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ASSEMBLY**

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# ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE FOR BIBLICAL DOCTRINE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

## Report to the 101st International Assembly July 20 - 24, 2022

### Introduction

We welcome every member and friend of the Church of God of Prophecy to the 101st International Assembly, convening in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. We have assembled here from across the globe as brothers and sisters to worship the God of heaven, engage in vision casting, clarify our purpose, appropriate the business of this Church, and fellowship with one another.

The members of the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee (BDP) count it an honor to serve this worldwide body and its constituents. We do not consider ourselves to be the final word on any matter of theology, doctrine, biblical interpretation, or governance polity within this global movement. As a committee, we reaffirm that the International Assembly is the highest governing body of the Church of God of Prophecy. We are, however, aware of the significant task to which the BDP has been assigned.

Accordingly, in 1994, the following responsibility was entrusted to the BDP Committee at the 88th Assembly. "The committee is appointed by the General Overseer to serve the Church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration."<sup>1</sup> We accept the somber duties of this assignment and have proceeded in our deliberations with an eye focused on the Scripture, a heart given to prayer and the worship of our Lord, and an intellect attentive to theological, ethical, and policy matters.

This report is a compilation of the 2020 BDP report and additions for 2022. The cancellation of the 2020 International Assembly due to the pandemic resulted in the 2020 report being referred for consideration in the 2022 Assembly. The Committee<sup>2</sup>, however, did release a large portion of the 2020 report in October 2020 for Church<sup>3</sup> constituents to read. The sections released included a "Notice of Study of Term Limits." The 2020 notice is included in this report as an addendum for archival purposes.

Admittedly, this report is somewhat lengthier than previous reports. However, the compilation of the four years of work and the nature of subjects under consideration have warranted a detailed report. The report is arranged as follows:

1. Recognition of individual leaders (Sections One through Three)
2. Statements from the BDP for the Assembly (Sections Four through Six)
3. Studies and recommendations (Sections Seven through Eight)
4. Notice of Study (Section Nine)

<sup>1</sup> 88th Assembly Minutes, 1994, 150-151.

<sup>2</sup> Where the word *committee* represents the longer title, *Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee*, it is capitalized in this document.

<sup>3</sup> Where the word *church* represents the longer title, *Church of God of Prophecy*, it is capitalized in this document.

# Recognitions

## SECTION ONE: RECOGNITION OF BISHOP SAM AND LINDA CLEMENTS

The term *servant* is an accurate description of Bishop Sam and Linda Clements. The selfless ministry and leadership of the Clements is beyond question. The Clements' devotion to the lordship of Jesus Christ, commitment to the gospel ministry, and support of the mission of the Church of God of Prophecy is evident throughout their decades of service.

Sam N. Clements was born August 4, 1942. He received Jesus Christ as his Savior at the age of twelve. In 1962, he accepted God's call into Christian service, and began full-time ministry in 1963, being licensed as a minister in the Church of God of Prophecy. He was ordained as a Bishop in 1972. He completed studies at the Church's Bible Training Institute and has extensive experience working with the Church's international, state, and regional boards and committees.

Bishop Clements was a Pastor for 28 years, serving congregations in Oklahoma, Michigan, and Tennessee. In 1991, Bishop Clements was appointed as Overseer to Arkansas. In 1993, he was appointed to both Arkansas and Oklahoma. In 1998, Bishop Clements was appointed as State Overseer<sup>4</sup> of North Carolina. In 2000, being recommended by his colleagues in North America, and with the endorsement of the International Presbytery, Bishop Clements was selected as General Presbyter for North America. Bishop Clements served as North America General Presbyter under the administration of two General Overseers, Bishop Fred S. Fisher Sr. and Bishop Randall E. Howard.

When the office of General Overseer became vacant in April 2013, Bishop Clements shared directly in the Church's international governance from the end of April 2013 to July 2014, being selected by the General Presbyters to be chairman for the plurality team until a General Overseer was selected. In the closing prayer session of the International Presbytery meeting, July 29, 2014, the presbyters sensed the confirmation of the Holy Spirit upon Bishop Clements to be the General Overseer. During this session of Spirit-anointed prayer and Spirit-led affirmation, Bishop Clements was identified as a "leader among leaders." He was presented to the 98th International Assembly as General Overseer select, where he was subsequently accepted in a one accord decision, becoming the sixth General Overseer to serve the Church since our inception in 1903.

As he began his tenure as General Overseer, Bishop Clements announced, "I am praying for God to change our little mindsets and give us a vision of the lost souls. Let us go forth and do the work that Jesus Christ has called us to do. This is our time, our day—we must not miss what God is doing." This passion for the unevangelized, along with his admission that the Church of God of Prophecy is not in competition with any other ministry, describes his vision of the Church's approach to ministry in the twenty-first century. Bishop Clements conveys that we should embrace a cooperative approach to ministry, partnering with others in the kingdom, knowing the mission field is too large for any one church group to reap the harvest alone.

Anyone who is blessed to spend time in the company of Bishop Clements will discover his humble disposition, sense of humor, delight in the Word of God, love for God, and his genuine regard for people. He claims that his faith and confidence does not stand in the wisdom of man but in God, the great "I AM." Bishop Clements has often been heard to comment, "His will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else."

Bishop Clements has ministered and led with the support of his loving wife, Linda. As the First Lady of the Church of God of Prophecy, Linda emulates the Proverbs 31 lady. Sam and Linda were joined in holy matrimony in 1961. Lady Linda has modeled the loving care for her husband, family, and the ministry. She is both an encourager and a prayer intercessor. She willingly demonstrates her love for people and commitment to pray on the behalf of the Church.

<sup>4</sup> The BDP wishes to show the Committee's utmost respect to the honorable leaders of this movement throughout the world. For that purpose, ministerial and administrative titles will be capitalized in this document except where they are not capitalized in citations from other sources.

The Clements' life and ministry have not been without challenges and grief. However, in the midst of their deepest grief, the Clements modeled a confident faith and trustworthy resolve in the lordship of the sovereign God.

During his tenure, this Church body has been motivated, encouraged, and witnessed numerical growth and spiritual advancement. Bishop Clements' global passion is clearly visible. He has visited every continent where the Church of God of Prophecy ministers. He is not only an accomplished leader in this movement but has been recognized within the greater church community as a leader of leaders. In 2018, Bishop Clements presided over the historic centennial Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, leading a pre-Assembly rally at the Fields of the Wood where thousands participated.

In a joint meeting of the General Presbyters, Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee, Finance and Stewardship Committee, and International Offices personnel, Bishop Clements announced on October 16, 2019, his transition from the office of General Overseer. However, with the cancelation of the 2020 International Assembly due to the pandemic, the leadership of this Church requested that Bishop Clements continue as General Overseer through the 2022 International Assembly. Bishop and Sister Clements graciously and humbly accepted this task and have modeled true servant leadership during this global crisis. Now, his leadership journey brings him to another phase. However, the Clements will continue to be servants until the Lord calls them home. This leader and family anticipate hearing the Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

The Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee, on behalf of Church of God of Prophecy ministers, members, and friends, recognize the invaluable service and leadership of Bishop Sam and First Lady Linda Clements. In recognition of the Clements, this Committee rehearses the instruction of the New Testament writer of Hebrews, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Heb 13:7 NIV). There is no mistaking, the Church of God of Prophecy is indebted to the Clements for their selfless servant-leadership. This Church is better because of the Clements family.

Today, on behalf of the 101st International Assembly, we applaud the leadership of Bishop Sam N. Clements. Additionally, we invite this Assembly to rise to your feet and join with us in an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for the ministry of Bishop Sam N. and Linda Clements.

## **SECTION TWO: RECOGNITION OF DR. ELÍAS RODRÍGUEZ**

Dr. Elías Rodríguez was first appointed to the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee (BDP) under the administration of General Overseer Bishop Fred S. Fisher, Sr. in the International Assembly of 2006. He was reappointed to the Committee under the administrations of General Overseers Bishop Randall Howard and Bishop Sam Clements. Dr. Rodríguez served a total of twelve years on the Committee, being rotated off the Committee in 2018, at the 100th International Assembly. Dr. Rodríguez served as secretary of the Committee for eight years (2010-2018).

