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### A Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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# A Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

(Adopted at Kansas City, Missouri, 1968. Included here for information only)

## OUTLINE

### Preamble

#### I. Name

#### II. Membership and Participation

#### III. Christian Church in the United States and Canada

- A. The General Assembly
- B. The General Board
- C. The Administrative Committee of the General Board
- D. Officers
- E. Administrative Units
- F. Nominations and Elections

#### IV. Christian Church in Regions

- A. Nature and Purpose
- B. Membership and Participation
- C. Functions
- D. Shape and Boundaries
- E. Structure and Staff

#### V. Christian Church in Congregations

- A. Recognized Congregations
- B. Rights and Responsibilities
- C. Representation

#### VI. Ministry

#### VII. Revisions and Amendments

#### Ascription

## FOREWORD

*The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) manifests itself in free and voluntary relationships at congregational, regional and general levels. Each manifestation, with reference to the function for which it is uniquely responsible, is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority, rights and responsibilities.*

*In this connection, it is important in considering the Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to remember the differences in the nature of the material which it includes.*

*Article III describes the general organization of the Christian Church in the United States and Canada and the material is largely in the nature of organizational detail for the widest representative manifestation of the church.*

*In contrast, the material under Article IV (describing the Christian Church in Regions) and Article V (describing the Christian Church in Congregations) is largely in terms of principles, with relatively less organizational detail. Such principles as are presented reflect the historic and present experience of congregations and state and area organizations. Organizational details relevant to the internal administration of regions and congregations*

*are not provided in the Provisional Design because such decisions belong primarily to each region and to each congregation. Such organizational detail as is presented deals mainly with the relationships of regions and congregations to each other and to the general structures of the Christian Church in the United States and Canada.*

## PREAMBLE

- 1 As members of the Christian Church, we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and savior of the world. In his name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to mankind. We rejoice in God our Father, maker of heaven and earth, and in the covenant of love by which he has bound us to himself. Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God. In the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit we are joined to one another in brotherhood and in obedience to Christ. At the table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving his saving acts and his presence. Within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture. In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God, that we may serve him whose kingdom has no end. Blessing, glory and honor be to him forever. Amen.
- 2 Within the whole family of God on earth, the church appears wherever believers in Jesus Christ are gathered in his name. Transcending all barriers within the human family such as race and culture, the church manifests itself in ordered communities of disciples bound together for worship, for fellowship and for service, and in varied structures for mission, witness and mutual discipline, and for the nurture and renewal of its members. The nature of the church, given by Christ, remains constant through the generations; yet in faithfulness to its mission it continues to adapt its structures to the needs and patterns of a changing world. All dominion in the church belongs to Jesus Christ, its Lord and head, and any exercise of authority in the church on earth stands under his judgment.
- 3 Within the universal body of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) manifests itself organizationally in free and voluntary relationships at congregational, regional and general levels. Each manifestation, with reference to the function for which it is uniquely responsible, is characterized by its integrity, self-government, authority, rights and responsibilities. In the United States of America and in Canada, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),<sup>1</sup> hereinafter generally referred to as the "Christian Church," is identifiable by its tradition, name, institutions and relationships. The Christian Church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and constantly seeks in all its actions to be obedient to his authority.
- 4 In order that the Christian Church through free and voluntary relationships may faithfully express the ministry of Christ made known through scripture, may provide comprehensiveness in witness, mission and service, may furnish means by which congregations may fulfill their ministries with faithfulness in Christian stewardship, may assure both unity and diversity, and may advance responsible ecumenical relationships, as a response to God's covenant, we commit ourselves to one another in adopting this provisional design for the Christian Church (hereinafter referred to as "this design").
- 5 In keeping with this design the Christian Church shall: establish a General Assembly, a General Board and an Administrative Committee of the General Board; provide for such administrative units as may be required; provide for and act in and through related regional manifestations (hereinafter referred to as "regions"); establish, receive and nurture congregations; define procedures for the ordering of its ministry; develop or recognize new forms of ministries for mission, education and service; provide for appropriate consultation and interim procedures whereby existing organizations may make any necessary transition within the provisions of this design; and seek to provide for continuing renewal and reformation.

## I. NAME

- 6 The name of this body shall be CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST).

<sup>1</sup>Christian Churches in Canada and the United States have long enjoyed cordial cooperative relationships across national boundaries, and this history confirms the foregoing statement. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada will be related to the General Assembly both through congregations and through the All-Canada Committee. The Christian Church in Canada may take the initiative in relating itself to any and all Canadian and world ecumenical and interdenominational bodies.

