



2024 MINISTRY POLICY MANUAL

OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD
OF PROPHECY

REFLECTS RULINGS THROUGH
2024 INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY



**MINISTRY
POLICY
MANUAL**

**CHURCH OF GOD
OF PROPHECY**

2024 EDITION

Ministry Policy Manual

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SECTION ONE

**ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURE**

I. Church of God of Prophecy Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the Church of God of Prophecy (also referred to hereafter as “the Church”) exists and operates at three interdependent levels—international, national/regional/state, and local. The international level of the Church functions on a worldwide basis and provides a global network of support and interaction for the Church’s ministries in all 50 United States and more than 130 other nations. The national/regional/state level provides more focused leadership and support directly within the context of the nations, regions, and states where the Church is at work. The local level is the heartbeat of the Church, providing caring congregations in more than ten thousand cities, towns, and communities around the world where the Church’s mission is carried out daily. These local bodies of believers form the framework through which the Church achieves its objectives of worship, evangelism, equipping believers, and preparing for Christ’s return.

At all levels of organization in the Church, efforts are being made to retain dynamic flexibility in order to avoid stagnation. In increasingly complex and ever-changing societies, the ability to remain relevant to people’s needs is dependent upon the ability to respond to societal change in a positive manner without compromising truth. God is dynamic, not static; he is a God who moves and acts in the affairs of mankind. The Church is committed to being a mobile and pilgrim people who moves when he moves and who stops when He stops. Thus, the organizational structures described below are currently serving our mission, but they are subject to review and revision as the Holy Spirit may direct.

II. The International Assembly

The International Assembly is a meeting open to all members of the Church of God of Prophecy and serves as the highest decision-making body in the Church. Presently, the Assembly convenes every two years. The presiding bishop of the Church establishes the program and acts as general moderator for the Assembly. During discussions of doctrinal and business matters, every member has an equal voice. Non-members may attend these meetings; however, only covenant members may speak and cast expressions during the business sessions.

If a leadership session is needed in the decision-making process, only bishops and elders who labor in prayer and in the Word should dialogue the Scripture (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 41). To give further clarification to our decision-making process, we recommend that reports concerning policies, procedures, and finances presented by Assembly standing committees be accepted by overwhelming consensus. All matters of a doctrinal nature must be accepted by “one accord” (*93rd Assembly Minutes* 2004, 333).

The Assembly also provides times of inspirational worship, preaching, teaching, and fellowship. During the Assembly, the General Presbytery reveals the burden of its heart and provides vision for the direction it believes God is leading the church. Led by the presiding bishop, the General Presbytery also makes the final selection of all international leadership, including the national/regional/state bishops, international office appointees, and the Assembly standing committee members.

A. The Purpose of the International Assembly

The primary purpose of the International Assembly is to serve as an interpretative and decision-making body that deals with pressing universal truths requiring definitive decisions for translocal matters in expediting the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 1:21–23; Ephesians 2:13–16, 19–20; Acts 15:6–9). It is where members of the Church assemble under the headship of Christ to search the Scriptures. The Assembly accepts the Bible as its highest authority.

A secondary function of the Assembly is to decide on administrative actions the Church deems helpful in accomplishing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20).

Specific matters without universal impact, which pertain to particular areas of the world, will be handled by the presbytery in that area in harmony with accepted Assembly interpretations and rulings.

B. International Assembly Infrastructure and Committees

1. The Chief Moderator

The presiding bishop of the Church shall serve as chief moderator of the Assembly. In this role, in consultation with the

general presbyters, he will have the following responsibilities:

- a. The authority to convene an International Assembly as outlined by the International Assembly
- b. The moderation of the International Assembly
- c. The appointment of Assembly committees
- d. The facilitation of the decision-making process in conjunction with the Assembly counselors

2. Assembly Counselors

The general presbyters serve as the Assembly counselors. They are meant to serve in this role by supporting and advising the general moderator in facilitating the decision-making process during the Assembly. The assembly counselors may also be used by the general moderator, at his discretion, to assist in moderating the Assembly (*90th Assembly Minutes* 1998, 87; *88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 39).

3. The Role and Duties of the Assembly Committees

The roles and duties of the Assembly committees (Biblical Doctrine and Polity, Corporate Board of Directors, and Finance and Stewardship) have been defined in the following text. These committees are referred to as “standing committees” because the nature and influence of their work are ongoing even when an Assembly is not in session. These committees invest a considerable amount of time, effort, and cooperation to carry out their assigned functions as well as to provide the best ministry they can to this body.

In an effort to help clarify the Church’s policy regarding these various committees, the general presbyters have expressed their support for the Assembly committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity to define both the role and duties of the Assembly standing committees.

An Assembly Standing Committee is defined by the following criteria:

- a. appointed at the Assembly by the presiding bishop in consultation with the general presbyters
- b. functions on an ongoing basis with meetings outside the Assembly

- c. gives a report to the Assembly for consideration and response
- d. has a global scope or sphere of influence in this Church.

4. Corporate Board of Directors

- a. The Corporate Board of Directors (formerly known as the Administrative Committee; hereafter BoD) was developed in response to a 1983 Assembly ruling that united the General Properties Committee and the Executive Committee's role and responsibilities. (*83rd Assembly Minutes* 1988, 45).
- b. With the reorganization of the presiding bishop's office in 1991, the presiding bishop was given the authority to use his own discretion in appointing International Offices committees and in determining the number of persons who would compose such committees (*86th Assembly Minutes* 1991, 108).
- c. The BoD is appointed by the presiding bishop and serves to bring items of an administrative and practical nature to the Assembly for approval as needed. The BoD is to determine which of the various personnel and International Offices committees that need to report to the Assembly (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 150–151).
- d. It is not the responsibility of the BoD to set the agenda of the other Assembly committees [i.e., BDP and F&S], nor to dictate the agenda of the Assembly (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 43–44).
- e. The BoD will bring to the Assembly for its consideration all matters not under the jurisdiction of the other Assembly committees. Decisions are reached through overwhelming consensus (*90th Assembly Minutes* 1998, 89, 150).
- f. Input from the general presbyters will add a significant leadership dimension to the process of deciding matters that will be presented to future Assemblies. The role of the BoD will remain principally one of reporting decisions taken between Assemblies and clarifying existing working practices (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006).

During the transition between presiding bishops, by mutual consent of the incoming presiding bishop and his predecessor, arrangements for proper office accommodations and remuneration is to be made by the BoD (*94th Assembly Minutes 2006*).

The transitional growth of the administrative needs of the Church has required the BoD, under the direction of the presiding bishop, to take on more responsibilities.

The current role of this committee, by necessity, has grown out of need to assist the presiding bishop and general presbyters who represent the Assembly when it is not in session. With this understanding, some flexibility must be given the BoD to rightly serve in its role while also respecting the roles and duties of the general presbyters and the other Assembly committees.

5. Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee

- a. The Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee (hereafter BDP) is appointed by the presiding bishop to serve the Church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration.
- b. The BDP should reflect the international constituency of the Church (as much as possible). As a standing committee, the BDP members should interact with the international Church in the process of report development.
- c. The BDP is to prepare a preliminary expositional report that should be distributed to the Church no later than 90 days before the ensuing Assembly for their consideration. Additional expositional matters not included in the report should not be considered in that Assembly but in the following Assembly after a document is introduced and distributed; however, urgent matters may appear. This does not preclude any dynamic moving of the Spirit from giving direction.
- d. Matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration should be directed to the BDP Committee. The general moderator (presiding bishop), in consultation with the Assembly counselors (general presbyters) and the BDP Committee, may introduce matters

- of an emergency nature not included in the Assembly Report (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 150–151).
- e. In the interest of maintaining clarity and efficiency, it would seem wise for matters requiring biblical exposition to be solely dealt with by the BDP Committee (*90th Assembly Minutes* 1998, 89).
 - f. In order to give further clarification to the Church’s decision-making process, reports concerning policies, procedures, and finances presented by Assembly standing committees should be accepted by overwhelming consensus. All matters of a doctrinal nature must be accepted by “one accord” (*93rd Assembly Minutes* 2004, 333).
 - g. The intent of the expositional process is to provide each Assembly with a report(s) for discussion and distribution to facilitate study, prayer, and meditation until the next Assembly, when it would be presented for decision (*93rd Assembly Minutes* 2004, 111).
 - h. The BDP, upon request of the general presbyters, made a clarifying statement concerning the Church’s position on Church government which recognizes the delicate balance between the Church’s theological/ecclesiastical makeup and the business structure that we must maintain for legal purposes (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, 176–177).
 - i. Further, the BDP is to serve the Church by continually revisiting the Word of God to assure that we are walking in the light of truth. The BDP should not only bring matters to the Assembly for their consideration, but also meet with the leadership and other committees (as deemed necessary by the presiding bishop and general presbyters) to provide counsel in areas of doctrine and polity. They should also assist in the editing of the *Assembly Journals* and the *Ministry Policy Manual* to ensure that decisions made by the Assembly pertaining to doctrine and polity are accurately recorded.
 - j. It has been the practice of this body that subjects brought to the BDP for study or resolution come through the presiding bishop and general presbyters, by an official Assembly

decision, or on the basis of a matter's overwhelming importance and concern to the global Church.

- k. Expenses to attend meetings shall be reimbursed or provided as with other Assembly standing committees (*95th Assembly Minutes* 2008, 47).

6. Finance and Stewardship Committee

- a. The Finance and Stewardship Committee (hereafter F&S) is appointed by the presiding bishop to serve the Church by formulating and articulating biblically based and globally oriented financial plans and stewardship principles for Assembly consideration.
- b. The F&S should reflect the international constituency of the Church (as much as possible). As a standing committee, it should interact with the international Church in the process of report development.
- c. The F&S is to prepare a preliminary report that should be distributed to the Church no later than 90 days prior to the ensuing Assembly for their consideration. Any biblically based recommendation should be accompanied by scriptural references; any practical stewardship matter should include appropriate rationale. Additional matters not included in the report should not be considered in that Assembly; however, urgent matters may appear. This does not preclude any dynamic moving of the Spirit from giving direction.
- d. Matters related to finance and stewardship for Assembly consideration should be directed to the F&S. The general moderator (presiding bishop), in consultation with the Assembly counselors (general presbyters) and the F&S, may introduce matters of an emergency nature not included in the Assembly Report.
- e. The presiding bishop or International Assembly may utilize this Committee to assist in providing accountability and policy formulation in financial administrative processes (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 149–151).
- f. The F&S is to focus on practical matters, including

promotional and fund-raising projects. Thus, when determining the Assembly's expression, overwhelming consensus will determine all matters presented by the F&S.

- g. It is the responsibility of the F&S to establish and annually review the salary and benefits of the presiding bishop, general presbyters, and executive ministry directors and to develop an investment policy for the International Office funds (*87th Assembly Minutes* 1992, 61, and *95th Assembly Minutes* 2008, 47–51). Salaries and benefits of the other IO appointees (translocals) are determined by their respective executive director.
- h. All above-mentioned duties have been recognized so that the F&S may serve this Church in providing better accountability for all Church finances. Furthermore, this includes the use of the F&S to provide accountability in policy formulation in the financial administrative process and in setting salaries for the presiding bishop and general presbyters. Their counsel to the BoD is essential by providing broader insight and external review of financial decisions.
- i. Expenses to attend meetings shall be reimbursed or provided as with other Assembly standing committees (*95th Assembly Minutes* 2008, 47).

7. Assembly Business Procedures

The BDP has the authority to make procedural adjustments to the process for conducting Assembly business in collaboration with the general presbyters (*93rd Assembly Minutes* 2004, 112).

8. Local Church Pre-Assembly Process

In an Assembly year, each local church should begin reviewing any new recommendations coming before the Assembly upon the release of the Assembly business documents. These documents will be released at least 90 days prior to the Assembly business sessions.

The Assembly business documents will include procedural changes following the International Assembly committees' reports and recommendations. The Assembly moderator shall lead the Assembly delegates present in a dialogue concerning the

matter brought before the Assembly for decision. The delegates attending the International Assembly business sessions, with submission at all times to the Holy Spirit, will cast their expressions. Doctrinal matters will require a one-accord agreement, while matters of policy and practice (including financial matters) will be considered approved by overwhelming consensus. It is always the desire of the Church to allow for inspirational decision-making and discernment by the Holy Spirit in all our Assembly business sessions.

After the reading of the business being considered, the moderator will open the floor for discussion and decision. The motion to accept, along with a second to the motion, will be received. Then the statement, “All in favor,” will be extended, followed by “All opposed.” Should there not be a one-accord or overwhelming consensus expressed for a decision to be received (depending on which is required), the moderator will give opportunity to abstain or submit in agreement with the approved Assembly Business Procedures (*98th Assembly Journal [Minutes]* 2014, 29–31).

9. Recommendations as Official Rulings

When a recommendation and/or recommendations are presented in proper order by the International Assembly committees designated to do so, the said recommendation and/or recommendations, when accepted by the International Assembly, become the official ruling(s) of this Church body. Moreover, we regard only those recommendations which have been properly presented to and accepted by the International Assemblies of the past as the official ruling(s) of this Church body except in those instances where they have been subsequently amended.

III. Dynamics of Theocratic and Hierarchical Government

We recognize the delicate balance between the theological/ecclesiastical makeup of the Church and the business structure that we must maintain for legal purposes; therefore, upon request of the General Presbytery, the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity has made the following clarifying statement concerning our position on Church government:

From the inception of this Church body at the beginning of the twentieth century, our pioneering fathers realized the powerful dynamics of recognizing that in all ministerial and spiritual operations that we were to pattern ourselves after the theocratic principles of the Bible. At the same time, the wisdom of early church Assemblies also realized the critical need to develop a system of hierarchical government in all matters of business pertaining to property, monetary operations, and legal matters. This dynamic requires us as ministers and members to confess that this important balance would be needed to function in a secularized society that did not often reflect a belief in a “direct rule of God through Spirit-filled leaders.”

We hereby declare this Church to be a body striving to operate under theocratic principles in all spiritual, ministerial, and inspirational areas, but to recognize that we also function as a hierarchical government to maintain proper order and discipline in all areas pertaining to business and management of our organization. While this statement is being given to clarify our present type of government, this position has been reflected by past Assembly decisions and court rulings throughout our history. (*94th Assembly Minutes 2006, 177*)

A. International Presbytery

The presiding bishop, general presbyters, national/regional/state bishops, and the International Offices executive directors and ministers appointed to serve in translocal ministries constitute the International Presbytery. This body meets regularly at the International Assembly and other times as determined by the presiding bishop and general presbyters. It convenes for counsel, recommendations, and decisions on Church-wide matters that fall within its Assembly mandates. The General Presbytery may invite individuals to observe and/or address these meetings as deemed necessary (*Revised Governance Document, July 2016*).

