

**Title: Revisions to the Executive Search Model**

**Origin: Office of General Minister and President**

**Background:**

*Each general ministry shall select its officers and staff using the current Disciples search processes, as established by the General Board. Each board shall be called upon to enter into an agreement with the General Board or to include in its bylaws or rules of procedure a provision for any new chief administrative officer to be elected by its board following consultation with the General Minister and President, as provided for in paragraph 52, and with the advice and counsel of the Administrative Committee of the General Board. Following election, recognition by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be bestowed upon a new Chief Administrative Officer by the General Board in an appropriate act. (The Design, paragraph 71)*

In the Administrative Committee response to the grievance brought by the National Convocation related to the 2008 DHM Presidential Search, and the subsequent letter from the Table of Reconciliation called together as the result of the same Administrative Committee response, recommendations were made to initiate revisions to the Executive Search Model. Both responses call for the Executive Search Model to include guidelines for internal candidates (including board members) in an executive search process, to insure equity of process between internal and external candidates. Other recommendations include providing: anti-racism training for search committees, guidance on reference checks, and tools for achieving consensus.

**Recommended Action:**

The Administrative Committee authorizes the General Minister and President and the Moderator to appoint a task force to revise the current Executive Search Model, giving attention to the recommendations from the Administrative Committee and the Table of Reconciliation, to be ready for approval by the General Board when it meets in April 2012.

**Administrative Committee Response to a Grievance Brought by  
the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Related to the 2008 DHM Presidential Search**

**Introduction:** A formal grievance was brought to the Administrative Committee in response to the Search and Call process for the President of DHM, which took place in 2008. A Grievance Task Force was created and a process began that involved collecting information from persons involved with the Search and Call. The members of the Grievance Task Force of the Administrative Committee have sought to provide an interpretation and pastoral responses related to the grievance and have assumed the best for all persons involved.

### **1. Biblical Reflections**

Conflict and brokenness are part of the human community. The Biblical accounts underscore that how people of faith respond to such moments either directs us toward God's wholeness or away from it.

- A. In the Gospels, we see Jesus confronting such brokenness. He insisted that the faith community address such wounding and conflict by working toward restored relationship:

***Matthew 18:15-17a 'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; ...'***

Following upon the directions to address the brokenness within the community, Jesus offers Peter more than a legalistic understanding of reconciliation. He called for a fierce holding onto one another that included forgiving again and again to reach restored relationship:

***Matthew 18: 21-22 Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'***

- B. Shortly after the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit, the newly empowered community of faith found itself in conflict. A complaint was issued that racial/ethnic groups among the community were being treated differently:

***Acts 6:1-6 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.' What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with***

***Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.***

The community of followers did not hesitate to address the complaint and to find a way to reconciliation that met the needs of the widows with compassion and equity while continuing the ministry of preaching and prayer.

- C. In Exodus, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, reminds him that addressing concerns in the life of the community of faith is not a solitary job; it calls for the wisdom and support of the community.

***Exodus 18:13-18 The next day Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?' Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God.' Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone...."***

To be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world means we take seriously the ways the Biblical witness calls us to engage in addressing situations and individuals that have experienced injustice.

## **2. Administrative Committee Conclusions**

Each general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should make personnel decisions for their organization solely on the basis of merit and untainted by improper influences including race. Indeed, in Disciples ecclesiology and structure, self-governing general ministries select search committees and develop a search model that is meant to ensure that the process for selecting a new executive staff person achieves these important objectives. This is particularly important because the history of racial injustice in America means that interaction among different racial/ethnic persons, including European-Americans, is often marked by suspicion that racism, even unintended, is involved. As a result, search processes must be carefully crafted and meticulously followed, so that all involved have confidence in the final selection.

The Administrative Committee recognizes that a search committee must be united in its actions so that any or all personnel decisions are made on the basis of merit alone and are not affected by impermissible influences such as conflicts of interest or personal biases to name examples. The failure of a search committee to act as one or to not adhere to previously approved procedures can raise concerns and taint decisions. Concerns such as these led directly to this grievance.