## II. MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

- 7 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 thereby holds membership in the Christian Church in his region and in the Christian Church in the United States and Canada.
- 8 Regions may develop procedures of recognition whereby other persons and groups who support the purposes of the Christian Church may participate in its regional and general work.

## III. CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

- 9 The Christian Church manifests itself in the United States and Canada through a general organization.

### A. The General Assembly

- 10 The general representative body of the Christian Church shall be the General Assembly. In all of its worship, deliberation and work, the General Assembly shall seek to manifest the wholeness and unity of the Christian Church within the one body of Christ.
- 11 All members of the Christian Church who register for the General Assembly shall have all privileges of the Assembly except that voting privileges shall be limited to the following: (a) Voting representatives from congregations. Each congregation of the Christian Church shall be entitled to have two voting representatives, plus one additional voting representative for each 500 participating members or major fraction thereof over the first 500.<sup>2</sup> These voting representatives from congregations shall be in addition to persons holding the office of ordained minister.
  - (b) Voting representatives from regions. Each region shall be entitled to have one voting representative for each 3,000 participating members or major fraction thereof within the region. Each region shall have a minimum of three voting representatives. These voting representatives from regions shall be in addition to persons holding the office of ordained minister. The voting representatives from each region shall include both men and women.<sup>3</sup>
  - (c) The ordained ministers who have ministerial standing in the Christian Church in accordance with the policies established by the General Assembly (see paragraphs 98 and 99).
  - (d) Members of the Christian Church not otherwise voting members who are the chief administrative officers of institutions and general boards which are recognized by the General Assembly.
  - (e) Members of the General Board not otherwise voting members.
- 12 Voting members of the General Assembly shall serve from the beginning of one General Assembly to the beginning of the next General Assembly. No person shall have more than one vote in the General Assembly, and no person shall vote *in absentia* or by proxy.
- 13 Members of churches historically related to the Christian Church from nations and territories other than the United States and Canada, upon invitation of the chair, may have the privileges of the floor of the General Assembly except vote.
- 14 The General Assembly shall plan and conduct Assembly programs for worship, for the education of its members and for the transaction of business. In organizing for business the General Assembly shall receive and act upon proposed program and policy, reports and resolutions, and other items of business duly referred to it as hereinafter provided; elect officers of the Christian Church; elect the General Board members for which it is responsible; and elect the members of division boards. The General Assembly shall make provision and approve procedures for the financial support of the Christian Church and for its administrative units. The General Assembly shall determine the basis of cooperative relationships of the Christian Church with other religious bodies, organizations and agencies, and shall be responsible for authorizing unity and union conversations,

<sup>2</sup>Congregations with membership up to 750 will have two voting representatives; 751-1,250 will have three; 1,251-1,750 will have four; 1,751-2,250 will have five; 2,251-2,750 will have six; etc.

<sup>3</sup>Congregations and regions may name alternates to replace their voting representatives in 11(a) and 11(b) who are unable to attend.

consultations and negotiations with other Christian communions. (The Christian Church in Canada in consultation with the appropriate general units of the Christian Church shall be responsible for matters pertaining to the ecumenical and Christian unity concerns of national bodies in Canada.)

- 15 Regular meetings of the General Assembly shall be held every second year at a time and place to be fixed by the General Assembly. Under extraordinary circumstances the General Board may call special meetings of the General Assembly.
- 16 The General Assembly shall have such committees as it may deem necessary, including but not limited to: Credentials Committee, which shall certify that voting representatives have been properly accredited; Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall serve as the business committee during the General Assembly; Assembly Program and Arrangements Committee; and Assembly Time and Place Committee. These committees shall be elected by the General Board on the recommendation of the Special Nominating Committee of the General Board.
- 17 All items of business to be considered by the General Assembly, except in cases of emergency, 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 or administrative unit of the Christian Church (or by the representative governing board of any such body). Such items of business must be filed through the office of the general minister and president at least 120 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly in order to allow sufficient time for the General Board to review and refer them with appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly. All items of business shall be circulated among the congregations and regions by the office of the general minister and president at least 60 days in advance of the General Assembly meeting.
- 18 An item of business may be considered an emergency if its content is of such nature that it could not have been regularly filed 120 days prior to the Assembly. Such items of business may be filed when submitted by ten or more voting representatives from not less than five congregations to the Committee on Reference and Counsel, which shall decide whether such items are emergencies and, if so, make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly as to their disposition.
- 19 The General Assembly shall authorize a commission under the General Board to prepare a constitution for the Christian Church based upon the principles set forth in this design. When a proposed constitution has been prepared and recommended by the General Assembly, it shall be sent to the congregations, regional bodies, and general organizations for study. The General Assembly shall declare the constitution for the Christian Church adopted and in force when it has been approved by two-thirds of the regional bodies, two-thirds of the general organizations, and by two-thirds of the voting members of the General Assembly present and voting.
- 20 Pending the adoption of a constitution, a quorum for the transaction of business by the General Assembly shall be 40% of the voting members certified by the Credentials Committee as registered and present at the Assembly. If a quorum is not present at any business session, matters to be considered will be referred to the next business session. If a quorum is not present in the final business session, matters which were to be considered shall be referred to the General Board. The General Board may take interim action within established policy of the General Assembly, subject in all matters to a review of its action by the next subsequent General Assembly.