Dr. Rodríguez highlights two key passages that pose a challenge to the Church of God of Prophecy in regard to the hard work of studying, interpreting, and applying the Scriptures in our Church culture. The first is Matthew 22:37, 38 (NKJV): "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment." The second key passage is 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV): "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Dr. Rodríguez states that Pentecostals do not seem to have a problem loving God with all our hearts, but we have not always loved God with all our minds. Among the Christian community, we have been criticized for this neglect. Dr. Rodríguez continues, "If we don't study the Word of God, for me, we are not loving God with all our minds, and in consequence, we are breaking the first commandment. . . . There is no way of interpreting and applying the Scriptures if we don't study them. . . . I think that if we want to break the cycle of biblical illiteracy, we must teach our people how to study the Word [for] themselves."

Dr. Rodríguez practices what he preaches and teaches. During the twelve years he served on the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee, he was also pursuing biblical and theological education. He earned his

Master of Divinity (MDiv) from Pentecostal Theological Seminary in 2007 and his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) from Gordon-Conwell Seminary in 2014. He is presently studying for a research doctorate (PhD).

Dr. Rodríguez believes that his greatest accomplishment during his time of service on the Committee was to bring Hispanics to the discussion table, thus enriching the Committee by broadening perspectives and worldviews. "It was always amazing," says Dr. Rodríguez, "to see all of us working as one; nobody trying to impose their worldviews upon the others, but thinking [about] the field, how our brothers and sisters around the world [would] receive what we produced in that room." Another accomplishment, for which he is grateful, was his participation in the writing of the "Footwashing" document, presented in the International Assembly of 2018.

When asked, "What words [of advice] would you now give to the BDP Committee, based on your personal experience?" Dr. Rodríguez responded, "Based on my personal experience, I would tell my dear [colleagues] that, even though the job of the Committee is hard, time-consuming, even tedious at time[s], it is very rewarding. It has direct consequences on how the Church's businesses are conducted; how people around the world are represented and given voice; [and] how our people can have a better understanding of our doctrine, which translates to freedom from spiritual bondage for many. I think that the work done by the Committee has eternal consequences for our Church."

Those of us who had the honor and privilege of serving on the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee with Dr. Elías Rodríguez were saddened when he was rotated off the Committee in 2018. We miss his academic scholarship, his discernment and wisdom, his experience and resourcefulness. We miss his sense of humor. We miss his companionship. We still consult him from time to time, and he is always willing and eager to help.

We, the current members of the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee, now invite this International Assembly 2022 to join us in honoring Dr. Elías Rodríguez for his valuable years of service to the Church of God of Prophecy on the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee.

### **SECTION THREE: RECOGNITION OF DR. DELROY HALL**

Dr. Delroy Hall, hailing from Sheffield, England, served on the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee from 2014 until 2020. Dr. Hall was awarded his PhD in Pastoral Theology from Birmingham University in 2013, as well as a diploma in Counseling from Leicester University. He is a published author, both in prestigious academic publications and in a recent title in SCM Press. During his service on the BDP Committee, Dr. Hall was able to articulate insights through theological, psychological, and sociological lenses. He drove us to deep thought, but his unique sense of humor often elicited stress-relieving laughter as we engaged in tedious discourse. The members of this BDP Committee express our deep appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Delroy Hall for his invaluable service to the Committee and this Church. We extend to him Godspeed in all his endeavors for God and the kingdom.

## **Positional Statements**

### **SECTION FOUR: STATEMENT ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The Church of God of Prophecy embraces biblical principles regarding holiness, sexual morality, and a lifestyle of purity. Sexual immorality, in all of its expressions, is not consistent with godly living (1 Cor 5:1; 6:9, 10; 7:2; 10:8; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3-5; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6; Rev 21:8). Consequently, the Church of God of Prophecy is committed to a zero-tolerance regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and abuse. Every leader in this Church, whether volunteer or paid staff, is called to a lifestyle of holiness and purity according to biblical principles.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend the above statement be included in the Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy.



## SECTION FIVE: STATEMENT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Today, “Every nation in the world has laws abolishing slavery, yet the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 21 million men, women, and children are exploited for profit.”<sup>5</sup> The reality is that human trafficking is globally pervasive and is considered to be one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in today’s world. Human trafficking is experienced by three out of every 1,000 people. The Global Slavery Index proffers that actual human trafficking is closer to 45 million persons.<sup>6</sup> Human trafficking includes forced labor, sexual exploitation, organ removal, domestic servitude, child soldiers, forced marriage, forced begging, and the selling of children.<sup>7</sup>

### Recommendation

We recommend this statement be included in the *Ministry Policy Manual* of the Church of God of Prophecy:

The Church of God of Prophecy unreservedly denounces all forms of human trafficking, bondage, and enslavement, both past and present. We herald the biblical and theological truth that every person, no matter their gender, race, ethnicity, station, health, or mental capacity, is created in the *imago dei*, the image of God (Gen 1:26–28; 5:1–3; 9:6). We echo the pronouncement of the apostle Peter at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, after he ministered to the Gentile household of Cornelius (Acts 10), that God “did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9 NIV). We embrace the proclamation of the apostle Paul in his sermon at the Areopagus that God “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26 NKJV). And we champion the salvific truth that “in Christ . . . you [we] are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26–28 NIV).

## SECTION SIX: STATEMENT ON RACE RELATIONS

We, the global body of the Church of God of Prophecy, stand against the malicious presence of racism, classism, xenophobia, chauvinism, extreme nationalism, sexism, and all forms of bigotry and prejudice in this world. We mourn with those who are mourning and are suffering at the ugly hands of injustice. We stand against hatred, bigotry, and racial prejudices of any form and confess that it has devalued our brothers and sisters, both in minority and majority contexts, across the world. We must commit ourselves anew to teaching, preaching, and ministering a gospel of hope that promotes justice and freedom from fear. “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation” (Eph 2:14 NKJV).

Through the church, God has created a reflection of His kingdom here on earth, and we convey that we see great intrinsic value in building deep and abiding relationship with one another. His Word explicitly shows us that He has reconciled racially and culturally divided groups into “one new man” (Eph 2:15). He has united us into one body, thus making peace, so that the church can function in unity. The church is the place where race and class distinctions are no longer to be used as tools of division and disunion. We celebrate the diversity and differences of God’s creation through race, ethnic groups, culture, and language. As the church, however, we can no longer allow these differences to separate us.

We will not permit differences to overshadow the fact that God’s kingdom values all people regardless of race or culture. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28 NKJV). God’s people, when joined together, are more complete, balanced, and whole in Christ Jesus.

### Recommendation

We recommend the above statement be included in the *Ministry Policy Manual* of the Church of God of Prophecy.

<sup>5</sup> Wendy Stickle, Shelby Hickman, and Christine White, *Human Trafficking: A Comprehensive Exploration of Modern Day Slavery* (London: SAGE Publications, 2020), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Stickle, Hickman, and White, *Human Trafficking*, 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Stickle, Hickman, and White, *Human Trafficking*, 8.

## Topical Studies

### SECTION SEVEN: PROPOSED CHANGE IN TITLE OF OVERSEER

Words are the building blocks of effective communication, conveying ideas, sharing emotions, posing questions, providing instruction, and fostering comfort. Although words have etymological derivations and lexical meanings, how words are utilized by society at large and within conversation particularly, help to regulate their practical and contextual usefulness. The reality is some words undergo an evolutionary process in meaning. Accordingly, the study of linguistics commonly refers to this occurrence as semantic shift or semantic change. In a semantic progression of a particular word, the meaning of the word may be altered either slightly or significantly. At times, specific words can become archaic and obsolete.

