:

(1) Capacity to make informed and faithful articulation of Christian faith
(2) Openness to personal spiritual formation and growth
(3) Affirming, flexible, relational style; ability to cultivate and maintain strong relations
(4) Ability to handle conflict well, accept differences and admit weaknesses
(5) Ability to care for individuals and the wider community
(6) Responsibility in task fulfillment
(7) Willingness to serve without claiming the deference or appreciation of others
(8) Visible commitment to accepted standards of honesty, fidelity in relationships, and the refusal to exploit or be exploited
(9) Commitment to a non-addictive healthy lifestyle

3. Clergy Ethical Misconduct:

a. This term is defined as inappropriate behavior by clergy that includes, but is not limited to: fiscal malfeasance, violation of confidentiality, destructive misuse of substances or other addictive behavior, abuse of power including sexual abuse and harassment, or continuous flagrant violation of the ministerial code of ethics. This expectation applies across all platforms of interpersonal interaction including electronic and social media.

b. Questions about clergy performance that are related to a congregation's personnel policies are not considered subjects of ethical misconduct.

4. **Committee on Ministerial Ethics (CME):** The CME is a specifically trained committee of CCIW tasked to address allegations of clergy misconduct. It is a body consisting of seven members (six appointed by the Regional Moderator and one chosen by the CCIW Committee on Ministry). No more than four shall be clergy, no more than four may be of the same gender, and at least one must be a person of color. Term of service is four years, with no restriction on renewal. The committee will maintain and expand their skills through annual training.

5. **Complainant:**
    a. The person who brings the allegation of ethical misconduct to the attention of the Regional Minister (or designated staff) and/or the Chair of the Committee on Ministerial Ethics.
    b. A person may file an allegation even if they are not themselves a victim of the misconduct.
    c. If more than one person brings an allegation or if there are multiple allegations which are substantially the same, they may be handled under this policy in one proceeding.
    d. An adult next-of-kin may bring an allegation on behalf of a minor child.
6. **Confidentiality**: The practice of ensuring that information is accessible only to appropriate parties at appropriate times. Complaints are kept confidential and will not be shared beyond what is outlined in this policy without additional signed release. Please see "Procedural File" and "Permanent File" for information about the confidentiality of written materials
7. **Dual Relationship**: A relationship characterized by the participants engaging in two or more roles (personal or professional).
8. **Official Disciplinary Review:** Any allegation that involves a formal hearing with the Committee of Ministerial Ethics. If the resulting actions are reprimand, letter of censure, suspension, or termination of Standing a clergyperson must mark "yes" on question 1 on the "Search and Call" disclosure form.
9. **Permanent File:** The collection of materials kept by the Office of Christian Vocations of the Christian Church in its office in Indianapolis, Indiana on each clergyperson who has or has had Standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It is available to Regional Ministers who use their discretion in deciding what materials from this file are made available to search committees and other responsible bodies.
10. **Procedural File:** The separate file that is the property of the CME. It includes the initial allegation, the response of the accused clergyperson, a written log of the proceedings, all documentation that is generated or collected in the course of the process, a list of the actions of the committee, and the agreements with the involved parties. It is the responsibility of the Regional Minister (or designated staff) to maintain the file in a limited access area of the regional office. The Regional Minister (or designated staff) will determine who may have access to this file.
11. **Regional Minister:** As Pastor to pastors and Chief Executive Officer of CCIW, the Regional Minister (or designated staff) has important roles in maintaining the integrity of the review

and providing pastoral oversight when an allegation of clergy misconduct is filed. It is the responsibility of the Regional Minister (or designated staff) to:

a. Uphold the highest standards of the office of Christian Minister

b. Offer to arrange for the pastoral care for the complainant and the accused clergyperson and document such arrangements using the proper forms ***(Appendix #2)***

c. Meet, as soon as practical, with the leadership of the affected congregation and serve as the interpreter of the process

d. Maintain the procedural file of each proceeding under this policy

e. Communicate decisions of the CME to appropriate parties

f. Arrange training for the CME and the pool of Response Team persons at least annually

g. Be an ex-officio participant in the proceedings, with voice but without vote.