#### B. The General Board

- 21 The General Assembly shall establish a smaller deliberative body responsible to the General Assembly which shall be called the General Board. Under broad policies determined by the General Assembly, the General Board shall receive, review and refer to the General Assembly with appropriate recommendations all items of business presented from any unit of the Christian Church as provided in paragraph 17; establish the procedures whereby all units of the Christian Church may engage in joint planning for its total program of work and witness; review and evaluate the general program of the Christian Church, in accordance with its recognized mission, and make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly; receive and initiate proposed policy to be referred with recommendation to the General Assembly for action; establish procedures for continual renewal and structural reform; consult and confer with staff members in consideration of matters under review and evaluation; elect the members of an Administrative Committee; elect the governing bodies of administrative units for which it is responsible (see paragraphs 49-50); and elect the committees of the General Assembly.

- 22 Between meetings of the General Assembly, the General Board may take interim action within established policy of the General Assembly in behalf of the Christian Church, subject in all matters to a review of its action by the subsequent General Assembly.
- 23 The General Board shall be elected from the General Assembly and consist of members elected for terms of four years. Such elected members shall include laymen, laywomen and ministers, not more than one-half nor less than one-third of whom shall be ministers. They shall be elected in the following manner:<sup>4</sup>
- (a) From among the voting membership of the immediately previous General Assembly each region shall elect from that region one member of the General Board for every 10,000 participating members or major fraction thereof within the region. There shall be at least one such member elected by each region.
- (b) From among the voting membership of the immediately previous General Assembly, the General Nominating Committee shall nominate an equal number of members of the General Board for election by the General Assembly.
- (c) In addition, if necessary to provide representation for the various groups and concerns within the Christian Church which may not otherwise be represented, the General Nominating Committee may nominate up to ten members-at-large who are not from the voting membership of the General Assembly for election to the General Board by the General Assembly.
- (d) Persons serving on the Administrative Committee who are not otherwise on the General Board shall be voting members of the General Board. In addition, the chief administrative officer of each division, of each other administrative unit for central administrative functions, and each regional minister shall be a member *ex officio* of the General Board without vote.
- 24 Members of the General Board shall begin their terms of service on July 1 following their election and shall serve until their successors have been elected and qualified. Elected members of the General Board who have served two full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until one biennium has elapsed.
- 25 Regular meetings of the General Board shall be held annually at a time and place to be fixed by the General Board, except that the meeting in the year in which the General Assembly shall convene shall be held not more than 90 days nor less than 60 days prior to the beginning of the regular meeting of the General Assembly. One-half of the voting membership of the General Board shall constitute a quorum. Special meetings of the General Board may be called under extraordinary circumstances by the Administrative Committee.

### C. The Administrative Committee of the General Board

- 26 There shall be an Administrative Committee of the General Board elected by the General Board. This Administrative Committee shall consist of 40 members, at least 30 of whom shall be from the voting membership of the General Board. In addition, the officers of the Christian Church (the moderator, the two vice-moderators, the general minister and president, the secretary and the treasurer) shall be members *ex officio*. The parliamentarian shall be a member *ex officio* without vote.
- 27 The Administrative Committee shall meet at least three times each year and shall be organized to carry out its work and to implement policies and actions of the General Board, and shall assume and discharge such other duties and responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Board.
- 28 The Administrative Committee shall provide for long range planning for the work of the Christian Church, and shall forward all resulting proposals for review and evaluation by the General Board and disposition by the General Assembly. It shall promote and coordinate the activities of the several administrative units to assure that such actions conform to the policies of the Christian Church.
- 29 The Administrative Committee shall fill vacancies in offices elected by the General Assembly, subject to ratification by the General Assembly at its next regular meeting. It shall submit to the General Assembly through the General Board any recommendations it may deem useful for the development of the effectiveness and efficiency of the life, mission, work and organization of the Christian Church.