Nuances of specific words and their usage may connote something entirely different by the hearer than is meant by the speaker. A simple example of this is clearly evident in the word “mouse.” A speaker may say, “There is a mouse in the desk drawer.” The hearer may envision a furry rodent while the speaker may actually mean a hand-held wireless device used as an input device for a computer. The context in which a word or a set of words occur helps to determine its intended lexical meaning. However, word usage varies based upon culture, education, ethnicity, familiarity, and the speaker’s native language. Consequently, a word spoken in one cultural setting may denote something not meant by the speaker in a different cultural setting. Words are powerful not only in the sharing of ideas but also in the eliciting of emotions. Words can both express comfort and transmit discomfiting baggage. “Language is a medium of *action* [italics in original]: words, when used in different ways, *do* different things.”<sup>8</sup>

### Linguistic and Historical Rationale

Speech act theory proffers that in the philosophy of human language, through the medium of words, three actions occur, namely, 1) the locutionary act, 2) the illocutionary act, and 3) the perlocutionary act. Specifically, a locutionary act occurs when an individual vocalizes phonemes or the conjugation of phonemes into a sentence structure. A locutionary act is the utterance of a word or the formation of words into a sentence. An illocutionary act refers to what the speaker intends to be the result of his/her utterance. An illocutionary act includes both asking and answering a question, providing information, extending a warning, making an appointment with someone, ordering a command, granting a promise, asserting a position, etc.<sup>9</sup> Finally, a perlocutionary act refers to the effect that the words uttered by the speaker have upon the hearers. This includes parameters of thoughts elicited, beliefs embraced, and emotions felt by the hearer. The perlocutionary consequences may be either intended or unintended by the speaker.<sup>10</sup> That is, a speaker may intend to elicit a particular outcome (illocution) by the words spoken (locution); however, the result may be an unintended consequence (perlocution).

The lexical meaning of *overseer*, according to the *Merriman-Webster Dictionary* of the English language, is “a person who watches and directs the work of other people in order to be sure that a job is done correctly.” An overseer, in this definition, is a person who supervises, gives instructions, and manages within an organization or a company.

In the English language, the word *overseer* dates back to the fourteenth century, with an original meaning of a “supervisor, superintendent, one who looks over.”<sup>11</sup> In the 1570s, William Tyndale in his work titled, *An Answer to Thomas More’s Dialogue*, used overseer in an ecclesial context. He observed that “Those ouersears [overseers] which we now call Byshops [Bishops] after the Greke [Greek] word, were always bidying [biding] in one place to gouerne [govern] the congregation there.”<sup>12</sup> Tyndale acknowledged, in close proximity to the date of the 1611 King James Version, the reference to the use of Bishop rather than overseer according to his understanding of the Greek.

<sup>8</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 139.

<sup>9</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2018), 98, 108. See also James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 141.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 24. See also J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 106 and James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, 141.

<sup>11</sup> [www.etymonline.com/word/overseer](http://www.etymonline.com/word/overseer), accessed February 18, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> “Overseer” in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second ed., vol. X (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1116.

However, the word *overseer* also connotes a negative meaning, especially as it relates to the atrocities of human slavery. The *Learner's Dictionary* defines an overseer in the context of the historical institution of slavery as “the person who was in charge of the slaves on a plantation.”<sup>13</sup> Paul Escott, in his book titled, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives*, describes the relationship between an overseer and the enslaved as follows: “Between the field hands and the overseer or master, a continual tugging and pulling took place. Some masters openly sanctioned this context by requiring the overseer to establish his own dominance over the hands [slaves].”<sup>14</sup> From Escott’s description here, and from other historical sources, it becomes evident that the role of the overseer in the context of human slavery was one of control, harsh rule, and the domination of human beings. History indicates that within the context of slavery, the overseer exercised an aura of superiority, supremacy, exacting fear, intimidation, dehumanization, and often brutality. The oversight of forced daily tasks, enforcement of punishment, and allocation of food and clothing was relegated to the overseer by the slave owner:

Theoretically, it was the overseer who claimed the last word on when the bondpeople got up, when they went to bed, when they worked, when they could rest, whether or not they could amuse themselves at parties or through other forms of entertainment, and whether or not they could talk the languages and practice the religions that they had brought from Africa. It was the overseer who could disrupt relations between members of enslaved families . . . by suggesting family members for sale. Women lived in fear of rape by overseers flaunting all the venal authority that accrued to them. Their husbands had little redress or outlet for their anger since laws ensured that attacks on overseers could be punishable by death. . . . The overseer purchased food for these people and distributed clothing and shoes when their owner saw fit to send them. But although these measures went some way to keeping the men and women healthy, they represented little more than another means used by the overseer in his quest for control over the bondpeople. . . . And so all the while the bondpeople labored on the plantation, the overseer stood above them, whip in hand, his dark presence intended euphemistically to “keep them at their work.” Enough people had experience of the overseer’s lash to understand the real meaning of term: the tattered backs of men, women, and children underlined it.<sup>15</sup>

The barbarities of human slavery and bondage is an ancient scourge upon the history of mankind. For millennia, some classes of people have sought to enslave their fellow human beings. History indicates that human slavery dates back to the ancient Near East, and is a global scourge practiced in Sumeria, Babylonia, Egypt, China, Rome, and Greece. The Hammurabi Code of the eighteenth century B.C.E. references human slavery.<sup>16</sup> The reality of the enslavement of Hebrews in Egypt, and institutionalized slavery during the Greco-Roman period of the New Testament, is apparent to Bible readers. There can be no question that human slavery certainly has stained the modern history of Europe, the British colonies, the Americas, including the United States.

Additionally, “The multinational character of the Atlantic Slave System, from Sierra Leone to Cuba and Connecticut”<sup>17</sup> helped to foster a climate for the pernicious treatment of the enslaved. At times, the dehumanizing of fellow human beings was inflicted by their own countrymen, but certainly by those who considered themselves of a higher class. The institutionalized nature of Antebellum slavery “was a heterogeneous institution, and the slaves faced a wide diversity of conditions. Some lived on large plantations and toiled under the watchful eyes of overseers and drivers, while others, on small farms, worked beside their owners.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, history indicates that owners and their employees (overseers) treated slaves brutally and inhumanely.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/overseer>, accessed April 9, 2019. See also [www.etymonline.com/word/overseer](http://www.etymonline.com/word/overseer).

<sup>14</sup> Paul Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 86.

<sup>15</sup> Tristan Stubbs, *Masters of Violence: The Plantation Overseers of Eighteenth-Century Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2018), 1.

<sup>16</sup> David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2006), 37, 38.

<sup>17</sup> David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2003), 99.



## Biblical and Theological Rationale

In their exegesis of Scripture, our Church forefathers appear to have adopted the term *overseer* from the 1611 King James Version of the Bible. Specifically, in Acts 20:28, the apostle Paul charges the elders in Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood” (KJV). The word translated in the King James Version as overseer is ἐπισκοπος (*episkopos*). In the original Greek, ἐπισκοπος may be translated as overseer, guardian, or Bishop.<sup>19</sup> However, in this particular context, the inference of the ἐπισκοπος is dealing more with the function of overseeing, as Paul articulates in the shepherding role of feeding the flock of God, rather than an ecclesial office or status. Accordingly, the “validity lies in their (the overseer’s) exercise (shepherding the flock) and not their occupation as offices.”<sup>20</sup> Wayne Oates observes that Paul’s inference of the word ἐπισκοπος, as rendered by Luke in his writing of the Acts of the Apostles, connotes the act of seeing to the needs of the flock, rather than a status, office, or ministerial position. In fact, the verbal construction, ἐπισκοπέω (*episkopeō*), means to “take care, oversee, care for.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Paul instructs (locutionary and illocutionary acts) the elders of Ephesus to see to the needs of the flock. As the King James Version translates, elders are to oversee. The overseer’s function was to be “responsible for guarding it (the flock) against those who sought to lead people astray. They were to shepherd the church of God, bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28–31).”<sup>22</sup>

The word ἐπισκοπος occurs five times in the Greek New Testament (GNT). In the King James Version, the word is translated as bishop in every verse, except Acts 20:28.

- Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”
- 1 Timothy 3:2: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.”
- Titus 1:7: “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.”
- 1 Peter 2:25: “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

Admittedly, in the passages listed above, there are other English versions that do translate ἐπισκοπος as overseer (see New American Standard Bible, New International Version, *et al.*). The translation committees of the various versions may have focused more on function rather than office in these particular passages. Additionally, there is a credible argument that the office of Bishop became more formalized and developed in church history in the years after the first century.<sup>23</sup> However, the oldest non-canonical extant Christian document, the *Didache* (circa, 96 CE), instructs in chapter 15, “Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord.”<sup>24</sup> Noted church historian Justo L. González describes the influence of Bishops in the second century as “the link joining the churches together.”<sup>25</sup>

In the pastoral epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus, the apostle Paul is utilizing a literary genre known as *mandata principis*, which means, “the commandments of the ruler.” In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the apostle was outlining church order and structure. Specifically, the apostle addressed the purpose of his letter when he wrote, “if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15 NIV). Consequently, in this literary genre, Paul instructs Timothy regarding the ministry, particularly the prerequisites for Bishops and Deacons.