B. General Presbyters / Plurality of Leadership

A move toward “plurality of leadership” was accepted in the 1994 General Assembly. This plurality of the presiding bishop’s office is represented by the general presbyters, one of whom is recognized as the presiding bishop. The presiding bishop is selected for

recommendation by the International Presbytery to the International Assembly for approval (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 154); whereas, the remaining general presbyters are selected and approved only by the International Presbytery (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 155). In both cases, general presbyters are chosen according to their giftedness by God for providing direction to the worldwide Church in accomplishing its mission.

General presbyters are selected by, but not limited to, persons from the International Presbytery as gifted by God to provide leadership to the worldwide Church in accomplishing its Christ-ordained mission. They work with the presiding bishop to provide shared-leadership responsibility in carrying out the functions of the presiding bishop by developing vision, processes, and plans in accomplishing the church's mission. The plurality of leadership is to stay abreast of the international Church's needs in order to facilitate its mandate of world evangelization:

The General Presbytery shall be composed of the presiding bishop and the general presbyters (chosen by the International Presbytery) assigned to specific areas of the world. If the presiding bishop in consultation with the general presbyters determines that additional general presbyters are necessary for specific areas of the expanding global work, the International Presbytery would have to approve this decision.

The presiding bishop and all general presbyters perform the duties of general oversight for the Church worldwide and for particular divisions or world regions of the Church. In this context, the presiding bishop would be chairman of the General Presbytery, with the two vice-chairmen (those chosen among the general presbyters to serve in day-to-day matters with the presiding bishop), who may also moderate the Assembly's non-business sessions at the discretion of the presiding bishop.

The General Presbytery is accountable to the International Presbytery and to the International Assembly for both their function and work. They shall meet twice yearly or whenever the need arises to handle administrative work and strategy. Although the general presbyters may have oversight for vision and order, they shall not view a specific area as their own domain to rule but seek consultation with the presiding bishop and the other general

presbyters as the need arises (*The Governance of the Presbytery* 2016).

IV. International Office

The work at the International Offices is carried out in four interrelated ministry divisions. These ministries work together across organizational lines to better serve the needs of the Church at large. Each area is led by an executive ministry director who selects and employs appropriate middle-management personnel and support staff. The ministry divisions and their responsibilities are as follows:

A. Inspirational Leadership

This ministry area provides spiritual oversight, vision, and direction to the Church as a whole. Responsibility for credentialing and ministerial discipline rests with this ministry. It is also to provide the arrangements necessary for conducting the International Assembly. This area consists of the presiding bishop and the general presbyters.

The office of the presiding bishop is recognized within the Church of God of Prophecy as one that provides, to the membership in general and the leadership in particular, God-given direction to accomplish the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20) given by the Lord Jesus Christ. The presiding bishop, selected (without ethnic preference) by and accountable to the International Assembly, should have freedom to exercise his spiritual giftedness and realize the potential for ministering as the Holy Spirit directs. His selection is in accordance with the one-accord principle. He is responsible, in conjunction with the general presbyters, to carry out the following functions:

- a. Inspirational Leadership—Short-Term and Long-Range Planning
 - 1) World outreach evangelism
 - 2) Representation among others involved in the kingdom of God
 - 3) Leadership development
 - 4) Special events/meetings
 - i. International Assembly/International Assembly Task Force
 - ii. Presbytery meetings

iii. Other

- a. Administrative/Executive Duties
 - 1) Appointment of general and area leadership
 - 2) Establishment of ordination and licensure requirements and procedures in conjunction with the International Presbytery
 - 3) International Offices committees—serve as ex-officio members
 - 4) Stewardship—international budget and planning
 - 5) Representation for the International Assembly in legal matters
 - 6) Development of plans for infrastructure to meet the changing needs of the body
 - 7) Management and implementation of infrastructural changes
- b. Oversight of the Ministry
 - 1) Pastoral oversight
 - 2) Discipline
 - 3) Counseling
 - 4) Education
- c. Prayer Ministries
- d. Accountability for General Oversight and the Implementation of International Assembly Recommendations
 - 1) To International Assembly through the Corporate Board of Directors
 - 2) To International Presbytery through spiritual recognition/confirmation

B. Global Communications

The division of Global Communications of the Church of God of Prophecy is dedicated to advancing the Church’s mission by connecting, inspiring, and equipping its global community. Entrusted with proclaiming the wonderful works of God to all nations, the division unites the editorial, art, digital magazine, information technology, translation, web, and media services of the International Offices under a single leadership structure to enhance collaboration, strategic planning, and accountability. Committed to crossing cultural and linguistic barriers, the

division ensures that the Church's message is accessible and impactful in diverse contexts around the world. Clear communication and intentional partnerships bridge the Church's global vision with every ministry level, ensuring that members, ministers, and local churches have the tools they need for evangelism, spiritual growth, engagement, and impactful ministry. This effort is further strengthened by a dynamic network of national, regional, and state communication liaisons, extending the division's impact at every level.

C. Leadership Development and Discipleship

Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries consists of five distinct but unified departments: Accredited Ministry Development (AMD), Center for Biblical Leadership (CBL), Children's Ministries (CM), Spirit and Life Seminary (SLS), and Youth Ministries (YM).

Leadership Development and Discipleship exists to engage and develop leaders so that they are equipped to make disciples. The ministries of Leadership Development and Discipleship provide leadership and discipleship resources and training opportunities for the Church of God of Prophecy globally.

D. Finance and Administration

Finance and Administration is responsible for the management of financial, administrative, and publishing functions. This division integrates administrative services and ministries through accounting, managing properties, promoting stewardship, and operating the Global Missions Ministries.

SECTION TWO

**NATIONAL /
REGIONAL /
STATE
MINISTRY**

I. Translocal Ministry

The Assembly has agreed that there is a functional, apostolic ministry in these last days, and this ministry does not operate as the original foundational apostles. International Offices ministries, general presbyter offices, and the national/regional/state bishops are expressions of an ongoing apostolic-type ministry that is still needed in the Church. Persons that fill such a role should be individuals who have a calling on their lives to fulfill this type of ministry. They should be experienced individuals who have long field tenure and have manifested the anointing and giftedness for a translocal ministry before they are appointed to such responsibility. This is not meant to limit the Holy Ghost from calling and raising up whomever he chooses.

Their ministerial function may be changed when it becomes apparent that the sense of anointing has departed and that they have been released from the burden of the translocal work. Rotation of translocal, gifted workers should not be based solely on years of service or age factors, but on matters of giftedness, ability, competence, and anointing. Those responsible for the appointment of the translocal ministry should be in brotherly consultation with the person well in advance of any decision to change the role of ministry. If at all possible, a mutual agreement should be reached between those who make such appointments and the appointees regarding their future role of ministry.

II. National/Regional/State Bishops

“If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

A. Responsibilities of a National/Regional/State Bishop

The office of a “servant-leader” (national/regional/state bishop) is a biblically based function in the church. To fulfill the office of national/regional/state bishop is an awesome responsibility. There are many national/regional/ state bishop 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, or state.