<sup>4</sup>Recognizing the limited experience with the representative principle at the general level, the Commission on Brotherhood Re-structure suggests that the matter of representation in both the General Assembly and the General Board be under continued study in the light of experience under the provisions of this design.

- 30 In consultation with the various regions and general units of the Christian Church, the Administrative Committee shall be responsible for recommending through the General Board to the General Assembly, adequate and acceptable budgetary and promotional procedures for financing the various regions and general units of the Christian Church.
- 31 Such budgetary and promotional procedures shall reflect the fact that while congregations are responsive to the needs of general and regional programs established with the participation of the congregations' representatives in the general and regional assemblies, all financial support of the general and regional programs of the Christian Church by congregations and individuals is voluntary.
- 32 Pending the development and approval of new plans and procedures to be mutually determined, existing practices and agreements shall be continued.
- 33 The Administrative Committee shall prepare the business agenda for the meetings of the General Board, and appoint committees not otherwise provided for. Until the General Assembly provides other procedures, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by individual members, ministers, congregations, regions or boards to the Administrative Committee which shall handle such matters under policies to be established by the General Assembly.
- 34 Twenty members of the Administrative Committee shall be elected by the General Board just prior to each biennial meeting of the General Assembly for a term of four years to begin at the time of their election. An elected member of the Administrative Committee who has served two full consecutive terms shall not be eligible for re-election until one biennium has elapsed. No more than two persons from any one region shall serve simultaneously as elected members of the Administrative Committee. To achieve an adequate representation of both lay persons and ministers, not more than one-half nor less than one-third of the Administrative Committee shall be ministers.
- 35 One-half of the membership of the Administrative Committee shall constitute a quorum.

#### D. Officers

- 36 The Christian Church shall have two kinds of officers—voluntary (non-salaried) officers of the General Assembly, and general (salaried) officers of the Christian Church.
  1. Officers of the General Assembly
    - 37 The officers of the General Assembly shall be a moderator, a first vice-moderator, a second vice-moderator, 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 two years.
    - 38 The moderator shall preside at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board and the Administrative Committee, and assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies. The vice-moderators shall assist the moderator in presiding at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board and the Administrative Committee, and assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies. The moderator and vice-moderators shall normally include a minister, a layman and a laywoman. These officers shall take office upon the adjournment of the regular meeting of the General Assembly in which they are elected and hold office through the next regular meeting or until their successors have been elected and installed.
    - 39 A parliamentarian shall be appointed by the moderator with the approval of the Administrative Committee, who shall serve during the business sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board and the Administrative Committee, advising on parliamentary questions which may arise. Unless otherwise provided, all proceedings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.
  2. General Officers of the Christian Church.
    - 40 The general officers of the Christian Church shall be a general minister and president, a secretary, a treasurer and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. The general officers shall be salaried personnel of the Christian Church.
    - 41 The general minister and president shall be concerned for the pastoral care and nur-

ture of the Christian Church. As the chief executive officer of the Christian Church, the general minister and president shall preside over meetings of the general staff and shall have voice but not vote in the meetings of the administrative units of the Christian Church. In ways appropriate to the office, the general minister and president shall represent the Christian Church in interchurch relations and in ecumenical circles or appoint a representative. The general minister and president shall be elected by the General Assembly upon nomination by the Administrative Committee through the General Board for a term of six years and may be re-elected. The constitution of the Christian Church shall establish the age of retirement and provide procedures for recall. In the nomination and election of the general minister and president, a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the Administrative Committee, the General Board and the General Assembly shall be required. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the general minister and president, the Administrative Committee shall name the person to fill the vacancy until the next General Assembly.

- 42 The secretary shall keep the record of the proceedings of the General Assembly, the General Board and the Administrative Committee, and serve as the corporation secretary as may be required by law and perform such other duties as may be assigned to this office. The treasurer shall be the financial officer of the Christian Church and shall perform such duties as may be assigned to this office. The secretary and the treasurer shall be employed by the Administrative Committee on recommendation of the general minister and president.

### E. Administrative Units

- 43 The General Assembly, upon recommendation of the General Board, shall establish or recognize by constitution or contract administrative units to meet responsibilities of the Christian Church in its witness, mission and service to the world.