<sup>19</sup> L. Coenen, “Bishop, Presbyter, Elder” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed., Colin Brown, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 188.

<sup>20</sup> Wayne Oates, “The Holy Spirit and the Overseer of the Flock,” *Review and Expositor*, 63, no. 2 (1966): 187.

<sup>21</sup> L. Coenen, “Bishop, Presbyter, Elder,” 188.

<sup>22</sup> C. G. Kruse, “Ministry” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments*, eds., Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1310.

<sup>23</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 235. See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 212.

<sup>24</sup> *Didache*, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Justo L. González, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), Loc. 105, Kindle.

In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul writes, “This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (KJV); *Didache* (circa, 96 CE), instructs in chapter 15, “Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord The word translated as *office* or *position* is ἐπισκοπή (*episkopē*), is referring to the office of Bishop or Overseer in the church. This term, ἐπισκοπή, was “newly coined on the basis of the title ἐπίσκοπος, which had meantime established itself in the early church.”<sup>26</sup> According to biblical scholar Luke Timothy Johnson, “This is the only place in the NT where *episkopē* appears in reference to a position within the community.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the biblical and ecclesial distinction of the office of Bishop seems warranted instead of the title of Overseer.

A brief word study of *overseer* is also noteworthy in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, particularly as it relates to Joseph in Genesis 39. After having been sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph was transported to Egypt and became a slave of Potiphar. Joseph eventually became the overseer of Potiphar’s household. “And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand” (Gen 39:4). The King James Version translates the Hebrew word פקיד (paqidh) as overseer. As a slave himself, Joseph was placed in a supervisory role over others in the affairs of Potiphar’s household.<sup>28</sup> In the role of overseer, it appears that he may have supervised other slaves as well.<sup>29</sup> It seems plausible that the ministerial title *Overseer* has historical baggage in relation to slavery.

Biblically, the term *Bishop* better describes the title or the office of those entrusted with the oversight of both churches and ministers. Theologically, the function of the Bishop is to oversee; first, in an apostolic calling, and second, in administrative duties.

### **Ecclesial Rationale**

Within our ecclesial tradition, the title *Overseer* has been used for men who have been entrusted with the care and supervisory responsibility of leaders and churches. The inherent responsibilities of an Overseer have traditionally included both apostolic ministrations and administrative duties. Specifically, the Church of God of Prophecy has used the title *Overseer* at the general, national, regional, state, and district level.

We acknowledge that due to the negative and inhumane actions of the past, the term *overseer* as historically utilized in human slavery may still elicit cultural sensitivities. Admittedly, this may not be everyone’s experience; however, it is reality for others. In human slavery, the term *overseer* has connotations of privilege, power, and abuse attributed to a particular class and to those who are identified as being in a superior position.

This Committee does not subscribe to the belief that the title *Overseer*, as used historically and traditionally by the Church of God of Prophecy, was intended to elicit distinctions of class and privilege in our ecclesial usage. Nor do we believe that our forefathers in this movement selected the title *Overseer* as a racially insensitive, pejorative, or controlling measure.

The title *Overseer* was first used in our ecclesial nomenclature in 1910. The term *General Moderator* identified the leading officer of the Assembly from 1906 to 1910. In the fifth General Assembly (1910), the title *General Overseer* was adopted to replace *General Moderator*.<sup>30</sup> It appears the growth of the Church and the consequent apostolic and administrative duties were becoming increasingly time consuming, warranting the need for someone to oversee the ministrations of the Church rather than simply be the Moderator of the Assembly.

As the Church continued to grow, the need of State Overseers was recognized. In the sixth Assembly (1911), State Overseers were selected. The Overseers appointed in this Assembly consisted of a few U.S. states and the Bahama Islands.<sup>31</sup> In the twelfth Assembly (1916), the term *State* was omitted because the Church was increasingly expanding to the nations of the world.<sup>32</sup> In the thirteenth Assembly (1917), the role of District Overseer was introduced in a report titled, “Systematic Arrangement to Conserve the Work in the States and Local Churches.” The report stated, “Each district shall be under the care and supervision of a pastor

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26* in *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005), Loc. 18772 Kindle. See also Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 459, 460.

<sup>30</sup> *Book of Minutes: The Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1922), 39.

<sup>31</sup> *Book of Minutes: The Church of God*, 67.

<sup>32</sup> *Book of Minutes: The Church of God*, 234, 235.

or overseer, appointed by the overseer of the state.”<sup>33</sup> With the passage of time, the terms National/State/Regional Overseer became common ecclesial nomenclature.

Lexically, the term *overseer* does indeed refer to one who both watches over and sees to the needs of others he is leading. However, we concede that the title Overseer may emit unintended negative feelings and never-intended historical mental images, admittedly a perlocutionary effect. The World Language Department (WLD) at our International Offices utilizes the Spanish word *supervisor* as the title for an Overseer serving at the general, national, regional, state, and district level. The Spanish word *capataz*, which is a Spanish equivalent to the English word *overseer*, means a taskmaster in charge of laborers. In some contexts, *capataz* can be associated with the owner of a *hacienda*, similar to a plantation. For several years, the WLD has been correctly sensitive to the negative connotations of the word *capataz* and has used the word *supervisor*. The French word *évêque*, which means Bishop, is used for the designation of those serving as an Overseer.

*The Ministry Policy Manual (MPM)* of the Church of God of Prophecy articulates the responsibility of an Overseer:

The office of a “servant-leader” (overseer) is a biblically based function in the church. To fulfill the office of overseer is an awesome responsibility. There are many overseer leadership challenges, but none surpasses that of one’s total commitment to caring for, nurturing, protecting, and leading the ministry of an entire nation/region/state.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to note that the **office** of Overseer is described in the *MPM*, in terms of its **function**, which is the shepherding role of caring for, nurturing, protecting, and leading the ministry. Admittedly, the *MPM* identifies Overseer as an “office.” However, the *MPM* under the rubric of “Bishops” acknowledges, “It is important to realize that individuals **function** [emphasis not in original] according to their giftedness within an office. The Bishop is one of the eldership offices that provides oversight leadership to the Church.”<sup>35</sup> The nuance of office and function reflects the earlier stated premise of Acts 20:28. Oversight is the function of the office of the Bishop who is entrusted with the care of an area of churches and administrative supervision.

Ultimately, this report is not recommending a change in the function of what we have historically referred to as Overseer. The report is addressing the title of the office. Our Church forefathers utilized the King James Version, in selecting the term *Overseer* for general, national, state, and, subsequently, regional leaders. While the function of these leaders is to see to the work over which they have been assigned by “caring for, nurturing, protecting, and leading the ministry,”<sup>36</sup> the office they fulfill in their function of oversight is best referred to as Bishop. In fact, a man who is appointed to National/State/Regional Overseer, or selected by the Assembly to be General Overseer, is to be an ordained Bishop.<sup>37</sup>

## Recommendation

We recommend a change in the formal title from General Overseer to Presiding Bishop. Our constituency should recognize that there is only one Presiding Bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy. Presiding Bishop refers to what we have traditionally and historically understood as the General Overseer.

We further recommend a change in the formal title for National/Regional/State Overseer to National/Regional/State Bishop. The designation of Bishop of a particular nation, region, or state is also appropriate. For instance, referring to the office and person as the Bishop of Australia, Bishop of Mid-Atlantic, Bishop of Alaska, and so forth, is also appropriate.

We also recommend a change in the formal title for District Overseer to District Supervisor. We note that there is no ecclesial polity prerequisite that a District Overseer/Supervisor be an ordained Bishop.

<sup>33</sup> *Book of Minutes: The Church of God*, 289.

