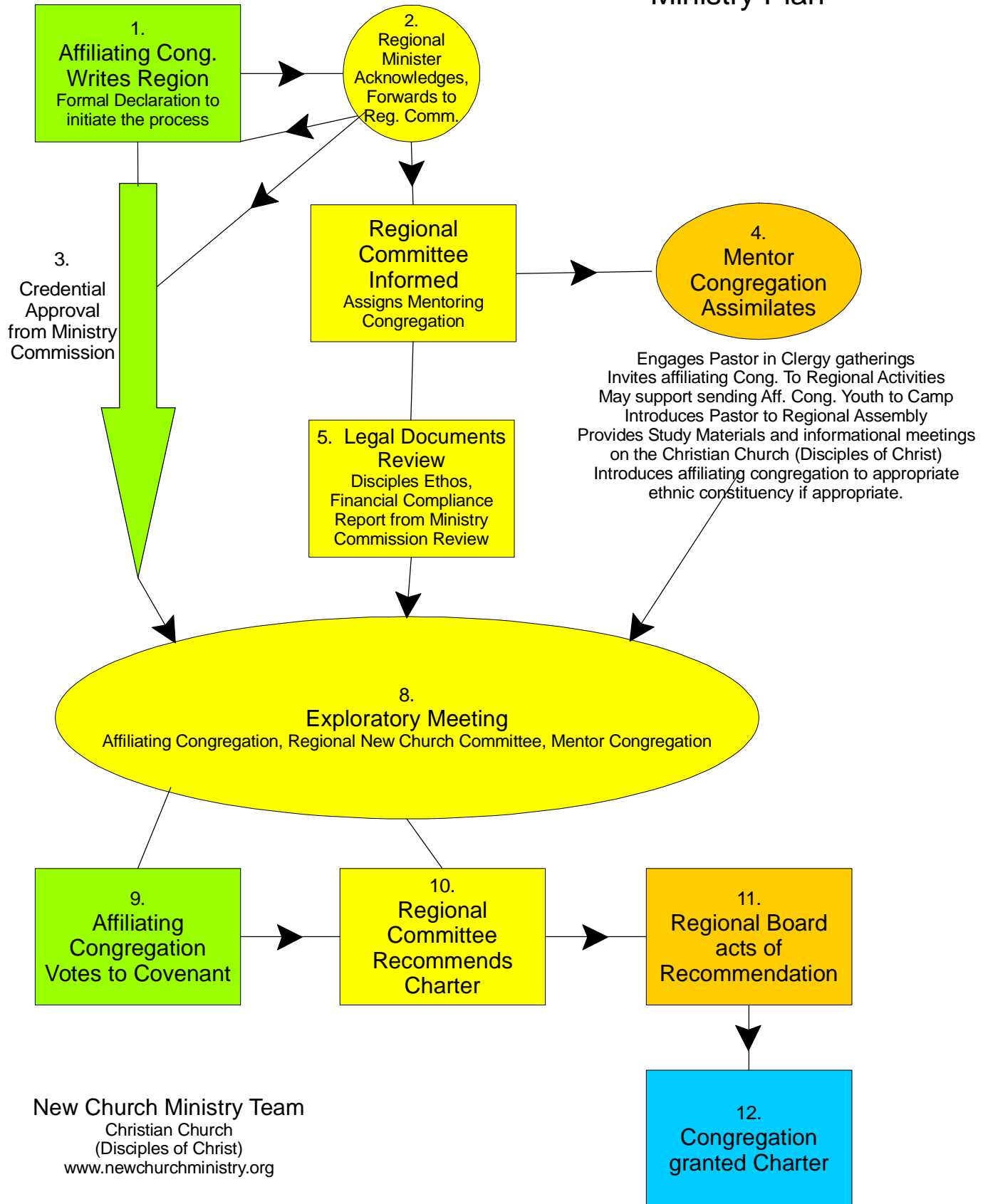


AFFILIATIONS

Congregational Affiliation Ministry Plan



Many ethnic congregations have been welcomed to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the affiliation process. These congregations often sprang up spontaneously and are often looking for a church building to nest in. That nesting can often lead to affiliation with the denomination. (See Appendix E for more discussion on the difference between nesting and renting).

Painfully, sometimes the congregation is only interested in the nesting arrangement and takes on the denominational name only until they decide to move to another building. A good affiliation process will engage the new congregation into FULL participation with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and assimilate them into the life of the church.