#### 1. Major Administrative Units

- 44 Major administrative units responsible for broad areas of work shall be called divisions. The General Assembly shall determine the general responsibilities of the divisions, which may be incorporated, subject to the approval of their charters or articles of incorporation by the General Board.
- 45 The members of each division board shall be elected by the General Assembly in a manner to be determined by the General Assembly when that division is established or recognized. The responsibilities, manner of election and tenure of office for the members of division boards shall be determined for each division with reference to its purpose and function and shall be specified in the constitution or bylaws of the Christian Church.
- 46 Each division board shall elect its officers and staff, except for the chief administrative officer who shall be elected by the General Board upon nomination by the respective division boards in consultation with the general minister and president as provided in paragraph 61.
- 47 Each division board shall administer its program and financial affairs and establish or retain its bylaws and rules of procedure in accordance with provisions established by the Christian Church through the General Assembly.
- 48 Each division board shall facilitate policy decisions of the Christian Church, accounting for its work through regular reports of its plans and actions to the General Board, which shall refer them to the General Assembly with recommendations for appropriate action. Each division board shall furnish copies of the minutes of its meetings to the General Board and the Administrative Committee to enable them to exercise their responsibilities for policy making and coordinating the operation of the Christian Church.

#### 2. Other Administrative Units.

- 49 The General Assembly, upon recommendation of the General Board, may establish other administrative units to provide for the central administrative functions of the Christian Church and for specialized study and service.
- 50 The members of the governing bodies of such other administrative units shall be elected by the General Board in a manner to be determined by the General Assembly when the administrative units are established. The responsibilities, manner of election and tenure of office for the members of the governing bodies shall be determined with reference to their purpose and function and shall be specified in the constitution

or bylaws of the Christian Church. Chief administrative officers of these administrative units shall be elected by the General Board upon nomination by the respective unit in consultation with the general minister and president as provided in paragraph 61. Special temporary administrative units may be established for stated periods of time.

- 51 Such other administrative units shall report their plans and actions to the General Board through the Administrative Committee. A review of the reports shall be referred to the General Assembly by the General Board with recommendation for appropriate action.

### 3. Interim Procedures

- 52 Upon adoption of this design, all general agencies, associations, institutions and societies which report to the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) shall be recognized as provisional units of the Christian Church. Wherever appropriate the provisional units will be called upon to bring their constitutions and bylaws into harmony with this design. The General Board shall initiate procedures for establishing administrative units of the Christian Church under policies to be approved by the General Assembly in keeping with the principles set forth in this article. To further the process of establishing the administrative units of the Christian Church, these agencies, associations, institutions and societies may be called upon to reassign staff, budget and functions for this purpose. During the period of interim coordination as well as in development of the administrative units of the Christian Church all existing agencies, associations, institutions and societies remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the agencies, associations, institutions and societies involved, in the light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church as expressed through the General Assembly.
- 53 On the recommendation of the Administrative Committee in consultation with existing agencies, associations, institutions and societies, the General Assembly shall establish the conditions under which such organizations may be related to the administrative units of the Christian Church. Full protection shall be given to all legal and contractual relationships, including trust and pension funds.

## F. Nominations and Elections

- 54 There shall be a General Nominating Committee consisting of 32 members elected by the General Assembly. Each biennium the Administrative Committee shall request each region to submit the names of one minister, one layman and one laywoman for possible membership on the General Nominating Committee. From these names the Administrative Committee shall nominate each biennium 16 persons, 8 ministers and 8 lay persons, for election by the General Assembly to a term of four years on the General Nominating Committee. Nominations for members of the General Nominating Committee may also be made from the floor of the General Assembly. The General Nominating Committee shall be widely representative and not more than one member shall be from any one region. A member of the General Nominating Committee may serve only one full term.
- 55 At the first choosing of the General Nominating Committee, the Board of Directors of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) shall act instead of the Administrative Committee, and shall nominate 32 persons, 16 ministers and 16 lay persons, from the names submitted by the regions, for election to the General Nominating Committee. The General Assembly shall elect 8 ministers and 8 lay persons for a term of one year and 8 ministers and 8 lay persons for a term of three years on the General Nominating Committee.
- 56 The General Nominating Committee shall accept suggestions from throughout the Christian Church 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.
- 57 The General Nominating Committee shall select one nominee for each of the following offices to be elected by the General Assembly: moderator, the two vice-moderators, and members of the General Board whose election is vested in the General Assembly as provided in paragraph 23. In addition, the General Nominating Committee shall present to the General Assembly the nominees for election to membership on the various division boards in the manner specified when the divisions are established or recognized. The report of the General Nominating Committee shall be sent to the congregations and regions at least 60 days prior to the meeting of the General As-