12. **Response Team**

a. CCIW shall recruit at least twelve persons (including at least one male and female from each Area) as a pool of individuals trained to serve on a response team. No more than half the pool shall be clergy. The pool must have at least two persons of color. The term of service shall be four years with no restriction on renewal. The functions of the Response Team are twofold:

(1) Investigative: to gather all information pertinent to the case from all relevant sources related to the allegation. When required, an investigative team of three shall be appointed by the CME Chair in consultation with the Regional Minister (or designated staff). One member will be appointed by the Chair to serve as leader. The Team will be comprised of a mix of men and women, clergy and laity. The assigned investigative team will report its findings to the Chair of the CME and be a resource throughout the adjudication.

(2) Supportive: during an allegation all members of the response team who are not a part of the investigative team are eligible to be support persons for the complainant and the accused clergy. Further definition is provided below.

13. Support Persons:

a. Those people who assist the complainant and the accused clergyperson through the investigative process. The role of the support person is not to speak for the person they are supporting, but to help them understand their rights within the investigative process and to be a supportive presence in any meetings.

b. CCIW maintains a pool of support persons knowledgeable in the investigative process and ethics policies from which the complainant and the accused clergyperson may choose. If the right to a support person is declined, a waiver of this right must be signed ***(Appendix #3).***

c. Support Persons cannot be members of the Committee of Ministerial Ethics, the Executive Committee of the Regional Board, or on the Response Team for the allegation. Once named the support persons shall thereafter not communicate with the assigned investigative team.

B. Types of Clergy Misconduct and Evidence of the Lack of Fitness for Ministry

1. Flagrant, repeated, or serious violations of the Ministerial Code of Ethics, and/or failure to embody the criteria for maintaining Standing in the Order of Ministry as specified in Section I.E. of the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry.
2. Violation of confidentiality
3. Failure to be truthful in information provided to the Region, congregation, or employer
4. Unauthorized use of church/employer funds, or pastoral relationships, for personal purposes
5. Continuation of an addictive behavior in the face of dire consequences; such addictions could include but are not limited to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and pornography
6. Abuses of power, including sexual abuse and harassment, or the creation of an environment where such conduct is condoned or ignored

C. Procedure

1. Any claims of clergy misconduct will be forwarded immediately to the Regional Minister (or designated staff) or the Chair of the Committee of Ministerial Ethics. When received the claim will be documented on the allegations form ***(Appendix #1)*** and shared with the CME with 3 days. The CME will determine whether the alleged conduct raises a question of

fitness for ministry; if it does, a formal process will be initiated, if it does not, the allegation and decision will be documented and filed in a procedural file.

2. Responses to Participants in the Adjudication Process
   a. Response to the complainant:
      (1) Upon receipt of an allegation of misconduct, the Regional Minister (or designated staff) will notify the complainant in writing that the allegation has been received and forwarded to the CME for review and send a copy of this policy. If the victim is a minor child, parents or guardians will be notified. Appropriate law enforcement and Child protective Services will also be notified.
      (2) If the allegation warrants a fitness review of the accused clergyperson, the complainant will be offered the appointment of a support person.
   b. Response to the accused clergy:
      (1) The Regional minister (or designated staff) and CME Chair (or designees) will advise the accused clergyperson of the allegation verbally, and provide a copy of the allegation form, the Ministerial Code of Ethics, *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*, and any related CCIW documents including this policy. While the CME reviews the allegation, the clergyperson will be cautioned to have no personal contact with the complainant(s) or victim(s) during the process.
      (2) If the allegation warrants a fitness review, the accused clergy person will be offered the appointment of a support person.
   c. Response of the Investigative Response Team:
      (1) Members of the team will meet with the complainant as soon as feasible, but no longer than 60 days, to hear further the nature of the allegation, and gather materials concerning the allegation. The Investigative Response Team may also meet with any persons whom they deem helpful discerning the truth of the matter. The written results of interview(s) and all additional materials will be forwarded by the team leader to the CME Chair and Regional Minister as part of the Procedural File.
3. Response to the Congregation or Employer

a. The interest of the accused clergyperson's employing congregation/agency in the matter is affirmed. The Regional Minister (or designated staff) will seek appropriate ways to involve the congregation's or employer's leadership in the matter, recognizing the complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved. A support person will be offered and the appropriate documentation (***Appendix #3)*** will be signed.

b. If the allegation results in a formal hearing, the Regional Minister (or designated staff) or support person will make further contact with the board of the affected congregation or the supervisor within the employing agency in order to orient them to the process which will be followed, and possible outcomes.