Affiliations are a good thing. They give us the chance to increase our diversity, while often times giving us a chance to work with groups and increase our witness. An affiliation with our first Vietnamese pastor produced 3 more Vietnamese congregations within 5 years. This obviously got our foot in the door with the 4th largest Asian population in the United States. During the writing of this document, some additional inroads have been made with Indonesian congregations. We could never have done this intentionally. These congregations are truly a gift. There are, however, large groups of people in the growing fabric of American diversity which the Disciples have yet to reach and affiliations will help our church look like the communities we serve.

As a church, we have been called to hospitality towards all people. Our church is a place of the "Welcome Table." Regional new church committees that recognize their roles in terms of hospitality instead of accountability will be successful with affiliations. Please review appendices E and F on nesting and sensitivity towards ethnic groups.

AFFILIATION PROCESS GUIDELINES

There are a few steps in the affiliation process. Regional policies generally follow these steps in some fashion.

1. A congregation seeking to affiliate with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) writes to the Region or Area indicating the desire to initiate the process. Included in that letter are as many of the following as are available:
 - Congregation's History
 - Core Values and Beliefs
 - Vision/Mission Statement
 - Reason for seeking affiliation
 - Membership lists
 - Worship Attendance records for the past year
 - Constitution or description of how the congregation is governed
 - Names of board officers
 - Financial Reports of the past 3 years
 - Current Budget
 - Names of ministerial staff and intention of staff to affiliate with Disciples of Christ
 - Biographical notes on ministerial staff
 - Congregation is listed in the Yearbook with an "A" status

2. Once this application is received, the Regional or Area Minister refers the file to the new Church Commission/Committee.
3. The ministerial staff of the affiliating congregation initiate the process of obtaining standing in the Order of Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the Regional Commission on the Ministry.
4. The New Church Committee appoints a partner congregation and a mentor, an individual leader from that congregation, to provide support and guidance throughout the affiliation process. The New Church Committee informs the affiliating congregation that a partner congregation and a mentor have been appointed for them.
5. The Committee also reviews the constitution or governing documents of the affiliating congregation to see if changes need to be made to reflect Disciples values and ways of governance.
6. The Committee works with the affiliating congregation on legal status issues, such as their Employee Identification Number, their Incorporation Papers, their Non-Profit Status.
7. The New Church Committee provides study materials for the affiliating congregation which may include the following:*

A Handbook for Today's Disciples, by Duane Cummings (available from CBP)
 A Mini-History of the Christian Church, (available from CBP)
 "A Church for Today" Video (available from Communications Ministries of the Christian Church in Indianapolis 317-713-2493)
 Materials from the Disciples Web Site (www.disciples.org)
 Sample copies and subscription forms for "Disciple World" magazine and the Regional or Area Newsletter
 Information about Disciples Mission giving opportunities

*Efforts will be made to provide materials in the language of the congregation

8. The New Church Committee and the Regional/Area Minister provide an Exploratory Session on the basic beliefs and practices of the Disciples of Christ, with a question and answer time. The three manifestations of the church are explained. The affiliating congregation is encouraged to begin supporting the mission of the wider church through BMF and Special Day Offerings.
9. The Mentor makes sure that the Partner Congregation has regular contact with the Affiliating Congregation, sharing worship and fellowship. The Partner Congregation encourages the Affiliating Congregation to participate in all the activities of the Regional and General Church, such as Regional Assemblies, Youth Camps, Women's Retreats, Men's Retreats, etc.

10. The Affiliating Congregation engages in study and discernment for at least 6 months. In accordance with the congregation's by-laws, the congregation decides to affiliate by approving and signing the "Congregation in Formation" covenant (Appendix D), and informing the Regional/Area Minister of their decision in writing.
11. The New Church Committee decides whether to make a recommendation to the Regional/Area Board that the congregation be officially acknowledged as a "Congregation in Formation" at this stage.
12. The Regional/Area Board acts on the recommendation.
13. If the Board's decision is affirmative, the congregation is given a Yearbook "Y" designation.
14. The affiliating congregation is acknowledged at Area and Regional Assemblies.

It is important to recognize that we are not talking about a one-way relationship here. It is important to learn about the congregation, its life, vision, mission and values. Nobody wants to be a part of a one-way relationship.