- sembly. Provision shall be made for nominations from the floor of the General Assembly.
- 58 The office of the general minister and president shall provide staff and counsel for the General Nominating Committee.
- 59 The General Board shall elect from its membership a Special Nominating Committee consisting of ten persons, five ministers and five lay persons, not more than two of whom are currently members of the Administrative Committee, to select the nominees for positions whose election is vested in the General Board, including the elected members of the Administrative Committee; members of any governing bodies of administrative units other than division boards; and members of General Assembly committees.
- 60 The general minister and president of the Christian Church shall be elected by the General Assembly upon nomination by the Administrative Committee through the General Board. In the nomination and election of the general minister and president a two-thirds vote of those present and voting in each of the Administrative Committee, the General Board and the General Assembly shall be required. In all other elections a majority of the votes cast shall elect.
- 61 The General Board shall elect the chief administrative officers of the various administrative units. The nominees for the chief administrative officers of the various administrative units shall be nominated by their respective governing bodies in consultation with the general minister and president.
- 62 At the first choosing of the membership of the General Board and the Administrative Committee, one-half of the members shall be elected for terms of two years and one-half for terms of four years. Thereafter, all members shall be elected for terms of four years, except for such *ex officio* members as may be provided for. Similar arrangements for the election of the boards or governing bodies of the various administrative units shall be specified when they are established or recognized.

#### IV. CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN REGIONS

- 63 The Christian Church also manifests itself organizationally in geographic units called regions. The following principles shall guide the Christian Church in the development of its regions.

##### A. Nature and Purpose

- 64 The primary factor by which the church determines the development of its regional expressions is the character of the ministry to which Christ calls his people in their mutual commitment to him and to one another.
- 65 The purpose of the Christian Church in regions is twofold: (1) to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, witness and service among the people and social structures of the region; and (2) 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 world-wide mission and witness of the whole church.
- 66 Identifiable geographic, cultural, sociological and political areas provide boundaries which the church may use to establish its own regional structures (1) by which the church carries out regionally its ministry of mission and nurture, (2) in which congregations and ministers find their primary relationships of mutual support and encouragement, (3) which provide opportunities for regional fellowship, worship and assembly for the consideration of matters of mutual concern, and (4) which serve to relate the three manifestations of the church—local, regional and general—to each other in the functioning of the whole church.

##### B. Membership and Participation

- 67 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 thereby holds membership in the Christian Church in his region.
- 68 Regions may develop procedures of recognition whereby other persons and groups who support the purposes of the Christian Church may participate in its regional and general work.

### C. Functions

- 69 Regions of the Christian Church perform in their particular areas the function of the church related to their two-fold purpose of mission and nurture.
- 70 1. *Mission*. In fulfilling the mission of the church in their areas, 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 role 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.
- 71 2. *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 certify the standing of ministers and provide help, counsel and pastoral care to ministers and congregations in such matters as: ordination, licensing, placement of ministers, establishment and dissolution of pastoral relationships, and installations of ministers. Regions seek to supply a ministry for congregations without full-time pastoral services and offer counsel and assistance in cases of difficulties between ministers and congregations.
- 72 As an integral part of the whole church, regions witness to the unity of the Christian Church by calling congregations to an awareness of their opportunities and responsibilities beyond local concerns. They also help to relate congregations to the total program of the whole church. By calling the general manifestation of the church to an awareness of the needs both of congregations and of regions, the regions help to relate the general manifestation to the life and work of congregations.

### D. Shape and Boundaries

- 73 The shape and boundaries of regions of the Christian Church reflect their primary purpose of mission and nurture. Regions may vary in size and shape as determined by such criteria as: the number and location of members of the Christian Church and existing congregations; the recognition of existing or emerging functional regions unified around such matters as finance, transportation facilities, communications media, employment and educational developments; and the needs and resources of the regions. It is recognized that in response to the changing imperatives of mission and the conditions of human life, new manifestations of the church may emerge in the process of developing the shape and boundaries of the regions of the Christian Church.
- 74 Upon adoption of this design, existing state and area organizations shall be recognized as provisional regions of the Christian Church. Wherever appropriate they will be called upon to take any necessary steps to bring their constitutions and bylaws into harmony with this design.
- 75 Upon adoption of this design the General Board shall initiate procedures for reorganization of existing state and area organizations as regions of the Christian Church under policies to be approved by the General Assembly in keeping with the principles set forth in this design.
- 76 During the period of interim coordination as well as in the development of any new regional boundaries, existing state and area organizations shall remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the states and areas involved, in the light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church as expressed through the General Assembly.
- 77 The constitution and bylaws of the Christian Church shall reflect the principles set forth in this design, the results of studies now in process, and the experience gained in the reorganization of state and area organizations as related to shape and boundaries.