<sup>34</sup> “The Role of Overseer” in *The Ministry Policy Manual: Church of God of Prophecy* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2018), 27.

<sup>35</sup> *Ministry Policy Manual*, 104.

<sup>36</sup> *Ministry Policy Manual*, 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ministry Policy Manual*, 104, 130.

Finally, we do not recommend any change in the title of General Presbyter. The title of Presbyter infers that he leads other Presbyters (National/Regional/State Bishops) within his assigned presbyterial area.

NOTE: These recommendations pertain to a shift of ecclesial nomenclature from Overseer to Bishop. The above recommendations do not change any recognition of the ministerial distinction and ordination of a Bishop. Many local Pastors, Evangelists, and retired Ministers are ordained Bishops in this Church and should be accorded the respect and honor that being a biblical Bishop warrants. There is no change in their ordination status as a Bishop. Additionally, in countries of the world where the Church of God of Prophecy operates within a state-recognized church system, the title National Bishop might be viewed as an affront to the state-sanctioned church. In these, or other similar nuances, flexibility is granted to the General Presbyter and his plurality team to make necessary adjustments to the title of the National Bishop as may be appropriate to that nation.

### **Observation**

We understand that old habits are difficult to change. We recognize that it will take time for the term *Overseer* to be completely replaced by the term *Bishop*. However, in many locales this is already being observed. In increasing numbers, constituents are referring to their Overseer as Bishop. Out of habit, Church members may still refer to leaders as General Overseer or National/Regional/State Overseer. This is to be expected and should not be met with rebuke but with a teachable attitude. Our goal should be to educate and assist members in their understanding that we have made a formal change in titles. With the passage of time, the title *Overseer* will be used less and less. For instance, some will recall the ecclesial nomenclature of this Church in reference to "auxiliaries." Auxiliaries were formalized to be the helps or ministries of the Church. Youth ministry, at one time, was called Victory Leaders Band, and small group ministries were referred to as Assembly Band Movement. The term *auxiliaries* and its unique vernacular is merely a historical recollection today. Over time, our constituents will refer to the leader of the Church of God of Prophecy as the Presiding Bishop.

Additionally, attention will need to be given, as appropriate, to legal, financial, and corporate documents that may need to be updated regarding the formal change in title. The function of the Presiding Bishop and National/Regional/State Bishops is the same as what we have referred to as Overseer, which is general oversight.

## **SECTION NINE: NOTICE OF STUDY**

In keeping with the tradition of issuing a notice of study from the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee of upcoming topics, the Committee informs the Assembly of the following:

### **Polity Studies**

#### **1. Study of the Evaluation Process**

Requests have come to members of the BDP regarding a study of the effectiveness of the present evaluation process for Pastors, National/Regional/State Overseers, General Presbyters, and the General Overseer. The present evaluation process seems confusing to many and cumbersome in implementation. Therefore, the BDP has on its agenda to study the evaluation process. If the BDP deems it appropriate, we will either issue a statement, conclusion, report, and/or recommendations to the 2024 International Assembly.

#### **2. Assembly Business Procedures**

The BDP has been active in studying the Assembly Business procedures for some time. We will continue this study. If the BDP deems it appropriate, we will either issue a statement, conclusion, report, and/or recommendations to the 2024 International Assembly.

## Doctrinal Studies

The BDP has been engaged in a study of the ordinances of the Church. In 2018, the Committee shared a report on the ordinance of Washing of the Saints' Feet. We continue to study the ordinances of the Lord's Supper/ Holy Communion, and Water Baptism. If the BDP deems it appropriate, we will either issue a statement, conclusion, report, and/or recommendations to the 2024 International Assembly.

## Afterword

The BDP serves the International Assembly and all constituents of the Church of God of Prophecy. We appreciate the cooperation and collegiality extended to us by the General Overseer, General Presbyters, and members of the International Presbytery, as well as all our leaders and members. As this Committee continues to serve the needs of this Church, issues arise, from time to time, which may require attention by the Committee without the convenience of a notice of study. Thank you for understanding.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Phil Pruitt, Chairman

Dr. Tim Harper, Secretary

Daryl Clark (appointed to Committee in 2020)

Dr. Delroy Hall (rotated off Committee in 2020)

James Kolawole

Dr. Sonia Martin

Dr. Rahadames Matos

Nelson Torres

Committee Note: The 2022 Term Limits Document is being held for Assembly discussion in 2024.

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# FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

## Report to the 2022 International Assembly

### OPENING STATEMENT

Having received additional input from each level of ministry after the release of our report, as it pertains to the need for higher accountability and transparency for all levels of ministry we preface our report with the following explanations for greater clarity.

Having pastors with occupations who decline receiving compensation from the tithe paid into the church then demanding it when they move or retire, our committee felt it was important to provide an example of good practice to document their actions for proper accountability. We also thought this action might provide much-needed assistance since the restructuring of the financial system in the early nineties, where the funds to N/R/S offices were impacted so dramatically.

The sections of our report with recommendations to the International Assembly for action are written to move toward a greater level of transparency at all levels. These administrative recommendations are designed to provide the supervisory level with recent financial information, not for their approval. However, approval should be obtained from each level of ministry and then submitted to those over us in the Lord. They then should use the information to assist and better equip those they serve toward best practices, working toward greater credibility.

The F&S Committee has also drafted a Code of Conduct referenced in the Bishop's Manual provided to all N/R/S Bishops and MDP COURSES available online- entitled, The Minister's Role as Leader and The Minister and the COGOP.

Information to assist you in preparing a budget or financial plan can be found in the above-cited resources to equip their leadership team with the need for financial planning and the skills to accomplish that goal.

## *Finance & Stewardship Committee Report to the 2022 International Assembly*

### GIVING FIRST

In the Finance & Stewardship Committee report of 2016 and 2018, we made this international body aware of adjustments made by the International Offices and our Global Outreach Committee that would allow all the nations of the world common opportunity regarding Harvest Partners and Harvest Grants. Local churches were released to allocate their mission and project giving to the state/region/nation or a local church of their choice, based on Holy Spirit guidance.

While these adjustments have assisted some levels of ministry, we, the Finance & Stewardship Committee, realize that great challenges remain to meet the needs of every level of ministry within our movement. We do believe that at this time, a systemic adjustment would only be an effort to reallocate or redistribute existing revenue streams. A redistribution of present income streams, while meeting one level's needs, would leave another lacking. As stated, we would from the 2018 International Assembly define efforts to collaborate with the general overseer, general presbyters, the Corporate Board of Directors, and the executive director of Finance & Administration to determine possible adjustments that would address the needs without weakening

another level. Consequently, we concluded, any adjustments made would only redistribute existing streams of revenue. Therefore, we have chosen to address the participation and partnerships of local churches with the International Offices through their giving of ten percent to the International Offices or the international account in their region of the world.

The general presbyters are to be commended for their work to address responsible participation in stewardship in their regions. Their call to live generously is based on biblical stewardship, much as Paul did with the Macedonian church when their giving went to extremes. Their extreme giving proceeded from a life of deep poverty while trusting God to meet every need. The Corinthian passage indicates no person, no nation, no state, or region is too poor to be generous and assume responsibility of caring for others in need within the body. *"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing"* (2 Corinthians 8:1-3 NKJV).

We are grateful and celebrate Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, North America/Canada, and South America who are participants in bearing the financial burdens of a global Church together. Each region's participation ranges from 1.5 percent of churches to 85 percent of churches.

While we celebrate what many are doing, we share these percentages to indicate the work we still have to do. As we can see, some are not participating in this partnership; therefore, we choose to ask you to prayerfully consider even in your deep poverty to adopt a generous lifestyle of "giving first." Jesus taught in Matthew 6 that there is a connection between our hearts and our finances. It seems from his words that the biggest competitor for our trust and dependence on him would be money. Giving is an opportunity to visibly and tangibly express our trust in him above all else.

*"When we give, we illustrate our belief that God can do more with a portion of what He has given us than we can do with all of it. We see this miracle every day in the international church body as He provides the means for ministry around the world. Through faithful giving, this church body has been able to accomplish greater works around the world, and for this, we commend the faithful tithing and giving of the Church of God of Prophecy"* (2018 Finance & Stewardship Report to the 2018 International Assembly).