Under the Design, the Administrative Committee is required to make a "final decision" about the grievance brought forward by the National Convocation against the 2008 DHM Search Committee. Therefore, we must address the specific facts regarding what occurred. We do so with full respect both for those who brought the grievance and those who are the subject of the grievance.

**A.** Additional references should not have been interviewed on behalf of the Search and Call Committee without that committee's prior approval. The change of process and procedure did not honor what had been previously discussed and decided upon. In its interview, the Convocation stated that the suggestion that DHM staff did not get along with the candidate "caused a change in the procedure of interviewing candidates' references." Our investigation reflected that some DHM staff members expressed their concerns about getting along with the candidate if the candidate were to become the DHM President. We found that these opinions of DHM staff caused the process to be changed. Furthermore, we noted that when objections to the change in the search process were made by individuals on the DHM Presidential Search Committee, these objections appear to have been ignored. In addition, members of the Search and Call Committee should not have reported internal committee proceedings to the candidate, including the reason for the candidate's non-selection. Again, as we noted above, a search committee should act as one.

When the DHM Presidential Search Committee came before the Executive Committee of DHM, there was a conflict of interest when a member of the Executive Committee was also a former applicant for the position of DHM President and had been eliminated at an earlier stage of the search. Objections were raised and there was not a consensus decision by the Search Committee to adequately address the concern.

**B.** The analysis of the search reveals that there were misunderstandings about how a search process should work. First, while a candidate's suggested references are an important starting point, a search committee is not required to obtain a candidate's approval before interviewing a reference (including internal references). Second, a search committee is not required to share what it learns from references with a candidate. Third, while it was improper for one person to consult internal references without full committee approval, there is no prohibition against consulting internal references as a general matter. It is true that the process for one candidate was different because internal references regarding this candidate were consulted. But there was only one internal DHM candidate considered, so this was the only candidate for whom there were internal DHM references.

### **3. Directives to the Office of General Minister and President**

The Administrative Committee having carefully followed the *Administrative Committee Grievance Policy* (AC10-2093) directs the Office of General Minister and President to take the following actions:

The Administrative Committee offers with a deep sense of urgency this directive to the OGMP recognizing that General Ministries in the CC (DOC) including DHM are self-governing, “administer their program and financial affairs and establish and retain by-laws.” (cf. paragraph 71, *The Design*). These recommendations are made in the spirit of accountability that should characterize the Church as people in covenant.

The General Minister and President will bring together the Minister of Reconciliation, Rev. April Johnson, and a trained and qualified professional consultant for the purpose of initiating a process of pursuing a true understanding of reconciliation among all of the individuals that were affected by the grievance situation.. This consultant should have knowledge of the church and demonstrated skills in conflict resolution.

The following persons should be invited to the process: representatives of the National Convocation who brought the grievance, including the Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation, the DHM President, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the current DHM Board of Directors, members of the 2008 DHM Presidential Search Committee and any other individuals that the General Minister and President deems appropriate.

The group of individuals named above would come together for face-to-face meeting(s). The costs and logistics required by an in-person meeting would be balanced and covered by the organizational groups involved (i.e. the National Convocation, and Disciples Home Missions (DHM)).

It is understood that the process, as guided by the consultant together with the involved parties, will develop ground rules and clarify the purpose of the meeting. In addition, the consultant will facilitate dialogue in such a way to help each person of the group find her/his voice in order to express concerns regarding the grievance and provide clear steps towards reconciliation.

The goals of the gathered group and the coordinators should include:

- a. Craft a collective statement of forgiveness and hope with and among the gathered group.
- b. Develop a list of recommendations towards “best practices” for future Executive search processes that can be shared with the Office of General Minister and President.
- c. Provide all involved the opportunity for healing and reconciliation by reaffirming each person’s high value to our community of faith.