The caring national/regional/state bishop must always make himself available for personal counsel with any minister or local church

representative in his assigned area. This is not to say that the national/regional/state bishop should address every situation; rather, when possible, the various levels of leadership should function so as to allow the body ministries to operate fully. The national/regional/state bishop should encourage delegation of all ministerial functions, including his office work, but should always remain ready to support and undergird any and all church work under his “servant-leadership.”

It is most important that the national/regional/state bishop commit priority time in prayer and biblical studies, as well as the planning, promoting, and evaluating of the ministries which will serve the spiritual needs and potentialities of the churches. The national/regional/state bishop must feel a deep commitment to the New Testament principles, equipping the ministry and laity.

The national/regional/state bishop should desire to give special attention to the development of a ministerial, educational program to better equip the ministry, as the ministry is a biblical gift for the purpose of equipping the saints for body ministry. Departments in the Leadership Development and Discipleship (LDD) ministries will assist the national/regional/state bishop in developing this educational program.

The office of the national/regional/state bishop has a broad base of responsibility and authority within the nation/region/state assigned by appointment. The “servant-leader” (national/regional/state bishop) should use power and authority with restraint and be very careful not to abuse either the authority or the influence of his office. Also, he must be careful not to promise people more than he can deliver.

The national/regional/state bishop should strive to build the character that reflects openness, honesty, fairness, and godly firmness in all his relationships. It is most important never to betray the confidence of the ministry or laity in his nation, region, or state.

The role of national/regional/state bishop provides a challenge for the development and growth of the churches. He can spark revival in his assigned area by giving himself to prayer and to ministering the Word. He can effect mobilization of all energies that are committed to the Church, resulting in spiritual and numerical growth of the organized

churches, as well as the establishment of churches in new communities. He can equip and develop spiritual leaders by giving himself to the joy of discipleship.

B. Principal Function

The national/regional/state bishop is responsible for the organizational structure, implementation, and administration of the total ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy in a given nation, region, or state, as well as the supervision of the ministers and personnel involved in those programs and ministries.

C. Appointment

1. The national/regional/state bishop is appointed by the general presbyter in consultation with the presiding bishop.
2. He should reside in the nation/region/state over which he is made bishop (where possible).
3. As a normal rule, the national/regional/state bishop will be notified two or three months prior to the International Assembly if his ministry is to be changed. The national/regional/state bishop will be contacted by his general presbyter through an official communication prior to this time.

D. Relationships

1. The national/regional/state bishop is directly responsible and accountable to the general presbyter in the area where he serves.
2. The national/regional/state bishop must maintain a “servant” relationship as he directly supervises the national/regional/state office staff, programs, and ministers.
3. The national/regional/state bishop is responsible to appoint pastoral leadership for each local church, and in a sense, he is the pastor for all the ministry in his area.
4. The presiding bishop, the general presbyters, and staff members of the International Offices are always available to the national/regional/ state bishop for counsel and support.

E. Qualifications

(These are broad-based qualifications.)

1. A man of proven ability and experience (not a novice)—1 Timothy 3:6
2. A loyal, ordained Church of God of Prophecy minister (or bishop) committed to the church's biblically mandated mission

F. General Responsibilities

The presiding bishop, general presbyters, national/regional/state bishops, and the International Offices executive directors and ministers appointed to serve in translocal ministries constitute the International Presbytery. This body meets regularly at the International Assembly and at other times as determined by the presiding bishop and general presbyters. It convenes for counsel, recommendations, and decisions on Church-wide matters that fall within its Assembly mandates. The General Presbytery may invite individuals to observe and/or address these meetings as they deem necessary (*Revised Governance Document, July 2016*).

Among the responsibilities of the bishops serving in the International Presbytery are the following:

1. Licensing and ordaining of ministers (*36th Assembly Minutes* 1941, 92; *88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 153)
2. Disciplining of ministers (*82nd Assembly Minutes* 1987, 56; *54th Assembly Minutes* 1959, 128, 256; *58th Assembly Minutes* 1963, 126, 256)
3. Disbanding of churches (*71st Assembly Minutes* 1976, 134)
4. Restoring ministers (*82nd Assembly Minutes* 1987, 47)
5. Dealing with ministers who preach contrary doctrine (*54th Assembly Minutes* 1959, 128)
6. Dealing with ministers who usurp authority (*58th Assembly Minutes* 1963, 126)
7. Handling certain matters pertaining to marriage (*78th Assembly Minutes*, 1983, 137; *80th Assembly Minutes* 1985, 139)
8. Establishing procedures and policies for ministerial license (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 153)

Those who serve as national/regional/state bishops are responsible for the appointment of pastors within their designated areas. Bishops who have this responsibility should fully consider the needs and desires of both the pastor and local church to ensure their maturing and growth. Each national/regional/state bishop, jointly with the ministerial review board of the nation/region/state (or group of nations/regions/states where necessary), should develop an appropriate pastoral evaluation process that is fair, orderly, and effective. Evaluations can be a means of self-improvement and accountability and provide opportunities for both commendation and admonition. Having them periodically and consistently builds confidence, gives assurances, and keeps the participants and those they serve well informed. The requirement of the ministry to equip the saints is such that sufficient time must be expended for the maturity of both the minister and the congregation.

G. Administrative Duties

(To be performed in conjunction with the plurality team of this national/ regional/state office)

1. To create and maintain all records pertaining to the national/regional/state work—such as minister’s reports, church clerk reports, ledgers, financial records, Finance and Stewardship Committee records, as well as any and all other files
2. To report the organization of new churches to the office of the general presbyter for record keeping and for forwarding to the presiding bishop’s office
3. To make monthly accountability reports to the appropriate offices
4. To officiate at all ordination services in his nation/region/state; to process new minister’s applications; to sign credentials of all ministers in his area who have been approved by the presbytery, and to serve along with the presiding bishop and general presbyters as a presbytery member in counseling, disciplining, and/or revoking ministerial credentials
5. To decide the geographical boundaries of each district in his assigned area

6. To discontinue or disband churches and report such to the general presbyter's office on forms prepared for such reports; to transfer members from disbanded churches to a church most convenient for the members
7. To implement resolutions and directives duly passed by the International Assembly

H. Supervisory Duties

1. To supervise, with the Finance and Stewardship Committee, all funds received and disbursed by the national/regional/state treasurer; to see that the reporting system of the Church functions promptly and accurately
2. To evaluate all national/regional/state reports and surveys as a means of measuring job performance and projecting future goals
3. To delegate responsibilities to others for more effective administration
4. To approve the setting in order of new churches before organization is effected
5. To contact pastors/ministers delinquent in reporting
6. To contact churches whose clerks are delinquent in reporting
7. To supervise and/or delegate the care and maintenance of all national/regional/state properties
8. To supervise all office administrative functions necessary to ensure proper oversight of the work assigned to the national/regional/state bishop

I. Promotional Duties

1. Leadership development—Mark writes in his gospel following Jesus' calling of leadership, "*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach*" (Mark 3:14). The phrase "that they should be with him" is an indication of the importance of developing the next generation of leaders. While the function of the national/regional/state bishop is great and encompasses a vast geographic area, it is necessary for them to find ways to

mentor a small group of future leaders—those who could possibly replace them in the future.