## BIBLICAL ADMONITION

We present three areas of focus for us that God has provided to meet our needs. When we fully embrace stewardship as a core value, God will meet our needs in at least the following ways:

**1) The needs of the church are met through your own hands.** We encourage pastors and local churches to work together to address their financial responsibilities that would honor God and meet the needs within every congregation.

*"But you must remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to get wealth, so that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is today"* (Deuteronomy 8:18 MEV).

In the very beginning, God gave Adam and Eve the responsibility to tend things; therefore, he provided them with the ability to work. He continues to do so with us today. He provides us the ability to work and produce wealth.

**2) The needs of the church are met through the hands of others.** We encourage networking with others who have means and a heart to help.

*Paul writes, "I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless you did well having shared in my affliction"* (Philippians 4:13, 14 MEV).

God can and will use the people in your life to provide for the needs of every level of ministry within every state/region/nation/congregation/office in this church.

**3) The needs of the church are met through miracles of God.** God delights in doing what men cannot do. He delights in surprising his children with supply to every need.

*"Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity" (2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 NLT).*

Since the late 1990s, the direction of the Finance & Stewardship Committee has been evident. As we read the records of our Church history, an underlying tone and statement is clear. To quote the Finance & Stewardship Committee in 1998, *"Motivation and heart attitude are all important."* The Holy Spirit is shaping the heart of the Church of God of Prophecy. We have had a heart problem for far too long, and this committee desires to see the transformation of the heart be the focus that produces an attitude of "Giving First."

We, as individuals, churches, companies, businesses, and corporations, have been blessed in that a giving first attitude will meet the needs of this organization. While we have searched our hearts and minds to determine the best direction for this body to move by means of a financial system, we feel there are no qualified options to change the systems within our movement. However, as we seek to see the heart of this Church transformed to reflect Christ, the offices of this Church should continue to seek structural adjustments to their operations to fit within the current financial system. Those churches, individuals, companies, businesses, and corporations who are stronger among us should recognize that the Lord doesn't give us strength for status so we can lord it over others, but so we can disperse it among others weaker than ourselves.

All of us have an obligation to this body's membership, as instructed by Paul: *"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'" (Romans 15:1-3 NKJV).*

## SECTION 1: COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY

The Church of God of Prophecy, as an international body, desires that all who serve faithfully in ministry be appropriately compensated for their service in their area of ministry to recognize, retain, and motivate our ministers and employees. It is the goal of the Church of God of Prophecy that all who labor for the Lord in our organization be properly compensated for their work as these workers are worthy of their hire. You will also note, the elder is worthy of *"double honor"* (ref. 1 Timothy 5:17-19).

"The scope of ministry is broad around the world. Therefore, each local, state, region, national, international finance committee should develop their compensation philosophy within their area of ministry that would reflect the same goals as the International Offices' philosophy to be biblical, understandable, equitable, and economically responsible.

Therefore, this committee seeks to encourage each church to prayerfully and appropriately compensate our faithful servants who are endeavoring to equip every disciple of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission our Savior called us to embrace. We must assume an attitude that reflects giving first, a generous lifestyle, as illustrated in the 'Giving First' section of this report" (2018 Finance & Stewardship Assembly Report).

In the same attitude of "Giving First," in which the church desires to bless their pastor, it is equally important for our pastors to consider the work of the church prayerfully.

### ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION FOR SECTION 1

When a pastor has an occupational position or other means of financial support and desires not to receive remuneration from the tithe paid into the local church, the church should operate as follows:

- 1) A document should be drafted (an example is provided in this report) and submitted to the church conference for recording in the minutes that the pastor has declined the full tithe, or a portion of the

tithes given by the local church. It should clearly state that for the present pastor only, the tithes now belong to the local church for distribution in other areas of ministry or to be saved for the work of future pastors.

2) The local church treasurer shall send the ten percent portion of tithes the pastor would have paid, had the pastor received those tithes, to the state/regional/national office. This would ensure the state/regional/national office receives funds necessary to assist their respective work in equipping churches in their jurisdiction.

## SECTION 2: MISSION AND PROJECT GIVING

As the Church of God of Prophecy continues to expand in numbers and influence, we are arriving at the challenge of offering more awareness to the financial needs of Global Missions as it pertains to North America. We are challenged as a global Church to run the pace with this growth. It is a priority that all our leadership, pastors, and congregations are in full understanding of exactly how our Global Missions department is structured. In a recent interview, the Finance & Stewardship Committee learned some helpful information that could lead to a global Church engaged in mission giving.

The Finance & Stewardship Committee desires to guide a global Church in giving based upon our relationship with the Lord, rather than with a mandated systematic purpose. If we continue to view our giving as worship unto the Lord, it seems to have great benefits for everyone. When it is from a generous heart, rather than a coerced heart, everyone will benefit, and the Lord will receive the praise. We must remember, attitude is everything. Tithing and giving to satisfy Church of God of Prophecy guidelines is, in and of itself, not healthy. Paul writes, "The point is this: whosoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 ESV).

The vision of "Harvest Partners" established by Global Missions Ministries was to resource in the following manner:

- 1) Harvest Partners is to assist in raising funds for nations/states/regions where resources are not currently sufficient.
- 2) Harvest Partners facilitates connection and communication by promoting partnerships between local churches and nations/states/regions approved for participation.
- 3) Harvest Partners also provides a platform for accountability, reporting, and fund distribution. Participation in Harvest Partners was to be temporary until the nation/state/region gained sufficient strength to become self-supporting.

There are two arms to the Harvest Partner Ministry:

- Mission Giving—Formerly Level One

Mission Giving is for personal allotments, housing, travel, and the operation of national/state/regional offices. It can also assist with pastoral subsidies and outreach.

- Project Giving—Formerly Level Two

Project Giving is for specific projects such as buildings, transportation needs, ministry support, educational needs, outreach crusades, church planting, etc. The general presbyter must approve these projects.

What we have today as opportunities to resource and serve others in our global Church looks much different than it did in its conception. In 1915, when our former overseer, Bishop A.J. Tomlinson, instituted giving to World Missions, it was not his desire nor his goal to fund a nation for an indefinite period. He desired to

see funding as a means of helping a new nation become established, have sustained growth, and be self-supporting.

Over the past ten years, we have seen growth in mission fund giving. That came in greater focus as North America was included in 2014 as a Harvest Partner candidate. When choosing a region or nation to partner with, some criteria are important in selecting said areas. The following is for your consideration as points of criteria. The criteria established below brings the United States to a level of equality with the other nations of the world.

#### Criteria for U.S. Participation

- Eligibility for participation would be determined by the North America general presbyter, the Global Missions Committee, and the Global Missions coordinator.
- To assist this group in determining eligibility, areas considered for participation should provide financial statements for the last three fiscal years and their budget for the current year.
- Accountability is a biblical principle and vital to the integrity of Harvest Partners. For a state/region to be considered, 60 percent of their local churches must be reporting and tithing ten percent to the International Offices. Also, the overseer must have a solid record of tithing, reporting, and accountability to their general presbyter. Ongoing accountability for continued eligibility is required.
- Once a state/region is approved, the Global Missions department will make local churches, in the United States and self-supporting areas around the world, aware of their eligibility.
- A local church should make an annual commitment toward mission giving. A local church cannot partner with their home state/region.
- Each state/region approved for participation will be permitted to have up to five U.S. Harvest Partner churches and two churches outside of the U.S.
- Participating states/regions will be required to submit financials annually for review. This review will be done by the North America general presbyter, the executive director of Finance & Administration, and the Global Missions coordinator. Since the support is understood to be temporary, the review will serve to measure progress toward that goal. Once a state/region becomes self-supporting, their local church partners will receive communication of such so that the church may connect with other areas in need.
- Local churches will not send funding directly to the states/regions. To facilitate coordination and maintain consistency in accountability, reporting, and fund distribution, the funds will be sent with the Treasurer's Monthly Report to the International Offices just as it is with international Harvest Partners.
- The state/region will be required to provide progress reports and news from their area to report to the Harvest Partners. These types of newsletters are critical in maintaining connectivity.