### E. Structure and Staff

- 78 Regions develop their particular structures and organize their boards, departments and committees for the most effective fulfillment of their ministry and mission. Regions secure or retain their charters, adopt their constitutions and bylaws, and formulate their declarations of covenantal relationship, consistent with the principles of this design. With due regard for the welfare of the other manifestations 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 from the congregations.

- 79 Regions call regional ministers as their spiritual and administrative leaders and to be 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. Regions employ other regional staff as required to meet their responsibilities in mission and nurture.
- 80 Regions are represented in the General Assembly as provided in Paragraph 11. Items of business for consideration by the General Assembly may be submitted by regions by filing such items with the General Board through the office of the general minister and president at least 120 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly. Regions receive from the office of the general minister and president a copy of all items of business to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance.
- 81 Regions are responsible for electing members to the General Board as provided in paragraph 23: each region elects from among the voting membership of the immediately previous General Assembly from that region one member of the General Board for every 10,000 participating members or major fraction thereof within the region. There shall be at least one such member elected to the General Board by each region. In addition, the regional minister shall be a member *ex officio* of the General Board without vote.
- 82 In the selection of the General Nominating Committee as provided in paragraph 54, regions submit to the Administrative Committee each biennium names of persons for possible membership on the General Nominating Committee. Each region submits the name of one minister, one layman and one laywoman. From such names submitted by all the regions, the Administrative Committee shall nominate a General Nominating Committee for election by the General Assembly.
- 83 In consultation with the various regions and general units of the Christian Church, the Administrative Committee shall be responsible for recommending through the General Board to the General Assembly, adequate and acceptable budgetary and promotional procedures for financing the various regions and general units of the Christian Church. Pending the development and approval of new plans and procedures to be mutually determined, existing practices and agreements shall be continued.
- 84 Until the General Assembly provides other procedures, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by regions to the Administrative Committee which shall handle such matters under policies to be established by the General Assembly.

## V. CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN CONGREGATIONS

- 85 The Christian Church manifests itself in congregations, both in the historic form of the local church and in new corporate structures for mission, worship and service which the Christian Church may establish or recognize.

### A. Recognized Congregations

- 86 Upon adoption of this design, all congregations then listed in the latest Year Book of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) shall be recognized congregations of the Christian Church. Thereafter, other congregations desiring recognition or congregations desiring to withdraw from recognition in the Christian Church, shall follow established procedures for Year Book listing.<sup>5</sup> Congregations which follow the pro-

<sup>5</sup>The principles currently operative were adopted by the Los Angeles Assembly of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ):

"1. The local church seeking listing will take congregational action expressing its desire and intention to be a part of the fellowship of the brotherhood of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ).

"2. Through the board of its state or area organization, the congregation then will make known to the International Convention its desire to be a part of the fellowship of the brotherhood and to have this affiliation recorded in the Year Book.

"3. In ascertaining the congregation's desire, the state or area board will either take note that such a declaration is included in the church's charter, constitution, by-laws, articles of incorporation or other indication of desire to fellowship with the brotherhood, or obtain a formal notarized statement from the congregation.

"4. The state or area organization will endorse the request for listing and this endorsement will be attested by the chief executive.

"Once a congregation has been listed, it can be omitted from the Statistical Reports only after the Year Book office has received a notarized statement of congregational action requesting removal endorsed by the state or area office. The congregation's formal request not to be listed will be kept in the Year Book office and a copy will be provided for the state or area organization to which the congregation should be related." (Excerpts from Resolution No. 40, 1962 Los Angeles Assembly)

In a congregation's action to withdraw it shall be understood that "endorsed by the state or area office" shall mean a certification of the congregation's notification of its action only.

cedures for listing after the publication of the latest Year Book and are recorded in the Year Book office shall also be recognized congregations.