2. Evangelism and missions (home and abroad) are key to the mandated challenge of the church. Therefore, the national/regional/state bishop should place promotional priority on evangelism and missions. He should arrange for and assist in conducting a general evangelism campaign throughout his nation/region/state. Home and global missions should be promoted on a regular basis.
3. To promote, through the district supervisor, district activities; to also promote a national/regional/state convention or meeting at which the national/regional/state bishop will give general instructions relative to the growth and development of the ministry and churches as well as to conduct business pertaining to the nation/region/state
4. To promote all the departmental ministries of the Church. In most cases, the national/regional/state bishop will appoint national/ regional/state leadership for the departmental ministries, but the national/regional/state bishop should feel responsible to always give promotional directions when the opportunity arises.
5. To promote the free, digital *White Wing Messenger* as well as any other church-published periodicals and publications

J. Appointive Duties

1. To appoint pastors in consultation with the local church and ministers
 - a. As was requested during the business session of the 100th International Assembly, the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee offers the following definition: “In consultation with” does not require that a national/ regional/state bishop physically or digitally visit with the entire congregation, a pastoral committee, initiate a survey, or conduct a vote or expression. “In consultation with” may include any one of the following:
 - 1) A conversation with a key leader or key leaders in person, by phone, letter, email, or some other similar medium

- 2) Extending the opportunity to individuals who would like to convey thoughts to the national/regional/state bishop in his selection of a pastor
 - b. National/regional/state bishops are not required to engage in all of the above. “In consultation with” is a very broad provision. The national/regional/state bishop has latitude to use his discernment in the method and modality of consultation and is thereby not limited to the above suggestions. While “in consultation with” is preferred, there may be certain situations which make it uniquely difficult for, if not altogether impossible, for the national/regional/state bishop to consult with members of the local congregation. In these instances, the national/regional/ state bishop could consult either with the general presbyter and/or the national/regional/state bishop’s plurality team. Ultimately, the pastoral appointment is at the discretion of the national/regional/state bishop (*100th Assembly Journal [Minutes]* 2018, 78).
2. To appoint national/regional/state staff
 3. To appoint a national/regional/state ministerial review board
 4. To appoint national/regional/state boards and committees as needed
 5. To appoint district supervisors and any other personnel necessary to administrate the national/regional/state programs

K. Cautionary Rule

1. Before launching large financial projects, the national/regional/ state bishop should seek counsel from the general presbyter. The national/regional/state bishop must have the consent of the General Trustees before buying, selling, or encumbering properties.
2. For the purpose of emergency or economy, the national/regional/ state Finance and Stewardship Committee may pass a measure giving the national/regional/state bishop authority to make expenditures not to exceed a reasonable amount. No action or any disbursements of funds may be

taken unilaterally by either the national/regional/ state bishop or the Finance and Stewardship Committee.

L. National/Regional/State Evaluation Process

The evaluation process for national/regional/state bishops has been suspended for study, effective July 2024 (*102nd Assembly Journal* 2024, 82–83). This does not prohibit evaluations from taking place should the general presbyter deem it necessary for such to be conducted in his area.

SECTION THREE

**LOCAL
CHURCH
MINISTRY**

I. Organizing a New Local Church

After a new area has been evangelized, and the people have been made acquainted with the Church through its prominent Bible doctrines, teachings, and scriptural standards for eligibility of membership, the minister in charge must come to a conclusion about the advisability of organizing a local congregation. No church should be organized without the approval of the national/regional/state bishop responsible for that area.

A. Considerations

1. The strength or weakness of the new church if organized with the prospective members, including any who may transfer from an already organized church
2. The prospects for future growth in view of the stability of the community's population and the attitude of the community toward the church
3. The availability of a building or regular place to hold services
4. The national/regional/state bishop's advice

All of the above being favorable, the national/regional/state bishop or authorized minister (bishop or licensed minister) acting as moderator may proceed with the business of setting the new church in order.

B. Organizing Procedures

The following procedures should be used in organizing a new church:

1. Be sure that some capable person will record the minutes of the organization of the new church.
2. The moderator should begin with a clear statement to the congregation concerning the intention to organize and explain the purpose of such organization according to the Scriptures.
3. The prominent teachings of the Bible should be carefully read and explained.
4. The moderator should give opportunity for any who desire membership to present themselves and then administer the Church covenant to them.

5. The moderator will appoint a clerk and treasurer, and other church officers, depending on the local situation and the willingness of such persons to serve.

If the national/regional/state bishop is not present, he should be notified of the new church immediately so that he may appoint a pastor.

C. Church Plant Reimbursement Policy

Newly established local churches will continue to report and send funds to their respective national/regional/state office and the International Office as outlined by the current financial system. After twelve months of faithful participation of the newly organized church in the present financial system, the International Offices and the national/regional/state office will issue an investment back to the local church, equivalent to 100 percent of the funds received from the newly established church, to support the ongoing work of the new church, effective January 1, 2025 (*102nd Assembly Journal 2024*, 78).

D. Local Church and National/Regional/State Treasure

In order to provide protection to the pastoral/ministry family and avoid a possible conflict of interest, and in the interest of fiscal integrity, pastors or members of the pastoral family should not serve as treasurers of the ministry body. (This also applies to the national/regional/state levels of ministry.)

In extreme circumstances, where there appears to be no other option, approval must be granted by the national/regional/state bishop. For nations, regions, and states, approval must be granted by the respective general presbyter (*98th Assembly Journal 2014*, 180).

E. Local Church Trustees

The role of local church trustees provided below is comprised of direct quotes from Assembly rulings regarding their authority and selection.

1. Authority

Since certain needs relative to the deeding of our church

properties are pressing in some localities, we recommend that this Assembly adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS it has been advised by competent attorneys that specific mention of proper authorities be stated in an effort to ease the complications arising in our endeavors to be recognized by the courts, and to facilitate the handling of deeds to our church properties,

BE IT RESOLVED that trustees to hold title to local church property for the Church of God of Prophecy with international headquarters at Cleveland, Tennessee, be selected by the local church either in a regular or called business meeting, said trustees to be vested with authority to bargain, buy, sell, convey, or encumber such property by mortgage or otherwise only when authorized to do so by the local church in regular or called business meeting, and with the consent of the General Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said consent of the General Trustees be evidenced by a separate writing or by the signature of the Chief Clerk of the said General Trustees, such documents to be notarized (*58th Assembly Minutes* 1963, 125).

2. Selection and Maintenance

Diligence should be given to the selection and maintaining of local church trustees for holding church properties. While it is not always necessary for changes in trustees to be immediately recorded on property deeds, any such change should be carefully recorded in the minutes of the local church conference in which the selection was made, and this record should bear the signature of the conference clerk and moderator.

We recommend that attention be given to this matter annually in business conference to make certain that any vacancies which might have occurred have been properly filled.

In those states or nations which require that registered deeds be likewise updated, this could be taken care of at the same time (*77th Assembly Minutes* 1982, 83).

F. Deeds for Church Property

(Quoted from *89th Assembly Minutes* 1996, 161–162)

The following resolution was adopted by the 58th Annual Assembly of

the Church of God of Prophecy, held in Cleveland, Tennessee, September 10–16, 1963:

WHEREAS it has been advised by competent attorneys that specific mention of proper authorities be stated in an effort to ease the complications arising in our endeavors to be recognized by the courts, and to facilitate the handling of deeds to our church properties,

BE IT RESOLVED that trustees to hold title to local church property for the Church of God of Prophecy with International Offices at Cleveland, Tennessee, be selected by the local church either in a regular or called business meeting, said trustees to be vested with authority to bargain, buy, sell, convey, or encumber such property by mortgage or otherwise only when authorized to do so by the local church in regular or called business meeting, and with the consent of the General Trustees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said consent of the General Trustees be evidenced by a separate writing or by the signature of the Chief Clerk of the said General Trustees, such documents to be notarized.