These types of criteria are for accountability. The Global Missions Ministries coordinator, along with national and regional overseers, bring awareness to the financial needs within our global Church. However, all monies should flow to the International Offices. There are two specific reasons for this protocol. First, it is not about control, but about safety and security. Helping the money get to its intended purpose is the top priority. Second, it is about accountability to the donor and accountability to the leadership of the nation being gifted and funded.

This committee would like to honor those regions who have continued to remain faithful in mission giving and challenge those who do not to prayerfully consider sowing good seed into good soil that will produce a harvest.



## SECTION 3: BUDGETS

Today, the church does business in a culture that demands greater accountability. As leaders, we must not ignore whole-life stewardship that builds trust. The diminishing trust of people toward organizations is a clear indicator that accountability is critical.

To assist our churches and state/regional/national offices to be more transparent and have more accountability, a budget is a must. A budget creates openness to a growing vision, defines priorities in planning ministry needs, builds constituents' confidence and trust, and leads to a recognition that the ministries of the church are worthy of their support. It also builds confidence in the leaders and their management of the church's resources. The benefit for the church or state/regional/national office is that a budget gives you an administrative tool to evaluate your current work, look for solutions to envision your needs for ministry, and assist in accomplishing your mission.

Luke referred to, in our modern thinking, a budget when he said, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you" (Luke 14:28, 29 NIV).

A church budget is a dynamic document, reflecting the church's mission, vision, and ministry needs. The purpose of the budget is to develop a financial plan to facilitate ministry for a fiscal year based on projected income and spending. Some churches may think they are too small to have a budget. Having small amounts of income is not a determining factor for whether an organization should have a budget. Where there are income and expenses, a budget is a necessary management tool.

Developing this document is not the end of the process. It is the beginning—a significant first step. Each month, a church or national/regional/state office should compile a report that gives the actual income and expenses, the budgeted amounts, comparison for that period, and year-to-date amount. This report will give the church a better financial understanding of its financial resources and capabilities.

There are several ways a church can obtain assistance in preparing a budget or other financial matter. The Leadership Development and Discipleship Department of the Church has developed a pastoral track which can be accessed online. They have two courses for your reference. The first lesson is "Responsible Management of Church Finances" in *The Minister's Role as Leader* course. The second is "Financial Stewardship in the Church of God of Prophecy" in *The Minister and the Church of God of Prophecy* course. Both of these are available in English, Spanish, and French and soon to be in Portuguese, Swahili, and Afrikaans. On the Church of God of Prophecy's website (cogop.org), you can view a webinar on budgeting. You can also contact the office of the Executive Director of Finance at the International Offices or any member of the Finance & Stewardship Committee for questions and assistance.

For full accountability, after a budget is created and approved, it should be submitted to the office in authority over them. As such, a local church would submit a copy of their budget to their state/regional/national office; the state/regional/national office would submit its budget to its general presbyter, who submits his budget to the general overseer who submits his to the International Offices' Board of Directors.

The work of the budget is strengthened by church members who see the church's vision for ministry and have a passion for doing it. The process of budget development is the stewardship of financial resources entrusted by the constituents. It is not about money but about growing in Christ, as individual believers, as a congregation, and as administrators. It is about ministry to the congregation, the community, the nation and the world.

### ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION FOR SECTION 3

We recommend every level of ministry prepare a budget as a management tool and financial accountability report to office over each level of ministry. Once the budget is approved by the National/Regional/State/Local Board of Directors or equivalent thereof, it will be submitted to the level of ministry to which that ministry is accountable. Upon the completion of the fiscal year, the actual revenue/expenses vs. budgeted amount be assessed with explanations provided on any variances sent to the relevant authority.

## SECTION 4: GLOBAL TITHING PARTICIPATION

God's financial plan for his church is in tithing and giving. There is ultimately only one reason why Christians should be tithers—because it is biblical. The word tithe means “tenth.” Paying tithes was not introduced by the law; in fact, it preceded and succeeded the Mosaic law. The first mention of tithing is found in the Old Testament in Genesis 14, as Abraham sets to rescue his nephew Lot from the hands of a coalition of kings invading Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham not only succeeds in his rescue mission, but he also brought with him large amounts of goods recovered from his encounter with the enemy. Abraham was thankful to God for his blessings and success; and out of a grateful heart, he worshipped God by tithing. Verse 20 states, **“And he gave him tithes of all,”** meaning Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all—that is, a tenth of his increase.

There are ongoing discussions as to the relevance of tithing, contending that tithing is no longer a necessary practice since **“[we] are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14)**. Notwithstanding, the principle of tithing was introduced as a practice of gratitude and faith by Abraham, whom the author of Romans calls **“the Father of all who believe” (Romans 4:16 NLT)**.

God commanded Israel to tithe, and they were bound by such command to follow the Law. It was the Levitical priesthood to whom tithes were paid. **“I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting” (Numbers 18:21 NIV)**. Thus, as Abraham had paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest, so Moses required tithes paid to Levi's posterity. Thus, tithes paid was to support the work that the priest did in the tabernacle. In other words, tithes were to go for the service of God's work, supporting those dedicated to ministry (**Numbers 18:24–29**), supporting the needy (**Deuteronomy 14:28, 29**), and supporting outreach initiatives (**Deuteronomy 14:28, 29**). The prophet Malachi would later describe a physical location as the **“storehouse,”** which we believe is the church treasury into which tithes should be paid for the Lord's work.

The New Testament church continues to operate under this established, three-fold purpose. First, through Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth **“that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14 NKJV)**. Second, through the giving of the primitive church to support Paul's missionary efforts (**2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15**). Third, through the primitive church initiative to care for those in need (**Acts 4:35; 6:1–3**).

While the New Testament does not explicitly teach on tithing, it implies its continuity, and Jesus Christ himself made references to tithes in the Gospels endorsing the practice of tithing when he stated that he had not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but that he had come to fulfill them (**Matthew 5:17**). While Jesus took the time to condemn many of the legalistic practices of the Pharisees, he applauded them for paying their tithes, saying, **“These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23 NKJV)**.

God challenges us to prove him to ourselves, those around us, and to the world: **“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so that there will be food enough in my Temple; if you do, I will open up the windows of heaven for you and pour out a blessing so great you won't have room to take it in!” (Malachi 3:10 LBY)**.

This call of God to stewardship with tithing and giving is both personal and corporate. The individual has the responsibility to be obedient and faithful with all that has been entrusted to him or her: finances, time, talent, and resources. Your giving will enable the Great Commission to be fulfilled as Jesus commands: **“Go**

*ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20).*

Corporately, the church must be good stewards with all God has entrusted to its care. Its purpose is to be involved in every facet of the life of the believer, striving continuously to meet all aspects of the needs of the believer. *"And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved" (Acts 2:44-47 ESV).*

Our local churches globally are not consistently and fully participating in sharing the ten percent of the tithe from the local churches to the International Offices. In this regard, we take this opportunity to remind all local churches of the Corporate Tithing Recommendation, which was adopted in the Assembly 2002. Although we should avoid legalistic demands, the very structure of the creation of God contains the principle of tithing and giving. In the New Testament, churches were taught the importance of sharing their resources to meet the needs of their brethren beyond their local churches. The apostle Paul directed Corinth to follow in the practice of the churches in Galatia by sharing their resources or gifts to help the mother church in Jerusalem (*1 Corinthians 16:1-3*). He called upon them to come into loving submission to his authority and share their financial blessings with the greater body. Similarly, our Assembly has given directives to our churches today to practice the sharing of their tithe and offerings to bless the global Church. As local churches bear their gifts to this God-ordained authority, they, too, shall prosper from such obedience in love. In our Church history, it has been our practice to support the global ministries of this worldwide body through the sharing of ten percent of the tithe from our local churches to the International Offices, and through mission and project giving, Helping Hands, as well as the Assembly Expense as adopted by the International Assembly.

Because this is a biblically sound practice, we, therefore, recommend that our dedicated congregations continue in these faithful and charitable practices so that our future acknowledgments of percentages of nations in regions of the world would convey 100 percent participation.

