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| NEW & AFFILIATING CONGREGATIONS COMMISSION |
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| Year 2020 | Formal Request for Affiliation |

This document is intended to initiate a process of discernment in order to understand together what it means to enter into and honor a covenant relationship between –*insert name of congregation here—*and the Florida Disciples Regional Church, a region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

NEW & AFFILIATING CONGREGATIONS COMMISSION

Formal Request for Affiliation

# The group currently known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (name of congregation) in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(city), \_\_\_\_\_ (state) requests affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida. We currently have no other religious affiliation with a denomination OR we are affiliated with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It is understood that if affiliation is to be granted to the congregation above by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida, a process will begin through which we will become a fully-affiliated congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It is further understood that while this process, in general, may take one to three years in duration, both Region and congregation will determine the period of time needed.

# As part of this process toward affiliation, we agree to enter into a time of discernment together with the Florida Disciples Regional Office, as delineated below:

# **the discernment process**

The process of discernment is a relational process for the purpose of engaging in prayer, study, and dialogue as to the ways of being and doing of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, and the obligations, rights, and blessings of covenantal relationship.

This affiliation discernment process involves: Identifying and assessing (1) the credentials of the pastor(s) of –*insert name of congregation here-* and (2) the congregation’s process toward affiliation, which will involve the following phases: (1) Initial; (2) Study; (3) Decision-Making; (4) Nurturing and Commitments; and (5) Recognition and Covenanting Phase.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we enter into this process…

*“…confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you (us) will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6 NRSV)*

1. Pastoral Credentialing Process.
2. The Pastor will meet with the Regional Minister to discuss standing as a Disciples minister.
3. The Chair/Moderator of the Congregation will write a letter to the Regional Minister to request that their Pastor come to the Commission on Ministry to explore becoming a Disciples minister.

Pastor and Leadership should also receive the following for reference and study:

1. The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
2. Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry
3. Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct
4. Congregational affiliation process involves five different phases as delineated below:

discernment phases

## Initial Phase:

## We (The Congregation, its governing board and pastor(s)) will meet with the Regional Minister and with the New and Affiliating Churches Congregations Commission, herein referred to as N&ACC.

## We will issue a letter signed by the Chair/Moderator of the congregation to the Florida Regional Church’s Office stating the official desire of the congregation to seek affiliation.

## We will sign the formal request form for affiliation, “Affiliation Discernment Process Request”.

## We will present document(s) verifying that we are a not-for-profit organization, including our state tax exempt certificate and our incorporation information.

## Study Phase.

## The Florida Regional Church (through the Regional Minister and the N&ACC) will lead us in the study of the history and polity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

## We will assess our theological compatibility by discussing themes such as: the centrality of Jesus Christ – *The Good Confession; The Preamble to The* Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the core values of “covenant” and “ecumenism”, and an appreciation for the theological diversity within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

## We will explore mutual expectations.

## Decision-Making Phase:

## A “process for deciding” will be agreed upon between us, the Congregation, and the Florida Region indicating the percentage of the congregational vote required to affiliate.

## We will vote on entering into covenant relationship with the Florida Region, as indicated in The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. We will then notify our decision to the Florida Region.

## Upon approval to enter the next phase, the N&ACC will recommend to the Admin Team, who then will recommend to the Region’s Leadership Council to grant us a “Congregation in Formation” (CIF) will be listed in the Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

## Nurturing and Commitments Phase.

## The N&ACC will assign an affiliated liaison to us, the Congregation.

## If we own real estate property, we will submit Title and Non-Profit status for review.

## We will amend our Constitution and By-Laws as necessary.

## We will submit copies of our Articles of Incorporation.

## A “Mission Statement” consistent with the affirmations of the “Preamble” to The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be adopted by us, the Congregation.

## We will prayerfully and financially support the work of the General Church and seek to grow toward a tithe to the Disciples Mission Fund.

## Our pastor(s) will seek(s) recognition as a minister with the Florida Regional Church, through the Commission on Ministry (COM).

## We will disclose to the Florida Regional Church our financial status/condition.

## We will commit to participate in the life and ministry of the Florida Regional Church.

## Recognition and Covenanting Phase.

## Our congregational leadership will meet with the Florida Regional Church’s Administrative Team. Together we will sign the “Covenantal Affirmations for Affiliating Congregations” document (attached below) and present before the Leadership Council.

## The Leadership Council votes to receive us, the Congregation, as a “Recognized Congregation”. [The Congregation Year Book status is also changed from “Congregation in Formation” to “Recognized Congregation.”]

## A date is set for a service of “Covenanting and Celebration.”

## We, the Congregation, are officially recognized at the next Regional Church Assembly.

Through this request, and after having evaluated the accompanying phases for affiliation discernment, we \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (congregation), express our desire to be a vital part of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is expressed through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Pastor)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Congregational Representative)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

covenantal affirmations for affiliating congregations

Having been led by God into the communion of churches known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we the leaders of the Florida Disciples Region and the leaders of (insert name of church) agree to live in covenant with all the congregations and expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Together, we will exercise the responsibilities and privileges, as well as enjoy the benefits of being Disciples.

# as a congregation:

We will support the mission of the whole church through financial contributions to the Disciples Mission Fund and Special Day Offerings.

We will participate in appropriate Regional Leadership Council, workshops, retreats and assemblies, including appointing a representative from our congregation to serve on the Leadership Council.

When possible, we will participate in events of the entire church including General Assembly, Quadrennial Assemblies for Women, and New Church Ministry Events.

We will continue to learn about what it means to be a Disciple, and help our members and participants learn about our common values.

We will pray for other Disciples congregations, leaders, and missionaries in its various expressions (local, regional and general).

We will commit to filing annual reports for the Year Book and submit them to Regional Office. Our Pastor will commit to filing annual standing forms to the Regional Office/COM, to maintain Disciples clergy standing. Our Pastor will also attend training as required, including Healthy Boundaries Training (every 5 years) and Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation (every 5 years).

We will create or modify governing documents to reflect our affiliation with the Christian Church (DOC) and to comply with local, state, and federal requirements for religious organizations.

# as a regional church:

We will work to invite and include the congregation in all workshops and assemblies.

We will seek to include congregational participants as officers and volunteers in the life and work of the Regional and General Church.

We will provide guidance when the congregation enters into periods of transition, and accompany the congregation in times of planning for the future or facing a crisis.

We will encourage other Disciples congregations to seek fellowship and relationship with you.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Pastor)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Congregational Representative)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Regional Minister)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Regional Leadership Council Chair)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_