BE IT RESOLVED that state church trustees appointed by the state bishop to hold title to property for the Church of God of Prophecy with International Offices at Cleveland, Tennessee, be vested with authority to bargain, buy, sell, convey, or encumber such property by mortgage with the consent of the General Trustees. This applies to property being held by state trustees where churches have been disbanded or are too weak to function and to property that has been given to the state. All other property with title in the state trustees or a state Holding Association may be disposed of or mortgaged only by the consent of the state convention in session (modified in 1981).

Requests for Letters of Consent from the General Trustees must be sent through the office of the national/regional/state bishop and not directly to the General Trustees. A Warranty Deed form has been prepared and should be used where it is possible to do so (see appendix, p. 180).

G. Incorporation

In many cases, it helps in business affairs for local churches and states to be incorporated. Thus, the following resolution has been adopted:

Local churches must have the consent of the national/regional/state bishop to incorporate. Said bishop should work with the local church in drawing up the articles of incorporation, seeing there is no violation of previous Assembly rulings in regard to holding, selling, or purchasing of church property. We further recommend that the General Property Trustees draw up a standard set of articles of incorporation which could be used by states and local churches (*83rd Assembly Minutes* 1988, 45).

Inasmuch as the above recommendation allows for incorporation, it seems important to have a consistent approach in taking this action. Since the business world we live in today is becoming increasingly sophisticated, and the fact that it is not always possible to conduct the business of the church without formal, legal recognition, it seems appropriate to properly assist our local churches and nations/regions/states in this process as is deemed necessary.

H. Procedures for Incorporation

In an effort to ensure consistency and to offer a degree of protection in the pursuit and implementation of incorporation, the following procedures that should be adhered to closely:

1. Local churches must have the written consent of the national/regional/state bishop to pursue incorporation. This consent should be kept as part of the official records of the church regarding this matter. In the case of the local church, a copy of the actual incorporation documents (Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) should be sent to the National/Regional/State office.
2. The national/regional/state bishop should work with local churches in drafting the Charter/Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. In no case shall the incorporation documents violate current International Assembly rulings and guidelines in regard to the holding, encumbering, selling, or purchasing of church property, or the doctrine and polity of the church.

3. In the case of a nation/region/state incorporating, the consent shall come from the presiding bishop/general presbyter assigned such responsibility. The same provision for adherence to International Assembly rulings and guidelines shall apply, and a copy of the final draft and/or approved incorporation document shall be sent to the General Trustees of the Church of God of Prophecy at the International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. A sample of the model used by the International Offices can be obtained from the Trustees to be used as a guideline for incorporation. It should be understood, however, that the incorporation document developed must comply with appropriate state or national laws as well as the International Assembly rulings. Legal counsel should be obtained to properly draft such documents in compliance with applicable laws.
4. The International Offices of the Church has been incorporated as the Church of God of Prophecy located at 3720 Keith Street NW, Cleveland, Tennessee, as a Not for Profit, Religious, and Public Benefit Corporation within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (*90th Assembly Minutes* 1998, 90–91).

I. International Offices Charter (Articles of Incorporation)

The Amended and Restated Charter brings congruency to the operations of the International Offices and Assembly rulings and has been filed with the Tennessee Secretary of State's office. The most current copy of this document, approved by the Board of Directors, may be found in the appendix on page 171.

II. Disbanding a Local Church

To disband a local church means to disorganize or render it non-existent. Except in extreme cases, a church will have already ceased to function before it is officially disorganized.

The presbytery should not disband any work that is properly organized and functioning; in fact, it is not the practice to disband a church that is in working order with the probable exception of extreme cases. The only time it is necessary to disband a church is when the

members move away or become scattered and not enough members remain to carry on the services. Before a church is disbanded, if there are loyal members, they should be transferred to the churches nearest them. If there are members that are disloyal, they are to be notified, if possible, that the church is disbanded. Since they are disloyal, they could not be transferred, and their membership would automatically cease when the church is disbanded by proper authority.

No church should be disbanded by anyone other than the national/regional/ state bishop. The national/regional/state bishop should have the consent of his general presbyter as well as the presiding bishop before disbanding a church. Special care should be given to members when disbanding a church. They should be contacted for the purpose of assessing their feelings and noting the church to which they desire their membership transferred. If it is known that members are disloyal, they should not be transferred to another church; however, special attention should be given them (*42nd Assembly Minutes 1947, 44*).

III. Church Membership

The following is recommended concerning membership: In the New Testament, people received the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, were baptized in water, and were added to the church (Acts 2:41–47; 3:19; Romans 10:10). Furthermore, they were expected to continue in a life of discipleship (Acts 2:42). Salvation is both instantaneous (new birth, regeneration) and also the all-inclusive work of redemption, beginning with regeneration and culminating with the glorified body (Hebrews 9:28). In the context of the Book of Acts and especially in the verses of them being “added to the church,” the instantaneous aspect of salvation is evident. Regarding the Church of God of Prophecy, membership requirement should be an individual’s experience of salvation (which includes repentance, denouncing, and forsaking of sin) and their public commitment to the Church covenant. Membership in the Church denotes acceptance, which is a basic need of every new believer.

In accordance with the New Testament pattern and principle, once a believer has been received into the Church as a member, it is important that every pastor and church use godly discernment in the discipleship

process. Ongoing discipleship, nurturing, and discipline by the pastor and church are very important for those who become members (Acts 16:4–5; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11). Henceforth, we further recommend that the Church of God of Prophecy, in general, develop a program of extensive discipleship to help all our members mature in Christ Jesus. This will require great wisdom and loving care by our leadership and people as we continue in the harvest (*93rd Assembly Minutes 2004*, 112).

Church membership is a biblical principle, and those who desire to join themselves to the Church are making an important decision. Great care should be taken by both the candidate for membership and the minister who is to officiate the service to ensure that there has been sufficient prayer and counseling.

A. Adding Members to the Church

It is the responsibility of the pastor who will be the shepherd of the new member to ensure that the candidate for membership is familiar with the teachings, government, and practices of the church. Stress should be placed on the following points:

1. The Teachings Made Prominent

The Church teachings should be thoroughly explained with an opportunity given for any questions the applicant may have. Special explanations can be made about those teachings that have particular public implications in today's moral climate, such as (1) abstinence from all liquor or strong drinks; (2) concerning tobacco, opium, morphine, etc.; (3) membership in lodges/secret societies; and (4) marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

2. Walking in the Light

It should be distinctly understood that a saved member is expected to go on to water baptism, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues. Walking in the light also includes keeping pace with the advancing church program as it moves forward to perfection.

3. Loyalty to the International Assembly

This should be presented as participating in and being loyal to the

worldwide church, which stands for the whole Bible, rightly divided. This includes helps and governments (1 Corinthians 12:28).

4. Business Responsibilities

A prospective member should be aware that they are not only joining as a member of the local church, but also as a member of the Church of God of Prophecy worldwide body as a whole. Therefore, the individual may participate in the business of the Church at the international level in addition to their respective local and national/regional/state levels during business conferences.