The Administrative Committee directs the OGMP to revise the Executive Search Model to include guidelines for internal candidates including board members in an executive search process. The revisions would involve the input of racial ethnic constituencies of the CC (DOC), select professionals in the area of human resources, the Reconciliation Minister of the CC (DOC), and legal counsel.

The Administrative Committee directs the OGMP to develop, in consultation with the Reconciliation Minister, a resource that would be available for use in executive search processes within the CC (DOC). This resource should include how to conduct a hiring process guided by best practices and shall be offered in on-going workshops from time to time such as at the General or Regional Assemblies.

The Administrative Committee is directed to revise its grievance procedure and adopt an appeal procedure to be followed in the event of a grievance or an appeal under paragraph 66 of the Design.

The General Minister and President will keep the Administrative Committee informed of the progress of this process.

***A Letter to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)***  
***From A Broken People Seeking Wholeness***  
***In This Fragmented World***

June 23, 2011

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.<sup>1</sup>

We acknowledge that as a Church we find ourselves not as professionals in the field of Human Resources but a lay driven organization seeking to do God's will. We come now to address the 2008 Presidential Search Process for Disciples Home Missions and the grievance submitted by the National Convocation.

We confess our brokenness, repent of the wrongs that we may have done, ask for forgiveness of those we may have offended, and receive grace from each other. Now, out of a desire to address our deficiencies, find healing and bring closure, we offer this letter.

We have relived the steps of the 2008 D.H.M. Presidential Search Process and looked deep into the souls of all involved. We have learned from each other and we have learned about the insidious nature of racism and its continued existence in the world and our Church. We, however, condemn it and declare that we will work hard to rid our Church and the World of racism, even as we learn together of its complex expressions in the life of our Church. Despite the best intentions of each member of the Search Committee we conclude that systemic racism affects all human interactions, even those within the Church.

The Search Committee prayerfully and intentionally sought to find the best-qualified candidate. When faced with decisions that had to be made where no policy or standing procedures were in place by the Church, D.H.M., or any other body, the Search Committee found itself divided. In our efforts to honor the integrity of the candidates and the process, it became difficult for the Search

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<sup>1</sup> From the Identity Statement of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Committee to balance transparency and confidentiality which led to a perception of racial bias.

While we attempted to evaluate and judge all candidates on the same level, background checks, references gained, information gathered, all sent us in unknown directions. The desire would be to have as much uniformity as possible.

Based on what we have experienced and learned from this process, we offer the following recommendations:

We ask the ***General Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*** to recommend guidelines for the search process for the whole Church.

1. All Search Committees participate in Anti-Racism training together.
2. When candidates list references it should be communicated early in the process, that secondary references such as Ministerial Profile, background checks, work history, colleagues in previous employment, can and may be contacted.
3. Every possible effort should be implemented to achieve uniformity in evaluating the candidates inclusive of their reference checks.
4. Measures should be developed to insure there is equity between internal and external candidates.
5. Search Committees are encouraged to develop tools to achieve consensus honoring confidentiality in the search process.

We call upon the ***Administrative Committee of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*** to review the Grievance Process of the Church and strengthen its guidelines to clearly spell out:

- The process for filing a grievance within the Church.
- Who can file a grievance?



- A timeline that defines deliberate steps toward resolution.
- Guidelines governing confidentiality in the grievance process.

This Table of Reconciliation has brought together representatives from the National Convocation and Disciples Home Missions to mirror what God can do when sisters and brothers “touch and agree”<sup>2</sup> to struggle with painful issues in openness and honesty. The outcome of this process is that integrity has been restored and relationships have been healed. We pray that the Church will continue to remain at Tables such as this until God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Eric Brown  
Tim James  
Lee Parker

Ron Degges  
April Johnson  
Jim Rivers

Jim Hockman  
Bill McConnell  
Sharon Watkins

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18:19