4. Formal Hearing

a. After the investigative phase is completed, if the CME determines that a formal hearing needs to occur, one shall be held as soon as possible (within 60 days) by the CME concerning the matter. Upon the request by the CME Chair, the accused clergyperson will now be understood as being subject of an "Official Disciplinary Review."

b. At the formal hearing, that accused clergy and the complainant will be invited to appear, although not necessarily at the same time. In addition to their appointed support persons the accused and the complainant may bring a second support person of their choosing.

c. The Regional Minister (or designated staff) will give any further written information that they deem helpful to the CME. Any written materials reviewed by the CME will also be given to the accused clergyperson.

5. Outcomes of the Formal Hearing

a. If the allegation is sustained:

(1) At the conclusion of the formal hearing, should the CME sustain the allegation, it may take a variety of actions including, but not limited to:

a. Continuing the hearing until a later date

b. Reprimanding the accused minister with a Letter of Censure

c. Suspending ministerial standing for a stated period, with the understanding that re-application may be considered after further meeting with the CME

d. Mandating counseling, with the option of requiring a waiver from the accused clergyperson allowing the CME communication to and from the counselor.

e. Other appropriate restitutions, sanctions, and growth programs
f. Revoking ministerial standing with no intention of entertaining a re-application.

(2) (4) and (5) above may be combined with (2) or (3) at the discretion of the CME

(3) Any and all actions are at the discretion of the CME. Per Section VII.2 of the *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry* the action of the CME will be communicated to the Office of Christian Vocations for the clergypersons permanent file.

(4) The Regional Minister (or designated staff) will communicate the actions of the CME to the complainant, the accused clergyperson, and the congregation/employer, in formal letters sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

b. If the allegation is NOT sustained

(1) At the conclusion of a formal hearing if the CME does not sustain the allegation, it will offer some assistance to the minister for limited counseling.

(2) The Regional Minister (or designated staff) will communicate the actions of the CME to the complainant, the accused clergyperson, and the congregation/employer, in formal letters sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(3) The Regional Minister (or designated staff), the CME Chair, and the accused clergy shall determine appropriate responses, public statements to make, and materials to be included in the regional file of the accused.

(4) Clergy may answer "No" in response to the question on Search and Call forms asking if they have ever been subject of an "Official Disciplinary Review."

D. Procedures when the Accused is a Ministerial Partner with Standing in the UCC.

1. A Disciples of Christ clergy serving in a United Church of Christ Ministerial Position

a. If an allegation of clergy misconduct is submitted against a minister of the Disciples of Christ while that minister is serving a United Church of Christ congregation or agency as an Ordained Ministerial Partner the CME will take no action until the appropriate UCC processes for handling allegations have been completed.
b. If asked, the CME will provide an observer for any formal hearings that may take place.
c. If the minister is exonerated, no further action will be taken by the CME.
d. If the allegation is sustained, the CME will receive the UCC report and determine possible action. The CME will invite an observer from the UCC to be present at the deliberation of possible action; this observer will have voice but no vote. The CME will report its decision to all appropriate individuals (***see Section C.5.a.4 above***).

2. United Church of Christ clergy serving in a Disciples of Christ Ministerial Position
   a. If an allegation of clergy misconduct is submitted against a minister of the United Church of Christ while that minister is serving a Disciples congregation or agency as an Ordained Ministerial Partner that allegation will be processed according to the procedures set forth in section C above with the following exception
   b. If the process leads to a formal hearing, a representative of the UCC will be invited to participate in that hearing. The UCC representative will have a voice but not a vote in the hearing. If the allegation is sustained, all appropriate individuals –including the appropriate UCC Association and Conference ministers –will be notified ***(see Section C.5.a.4 above).***

E. **Procedures if allegations are sustained for Disciple ministers with standing serving in denominations other than UCC.** The recommendations of that denominations ethical body will be reviewed and followed as consistent with our ethical standards and policies.

F. Procedures if a complaint is lodged against minister currently serving in CCIW but the misconduct occurred in another region.

1. The Regional Minister of CCIW will ask the Regional Minister of the region in which the alleged misconduct occurred to investigate the matter.
2. Upon the completion of that investigation the results will be sent to the Regional Minister of CCIW who will share them with the CCIW Committee on Ministerial Ethics.

3. The CCIW Committee on Ministerial Ethics will determine and apply the appropriate disciplinary action as discussed in ***Section C.5.a.1*** above.