5. Divine Healing

The applicant should be encouraged to exercise faith in God to heal.

6. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Since there is so much controversy on this subject among Christians, it is important that this Bible teaching be explained. To this end, the 94th International Assembly in 2006 considered, amended, and passed *The Biblical Institution of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* Document (94th Assembly Minutes 2006, 152).

7. Tithing and Giving

The biblical plan for paying tithes into the local church treasury and giving offerings for the support of the church's program should be explained, showing the promised blessings of God upon those who tithe and give.

8. The Church Covenant

The obligation for membership should be explained.

B. Administering the Covenant

The prominent teachings should be read and explained again just before giving an opportunity for church membership. When all are satisfied, the minister should invite anyone who desires membership to stand before the congregation. It will then be asked of the local

church if they know of any reason why any applicant should not be accepted as a member. If there are objections from the local church, the applicant should be asked to wait for counseling. If there are no objections, the minister should administer the following covenant:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses that you will accept the [this] Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided—the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government, and discipline, and walk in the light to the best of your knowledge and ability? The answer is, I will.

Ministers should be encouraged to continue administering the membership Covenant to new members. Further, all translations of this Covenant should have the same content (*100th Assembly Journal* 2018, 71–72).

It is important that each potential member responds affirmatively to the obligation. Then the minister may say, “By virtue of the authority that is vested in me as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I pronounce you a member of the Church of God of Prophecy.” It is customary to allow the congregation to extend the right hand of fellowship, welcoming the new member(s) into the church. The local church clerk should record the name and address of each new member immediately.

C. Transferring a Member

Transfers should be made only by order of the local church in regular or called conference, or when a church ceases to function, in which case, the national/regional/state bishop can transfer members. There should not be undue delay in presenting requests for transfers to the conference for action after they have been received (*69th Assembly Minutes* 1974, 130).

When a transfer of membership is made from one church to another, we recommend that the church clerk to which the transfer is sent advise the church clerk from which it was received as to whether it was accepted. The transfer should be accepted or rejected not later than the next regular conference (*59th Assembly Minutes* 1964, 131). The Membership Transfer Form may be found in the Appendix on page 179.

D. Teachings of the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy stands for the whole Bible rightly divided—the New Testament as the rule of faith and practice, government and discipline. Some of the basic Bible beliefs and teachings of the Church are listed in a later section of this manual titled, “Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy.”

E. Bible Translations

There has been a tremendous advance in scholarly work concerning biblical translations that has utilized the increased knowledge of the original languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Additionally, cultural understandings of modern English, Spanish, French, and other languages have made the archaic words of past translations more difficult for the average reader to comprehend and respond appropriately. Furthermore, the message of the gospel is now being translated into scores of other global languages. Daily, we are challenged to face the need to present the gospel in the most effective methods possible to reach all nations.

The Church of God of Prophecy has become an international movement encompassing many languages and cultures. As such, we must affirm the diversity of appropriate translations needed for the ever-widening harvest throughout the nations. All humankind needs to hear and read the “good news” in the language that speaks to their understanding.

In light of this urgent need of the harvest, we encourage our ministers to use appropriate translations in their preaching that will bring all people to the saving light of Jesus Christ. While we embrace earlier translations such as the King James Version (English) and the Antigua Version de Casiodoro de Reina (Spanish), we also want to encourage our ministers to use other legitimate and reliable translations to plant the seed of the gospel of Jesus into every hungry heart and to inspire a deeper understanding of God (*96th Assembly Minutes* 2010, 46–47).

F. The Presence and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit

The Church of God of Prophecy wants to go on record as believing and practicing the presence and manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

While there has always been a need among our leadership and pastors to maintain biblical order and decent behavior in the House of the Lord, such zeal for structure and fear of false manifestations of the Holy Spirit should never be practiced in a manner to “quench the Spirit” or “despise prophecies” (1 Thessalonians 5:19–20). Subsequently, this should encourage us to embrace “spiritual discernment” that enables church leaders to both enhance and encourage the genuine moving of the Holy Spirit that edifies and comforts believers. Scriptures are abundant throughout the New Testament in that such ministries are a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send to us “another comforter” (John 14:16–17). Furthermore, the Bible undeniably declares, “. . . Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

In the Church of God of Prophecy, our roots lie in the Holiness-Pentecostal historical tradition that is anchored to biblical truth. If there is no evidence in our church services today to give witness to this outward manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we will simply appear as imposters. On the other hand, when the Spirit is active among us, his anointing is obvious to unbelievers and will work powerfully in their hearts and lives. We encourage this ministry body to pray, entertain, and welcome genuine miracles, healings, speaking in tongues, and other manifestations such as described in 1 Corinthians 12. These must no longer be the rare exception or never practiced; rather, we commend to our pastors and leadership that these gifts, the very moving of the Holy Spirit, will draw men and women to come and see what is happening within your community of believers. We encourage our ministers and our people to freely use their anointed gifts to minister to others (1 Peter 4:10–11).

Let the Church be Spirit-filled and ready to offer deliverance, inspired truth, and real-life victory. We are truly thankful that there are areas in the world where the flames of the Spirit are burning brightly, and we commend such fervency with an admonition to continue to allow the Holy Spirit to spread. Indeed, we must now

commit ourselves once again to be churches filled with the spiritual outpourings that can refresh and change people's lives (*96th Assembly Minutes* 2010, 47–49).

IV. Church Discipline

A member who has become disloyal or unrepentant presents a challenging problem for the local church and the pastor. Before dealing with such an individual, biblical attitudes must be prevalent in the lives of those seeking to bring about reconciliation. Such attitudes are love, patience, and humility.

A. Objectives of Church Discipline

Those who must deal with this problem should have the soul of the erring one on their hearts, not his/her wrongdoing or failings (Galatians 6:1). If possible, these should not be mentioned. Three “objectives” (or considerations, targets, or goals) should be kept in mind:

1. The Glory of God

Anything that properly requires discipline is dishonoring God. If a sinner is recognized as a member of the church, the body of Christ, this reflects on God's holiness, making him appear to approve of sin.

2. The Purity of the Church

It is only through formative and corrective discipline that local churches can advance in purity and perfection. Urging the expelling of an unworthy member, Paul said, “. . . Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6).

3. The Spiritual Good of the Member

The persons who exercise discipline should have as their ultimate objective the salvation or restoration of the erring member. This is the principal reason for church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:3–5).

B. Classes of Offense

Two different kinds, or classes, of offense are described in the New Testament:

1. The Private or Personal Offense

This is an offense brought about by one member who is in conflict with another. In Matthew 18:15–17, our Lord instructs us to begin reconciliation by private confrontation. Thus, the first step is to go to the offender privately and seek to bring about reconciliation. This may resolve the conflict. If not, the second step is to confront the erring one with one or two witnesses (preferably friends of the offender). If this effort proves fruitless, the third step is to bring the matter to the church for confrontation.

It must be remembered not to take the last step first; it must also be remembered that it is the offended one who is to select one or two witnesses to go with him/her to the offender. The church may elect to do this again later, but first, the offended one must do it. Up to this point, reconciliation has been the goal. When the church confronts the offender, then restoration becomes the church's goal (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15).