## ASSEMBLY EXPENSE OFFERING

Every two years, we gather to celebrate our International Assembly, and this occasion brings a great opportunity for fellowship, inspiration, and connection. The International Assembly is also the platform where we attend the business of the Church. The International Assembly has a special place in our hearts. Its roots go back to the foundation of this movement, and it has become an important part of our identity. In our 99th International Assembly held in 2016, this committee made a recommendation to promote an annual offering to offset the expenses generated by the Assembly, which was approved. Due to the generous contributions of our members located in the seven regions of the world, we were able to conclude the 2018 Assembly with all expenses paid in full. As we all give from a heart of generosity, we are convinced that as every one of our members contributes to financing the cost of our International Assembly, we will conclude this important gathering with all the expenses paid.

Humbly Submitted,

Nathaniel Beneby  
Clarence Berry  
Daniel Felipe  
Scott Gillum, Chairman

Clint Knowles  
Ryan Napalo  
Rupert Neblett  
Paulette Wilbanks



## DECLINE COMPENSATION FORM

Name of Local Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Local Church: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to not receive the following in salary  
for serving as pastor of the local church at \_\_\_\_\_.

## TO NOT RECEIVE:

- ☐ 100 Percent of Tithes
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ Percent of Tithes
- ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ Per Month in Tithes

The local church treasurer is to forward ten percent of tithes to the International Offices, and the designated amount required by the state/regional/national office. Also, since the pastor is not receiving the tithe, ten percent of what the pastor would typically receive should be forwarded to the state/regional/national office.

Pastor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date recorded and submitted to the local church conference: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** A signed copy of this document should be provided to the pastor and the original kept in the church files. Once this document is recorded in proper business conference, the tithes received will be used at the discretion of the local church, finance committee, or board of directors.

Note: A signed copy of this document should be provided to the state/regional/national bishop, pastor, and the original should be kept in the church files.



# CORPORATE BOARD

## Report to the 100th International Assembly

### DISASTER ASSISTANCE APPRECIATION

The Board of Directors would like to first give praise to our faithful God for His continued grace and provision. We have faced unprecedented global challenges over these last few years, and He has been faithful. We have seen Him at work through the faithfulness of our people around the world, demonstrating again and again that little is much when He is in it. When individuals and congregations faithfully tithe and give through our church's financial system, they expand the efforts to give people everywhere the opportunity to know Jesus. Our tithing and giving stretch far beyond the walls of the local church or the International Offices and provide funding to impact the world through leadership development, church planting, evangelism, discipleship, disaster relief, orphanage support, help to the poor, construction, and support for our leaders around the world. Your faithful response to God continues to sustain and move the work of the Church of God of Prophecy forward.

### APPRECIATION FOR UKRAINE ASSISTANCE

We occasionally find ourselves faced with natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, and flooding. After each devastating event, the Church of God of Prophecy family responds with great generosity. While not a natural disaster, your response to the situation in Ukraine has been inspirational. You have given more than \$310,000 for Ukraine relief. These incredible acts of compassion have ministered to and will continue to affect countless lives. As a voice for those who have been blessed by your giving, we say thank you.

### ECFA

The Board of Directors remains committed to maintaining the highest levels of financial integrity and accountability. This is reflected in our ongoing association with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). The ECFA is an agency that provides accreditation to leading nonprofit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with established standards for financial accountability, fund raising, and board governance. Accreditation is reevaluated every year and we are pleased to announce that we have been successfully evaluated and approved every year since our original evaluation in 2012.

### AUDIT PROCESS

The board's commitment to maintaining the highest levels of financial integrity and accountability is also reflected in our partnership with one of the premier auditing firms in the United States. Our association with Batts, Morrison, Wells, and Lee started with the 2019 audit and has continued through the recently completed 2021 audit. In addition to our partnership with BMWL, the board has also instituted an Audit Committee to monitor the audit process and report to the board. The Audit Committee is comprised of members of the Corporate Board and the Finance & Stewardship Committee. The current members are Llewellyn Graham (chairperson), Jeffrey Davis, Nathaniel Beneby, Paulette Wilbanks, and Rupert Neblett. As a result of the Audit Committee's leadership, we will be implementing an internal audit function this fall.



## **TOMLINSON COLLEGE PROPERTY**

In the 99th International Assembly, the Finance & Stewardship Committee requested and received approval for the Board of Directors to pursue selling the former Tomlinson College Property. Several parties have expressed an interest in the property, but it has not been sold. There are eight commercial buildings and six residential apartments available for rent on the campus. Seven of the eight commercial buildings and all six residential apartments are currently leased. The board feels confident that, at some point, the right buyer will come forward. Until a sale is finalized, we will endeavor to produce a positive revenue stream through rental income.

## **ONE ACCORD CURRICULUM**

Our Church of God of Prophecy curriculum, One Accord Resources, continues to be one the of best and most widely circulated in the Pentecostal market. Several movements have now partnered with us in the use or circulation of our One Accord Bible Curriculum. The International Pentecostal Holiness Movement, Pentecostal Church of God, and the Church of God of Prophecy have worked together for many years. Since the past Assembly, the Church of God of Cleveland, TN has become a member of One Accord Resources, and are now selling our full line of One Accord curriculum as their own. And the Assemblies of God continues to sell GAP, our young adult curriculum as their own. All these partnerships prove that the quality of material being produced by our movement through the White Wing Publishing House is second to none.

White Wing is very excited to have recently introduced the new High School material called SEEN. This new content is specifically geared for the challenges today's young people face, covering topics such as depression, technology, and developing a healthy self-image. All of the additional resources are available online as downloadable materials. We are also currently working with our partners on the possible development of a completely online curriculum that we hope will be available in the future.

We would like to encourage our churches to pursue Bible based discipleship and to be a part of this partnership by purchasing and using One Accord curriculum.

## **IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC**

Our global church family grieves the loss of so many faithful members and leaders who died during the COVID pandemic. There are local churches that lost members and pastors. There are state/regional/national offices that lost overseers and leaders. As a board, we grieve the loss of two members of the board, Bishop Stephen Masilela, General Presbyter of Africa and Bishop Terry Gann, Senior Pastor of the Woodland Hills Church in Alabama. Can we bow our heads for a moment of silence to honor Bishop Masilela, Bishop Gann, and all those who left us during the pandemic?

We have all felt a sense of loss through this difficult period. But, amid grief and the loss of normalcy in our churches, ministries around the world found creative ways to share the good news with a hurting world. Small churches have testified to the impact of virtual services as many reached more people while ministering virtually than they have ever reached in person. Connections were created with those confined in their homes who desperately needed ministry.

There are areas of the world where the financial impact was indeed devastating and we do not want to downplay that fact. At the same time, there are praise reports from a great number of our churches that 2020 was their best year financially. Tithing and giving set records in many local churches.

At the International Offices in 2020, mission giving was down, but domestic tithes received set an all-time record. The board redirected non-designated budget funds to create a COVID relief fund. Our International Office departments wanted to participate, so most all contributed a portion of their departmental operating budgets to this fund. As a result, we were able to pool over \$300,000 to assist with COVID related needs all over the world. This helped aid those areas where the financial impact was more severe. While our mission giving was down in 2020, the increase in tithing allowed us to maintain our mission support to the field without reductions or delays.

As the pandemic continued in 2021, tithes received surpassed the record set in 2020. In addition, overall mission giving set a record for the highest in history with the March World Mission Drive being the best in our history and the October World Mission Drive coming in second all time.

Through this challenging period in history, we have seen Jehovah Jireh at work through His people. We thank Him for comforting those who grieve and for providing for those in need. He is faithful.

## **CLOSE**

Finally, the committee would like to recognize our General Overseer, Bishop Sam Clements, for his outstanding leadership to the board over these last eight years. He has led with wisdom and integrity. His actions are prayerfully predicated on his love for God and for this church. He has left a lasting imprint on the Church of God of Prophecy, and he will be missed. It has been our honor to serve with him. Would you join with us in expressing our appreciation to Bishop Clements?

**Respectfully Submitted,**  
 Bishop Sam Clements, Chairman  
 Tim Coalter  
 Clayton Endecott  
 Ben Feliz  
 Clayton Martin  
 Tim McCaleb

Gabriel Vidal  
 Kathy Creasy  
 Paul Holt  
 Jeffery Davis  
 Llewellyn Graham  
 Gary Smith