G. Special Procedures if the Accused Minister is a Member of the Regional Staff

1. The procedures described in D will be followed, with the following specific changes:
   a. Upon receipt of an allegation of clergy misconduct, the CME Chair shall contact the Regional Moderator and together consult with the Office of General Minister and President. Thereafter a person shall be named by them to be Consultant Staff to the CME.
   b. The Consultant Staff will carry the responsibilities and duties outlined above that would ordinarily be carried out by the Regional Minister. The Consultant Staff will ordinarily be a minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with no staff relationship to CCIW.
   c. The Moderator and CME Chair shall insure that the Consultant Staff has access to all persons and documents that are needed to carry out his/her work for the Committee, and all Regional staff shall cooperate fully as requested. The Moderator may, at their discretion, grant a stipend to the Consultant Staff for this work and for support services if needed.
   d. The Moderator, CME Chair, and Consultant Staff will consult with the General Minister and President, the Chair of the General Commission on Ministry, and other regional ministers as necessary and desired. The Moderator will ordinarily serve as spokesperson for public communication regarding this matter.
   e. If a Formal Hearing is held and the allegation is sustained, the CME chair or designees shall make a report and recommendation to the Executive Committee of the Regional Board. This recommendation shall be in addition to any actions taken by the CME which shall affect ministerial standing.
   f. If the allegation is not sustained, the Moderator, the Regional Minister, the CME Chair, and the accused staff person shall determine appropriate responses, public statements to be made, and materials to be included in the regional file of the accused

H. Rights of Appeal

1. Any minister against whom an allegation of clergy misconduct is sustained may appeal the CME decision to the General Commission on Ministry, where the procedures outlined in the

section II, K of the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*, will be followed.

2. Any appeal to GCOM must be initiated at its next meeting, provided that such meeting begins no sooner than 30 days from the date of the CCIW decision. If the next meeting of GCOM begins sooner than 30 days following the date of the CCIW decision, appeal may be initiated at the following meeting.

I. Lack of Cooperation by the Accused Minister

1. In the event an accused clergy resigns their ministerial standing or refuses to be available to the CME or its Response Teams at any stage of the processes outlined in this policy, the CME may take any action it deems appropriate, including revocation of standing, after reasonable effort to secure the accused clergy's participation.
2. The CME will be the usual procedure to continue the process of resolution, even if the accused minister should resign standing or leave the ministerial position before completion of the process.
3. The CME at its discretion may report to the Office of Christian Vocations and to the clergy's congregation or employer about its action(s) in such a situation.

J. Review of Procedures

1. Every five years, the Moderator, Regional Minister, designated staff or CME Chair may appoint a team to review and update this document. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin reserves the right to update and change this policy at any point.

K. Guidelines and Principles

1. All clergy are expected to meet the criteria for the Order of Ministry as specified in Section I. C. 1. of *Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry*, and to abide by the Ministerial Code of Ethics of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. Allegations made by any person will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated
3. While the church is called to offer forgiveness to all persons, it is also called to be diligent in responding to accusations of misconduct by any person. Justice calls for corrective action, even if the accused believes their behavior innocent or unintended.
4. Dual relationships between clergy and those directly served by their ministry are strongly discouraged.

5. Sexual contact and/or sexual harassment between a minister and a congregant, client, employee of the congregation, student, intern, child or anyone with whom the minister has a professional or pastoral relationship is sinful, unethical, and unprofessional behavior.
6. Clergy accused of unethical conduct will be considered innocent until a preponderance of evidence substantiates the allegation
7. Clergy are responsible for knowing the impact of their words and actions in caring for the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority.
8. Because clergy often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or personally vulnerable, it is imperative that:
    a. Clergy be healthy psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually, so that they are less likely to be at risk of unethical conduct.
    b. Clergy have adequate preparation and education for helping those under their care. This include understanding limitations and being prepared to make referral for more specialized care.
    c. Clergy participate, at least once every three years, in training provided by the Region which provides guidance in establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries in pastoral relationships.
    d. Clergy understand that it is their professional responsibility to set appropriate boundaries and preserve the sacred trust of their office
9. This policy is not intended to avoid civil and/or criminal charges that may be made by the complainant. If civil and/or criminal charges are made, the Response Team will still conduct their investigation.
10. All matters brought before CME are ecclesial and not legal in nature, with the primary concern to determine a clergy person's fitness for ministry. The objective is to determine whether there was a breach of ministerial ethics. The presence of attorneys on behalf of the accused or the complainant at a formal hearing is inappropriate.
11. While this policy is intended to be specific, not every contingency can be anticipated. CME members acting under this policy will make decisions based on available information after careful group discernment.