### B. Rights and Responsibilities

- 87 In adopting this design the Christian Church affirms that congregations in their freedom in Christ have both rights and responsibilities. As part of the Christian Church congregations share creatively in its total mission of witness and service. Equally, the Christian Church in its general and regional manifestations sustains its congregations through its commitment to their welfare and needs. Thus, concern for the integrity of each manifestation is shared and witness is given to the inter-relatedness of the whole church.
- 88 Among the rights recognized and safeguarded to congregations are the right: to manage their affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; to adopt or retain their names and charters or constitutions and bylaws; to determine in faithfulness to the gospel their practice with respect to the basis of membership; to own, control and incur 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 in forming the corporate judgment of the Christian Church.
- 89 Among the responsibilities by which congregations voluntarily demonstrate their mutual concern for the mission and witness of the whole church are the responsibility: 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 such as race and culture; 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; to choose voting representatives to the general and regional assemblies; and to seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other churches of the community and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.
- 90 While congregations are responsive to the needs of general and regional programs established with the participation of the congregations' representatives in the general and regional assemblies, all financial support of the general and regional programs of the Christian Church by congregations and individuals is voluntary.

### C. Representation

- 91 (1) Congregations are represented in the General Assembly by voting representatives of their choosing. Each congregation is entitled to be represented in the General Assembly by two voting representatives, plus one additional voting representative for each 500 participating members or major fraction thereof over the first 500. These voting representatives shall be in addition to its ordained ministers who are voting members as provided in paragraph 11(c). (2) Items of business for consideration by the General Assembly may be submitted by congregations by filing such items with the General Board through the office of the general minister and president at least 120 days in advance of a meeting of the General Assembly. Congregations receive from the office of the general minister and president a copy of all items of business to be considered by the General Assembly at least 60 days in advance. (3) Congregations are represented in their regional assemblies according to the provisions of the constitutions and bylaws of their respective regions.
- 92 Participating through their voting representatives in the general and regional assemblies, of which they are a part, congregations and individuals in the exercise of their rights and responsibilities and in the fulfillment of their ministries 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. Until the General Assembly provides other procedures, matters of grievance and appeal may be referred by congregations and individual members to the Administrative Committee which may handle such matters under policies to be established by the General Assembly.

### VI. MINISTRY

- 93 The fundamental ministry within the church is that of Jesus Christ. He calls his church to participate in this ministry.

- 94 By virtue of membership in the church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people. Within the corporate ministry, each Christian fulfills his own calling as a servant of Christ sent into the world to minister. The Christian Church shall seek to provide all its members with opportunities to exercise this ministry.
- 95 In addition, the church recognizes an order of the ministry, set apart or ordained, under God, to equip the whole people to fulfill their corporate ministry. To this end, the Christian Church inducts into the order of its ministry men and women holding the following offices:
- 96 (a) The office of ordained minister, bestowed by ordination, including such persons as: pastors, associates, chaplains, ministers of Christian education and missionaries; teachers with ministerial standing; administrators and ministers serving the Christian Church beyond the local congregation and ecumenical relationships;
- 97 (b) The office of licensed minister bestowed by license and an appropriate act of dedication. Licensing permits the exercise of ministerial function in specific situations with periodic review, in such cases as the following: (1) a worker who is duly commissioned by the Christian Church to a specialized full-time church vocation; (2) a theological student who has not yet fulfilled all qualifications for ordination, but who may be authorized to serve under supervision in ministerial capacity; and (3) a person who has not fulfilled educational standards for ordination but in whom the church discerns manifest gifts for ministry and who may be licensed to serve under appropriate supervision as pastor of a particular congregation or in ministerial capacity on the mission field.
- 98 The Christian Church, through the General Assembly, shall approve general policies and criteria for the order of the ministry, including such matters as: commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christian character, theological education, ordination and licensing, ministerial standing, ministerial ethics, placement procedures, support, pensions and emergency needs, and other matters relating to the ministry of the Christian Church.
- 99 Within policies developed by the General Assembly, regions certify the standing of ministers and provide help, counsel and pastoral care to ministers and congregations in such matters as: ordination, licensing, placement of ministers, establishment and dissolution of pastoral relationships, and installations of ministers. Regions seek to supply a ministry for congregations without full-time pastoral services and offer counsel and assistance in cases of difficulties between ministers and congregations.
- 100 The Christian Church may establish such associations of ordained and licensed ministers as will enable them to express the common concerns of the ministry.
- 101 The local offices of elder, deacon and deaconess 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) An elder is authorized to exercise within the congregation which elects him or her the ministerial functions which 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 deacon or deaconess is authorized to serve in the congregation which elects him or her for periods of time which it specifies by assisting with other deacons (deaconesses) 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. These offices are also voluntary.

## VII. REVISIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 102 Revisions and amendments to this design while it is in force before the adoption of a constitution may be made by a three-fourths vote of the voting representatives of the General Assembly present and voting, providing such revision or amendment shall have been regularly filed 120 days in advance of the meeting of the General Assembly and circulated among the congregations and regions 60 days in advance of the General Assembly.

## ASCRPTION

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