Regional Elders in the Christian Church in Ohio

Final Copy Approved by the Regional Church Elders November 4, 2021

To be confirmed by the Regional Church Council at its November 5-6, 2021 Meeting

Regional Elders in the Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ) are essential and integral parts of the ministry of the Regional Church. Their ministry amplifies and extends the vital service of the Regional Church far beyond what the Regional Minister and Staff could provide. While these are volunteer positions, they nonetheless are positions with great responsibility and ministerial authority, and thus require full attention to clergy ethics and healthy boundaries as well as the pro-reconciling and anti-racism obligations required of all clergy.

Pastoral Care

Regional Elders are considered members of the pastoral ministry team of the Christian Church in Ohio, in partnership with the Regional Minister & Staff. The primary charge of this team is to provide pastoral care to clergy and congregations within their assigned District. They may do this via in-person visitation, phone calls, text messages, videoconference calls, and through the mail. Regional Elders assist Regional Staff in crisis ministry for the congregation as necessary.

Communication & Connection

Regional Elders are also critical in the exchange of information from the Regional Office to clergy and congregations in their District as well as from the clergy and congregations to the Regional Office. Regional Elders provide regular reporting to Regional Staff and offer timely communication with Regional Staff as questions, concerns and celebrations arise within the district. Regional Elders will pass along changes in information from clergy and congregations, especially updated contact information, to the Regional Office. Much of this communication is reported as part of the monthly Regional Elders Gatherings (virtually and in-person as needed) and through their monthly written reports to the Regional Minister and other Regional Elders.

Regional Elders are expected to attend District clergy meetings as a Regional Representative. While it is hoped they will ensure these meetings happen regularly, they are not responsible for leading the meetings. They may be asked to consider special assignments as necessary, including representing the Region at pastoral installation services, congregational and pastoral anniversary celebrations, clergy ordination and commissioning services, and other special ministry events.

Covenant

The Regional Minister and the Regional Staff covenant to fully support and maintain healthy communication & relationships with the Regional Elders. Likewise, the Regional Elders covenant to be supportive of the Regional Church’s ministry, mission, vision, and priorities. Regional Elders agree to have their contact information be made available on the Region’s website and provided to clergy and congregations.

As an expression of that covenant, the Regional Minister and Staff will communicate with the clergy and congregations the need for preaching honorariums, out-of-pocket reimbursements, and mileage reimbursement whenever Regional Elders are called upon to either lead worship or attend special assignments.
Regional Elders, in close conversation with the Regional Minister & Regional Church Council, will partner with the Regional Minister to address whenever clergy are out of covenant with the larger church. Likewise, Regional Elders will partner with the Regional Minister & Regional Church Council to address concerns with congregations who might be pressured to break covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**Regional Elders and Search & Call**

Regional Elders are an integral part of the Search & Call process in assisting the Regional Minister in helping serve our congregations and clergy during this critical time in their faith journey. The Regional Elder makes the first contact with a congregation that is undergoing a pastoral transition. Information the Regional Elder might secure to assist the process:

- What is the timeline of the current pastor and if there will be a farewell service or celebration?
- Has a transitional committee or search committee been named and who the committee chair is?
- Gather the names and emails of transition/search committee.
- Find out what position is being sought (Interim? Associate? Pastor?)
- Find out if the open pastoral position will be part or full-time.
- Overall timeline the congregation has in mind (this may change in conversation with the Regional Minister).
- Find out if a meeting schedule has been determined.

All of the above will be reported to the Regional Minister who then engages the committee and leads the Search & Call training.

Other assistance the Regional Elders can provide in the Search & Call process:

- Discern & pray about possible candidates.
- Be present at and participate in the installation service.

**Organization**

Following a vacancy, new Regional Elders will be nominated by the current Regional Elders, in consultation with the Regional Minister who will invite the new Regional Elder to join the group. All Regional Elders will be confirmed by the Regional Church Council. One Regional Elder will be chosen by the group to represent the Regional Elders at the Regional Church Council and another Regional Elder will be chosen by the group to lead the monthly meetings, in partnership with the Regional Minister. All Regional Elders will be invited annually to renew their commitment.

**Thanksgiving**

The Christian Church in Ohio celebrates the presence, faithfulness, commitment, and service of these vital leaders in our Regional Church Ministry. And in the words of Hebrews 13:7: “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”