2. The Public or General Offense

This is an offense against the church that brings reproach on the body of Christ through unholy living, spreading false doctrine, or bringing division within the church. Such an offense is usually dealt with without delay. Paul warned Timothy to withdraw himself from those who consent not to wholesome words (1 Timothy 6:3–5). To the Romans he wrote, “. . . Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

Reconciliation of this magnitude requires a different approach from that of the private offense. The pastor, and perhaps the local deacons, should confront the offender about his/her attitude and intent. If there is no desirable change after one or two confrontations, the church may need to resort to exclusion (Titus 3:10). However, the church must realize that discipline is not punishment. Punishment has the past in mind; it is retributive. Discipline has the future in mind; it says, “We love you too much to allow you to continue repeating this offense.” The possibility of exclusion sets the stage for restoration by showing the severity of this kind of offense.

V. The Local Church Conference

A. The Constituents

The conference is open to every member of the local body. All members have a voice in business matters; however, the Assembly has advised that “children be given no voice until they are of age to use wisdom” (*45th Assembly Minutes* 1950, 110).

B. Types of Conferences

Local church conferences generally fall into one of two categories—regular or called.

1. Regular quarterly conferences are advised for each local church. A quorum consists of all members present at the conferences after due announcement.
2. A called conference may be convened by the pastor or national/ regional/state bishop at any time necessary—even at the beginning or close of a regular worship service. However, it is advised that
 - a. called meetings be announced ahead of time, especially for non-routine matters—transfers, for example;
 - b. a called conference should not be held unless the business cannot wait until the next regular conference;
 - c. business should never be transacted hastily or hurriedly, or as an effort to address issues while a known objector is absent;
 - d. only the business that necessitated the called conference should be acted upon in these occasions. Other matters may be discussed, but official action should not be taken unless the membership has been duly notified, and those present are agreeable to official action by overwhelming consensus or one-accord as the case may be. In the eyes of the law, “legal business” might be declared illegal if transacted without proper notice being given to the membership in advance.

C. Purpose and Objective

There are generally four purposes for the regular conference:

1. To keep all members informed of the progress of the local church by reviewing the work through reports of the clerk and treasurer, local leaders, and pastoral care ministry
2. To receive and grant membership transfers
3. To transact all other business relative to the efficient operation of the local church
4. To develop plans for the outreach and spiritual development of the local church

The objective of conferences is to obtain the best possible solutions to local church problems, giving all members equal opportunity to express themselves.

In light of the above purposes and objectives, it is advised that the general membership be informed of any official actions taken by the conference. After all, all members will be expected to cooperate in the actions of the conference, and they are entitled to know what was done.

D. Officers of the Conferences

Three officers are directly involved in local church conferences:

1. Pastor

The pastor is the moderator. If there is no pastor, the national/regional/state bishop has authority to serve as the moderator or to appoint a licensed minister to preside.

2. The Church Clerk

The church clerk keeps the minutes of the meeting, reads the previous minutes and all papers and correspondence as requested, and signs the officially accepted minutes along with the moderator.

- a. The specific duties of the church clerk are

- 1) taking and recording the minutes of all business procedures
- 2) sending out and receiving membership transfers
- 3) writing letters authorized by the conference
- 4) answering requests for information from the national/regional/state office and International Offices

5) preserving and filing all papers and records of the church as assigned to him/her

b. The clerk's records include

- 1) an alphabetized church membership roll with current addresses and telephone numbers
- 2) historical and statistical information about each member, such as date of birth, date added to the church, date of transfer received/granted, date disfellowshipped, etc.
- 3) copies of incoming and outgoing reports
- 4) minutes of all meetings that are an official record of transactions of important events These should be signed and dated by both the church clerk and the pastor.

3. The Church Treasurer

The church treasurer reads the financial report and keeps the books ready for questions or inspections. Sometimes, one person serves as both clerk and treasurer, especially in smaller churches. For the protection of the funds and the treasurer's own integrity, all church funds should be deposited in a church bank account, never in the individual's personal account, and they should not be kept on one's person or in the home.

In order to provide protection to the pastoral/ministry family, avoid a possible conflict of interest, and uphold fiscal integrity, neither pastors nor members of the pastoral family should serve as treasurer of the ministry body served. (This also applies to the national/ regional/state levels of ministry.)

In extreme circumstances, where there appears to be no other option, approval must be granted by the national/regional/state bishop. For nations/regions/states, approval must be granted by the respective general presbyter (*98th Assembly Journal* 2014, 180).

The treasurer's duties include

- a. receiving and holding all funds as authorized by the church (i.e., tithes, general and special offerings, and ministry funds)
- b. keeping proper account of all monies received and disbursed, including each person's individual tithes and contributions for verification of non-taxable contributions

- c. proper filing of all receipts, vouchers, and other papers relating to financial accounts
- d. making all necessary financial reports, both monthly and quarterly
- e. submitting reports for the church to the national/regional/state office and the International Offices, as applicable
- f. making himself/herself fully acquainted with the church's general financial system

E. Duties and Powers of the Conference

The local church, while in conference, has certain duties, along with the power or authority to carry out those duties, such as the following:

1. to select the local church trustees
2. to direct the raising and spending of all monies not already designated by the International Assembly
3. to accept and grant membership transfers
4. to discipline and/or reconcile members of the local congregation, when necessary
5. to set forth candidates for the ministry, with the recommendation of the national/regional/state bishop
6. to receive an account of the business of the International Assembly in the first regular conference after that Assembly
7. to assist in setting the days and times for the regular church services
8. to sell, borrow, or execute a mortgage on local church property after proper consent of the General Trustees through the chief clerk

These actions are subject to review by the General Presbytery and national/regional/state bishops.

F. Business Order

While not absolutely necessary to use the *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised*, it does provide a guide for the orderly conduction of

business. These, however, should not interfere with the spiritual nature of the conference when spiritual matters are being decided.

1. The following is the usual order of business:
 - a. Official opening of the conference, usually with a statement similar to the following: “The local church at [location] is now in business conference on [full date] at [time] to transact any business which may properly come before it.” (This statement, or one similar, is necessary to make the acts of business legal and binding in case the minutes should be needed in legal procedure any time in the future. The clerk should include this statement in the minutes of each conference.)
 - b. Minutes of the last regular conference, and of any and all called conferences held since, should be read by the clerk with opportunity being given for corrections and acceptance.
 - c. The treasurer’s report (including an itemized statement of receipts, disbursements, and balances) should be read, with discussion, corrections, and acceptance following.
 - d. Reports from the ministry activities of the local church, which include those of the deacons and lay ministers are reviewed.
 - e. Membership transfers are received.
 - f. Any unfinished business from previous conferences is revisited.
 - g. New and/or miscellaneous business is entertained, as the discretion of the moderator.
 - h. There should then be an official closing of the conference where the moderator states the time of dismissal. The clerk should ensure this statement is properly reflected in the meeting’s minutes.
2. The rights and duties of members during the conference include the following:
 - a. the right to offer motions or resolutions
 - b. the right to discuss or request explanation of any subject brought before the conference
 - c. the right to hold the floor without interruption until finished unless such is called out of order by the moderator

- d. the duty to await recognition by the moderator when introducing or discussing a motion or when otherwise desiring to speak
- e. the duty to refrain from speaking on any matter not properly moved, seconded, and stated by the moderator
- f. the duty to not interrupt one who has been given the floor even when opposing a matter
- g. the duty to indicate a choice by a “yea,” “nay,” or to abstain when “the question” is put before the conference by the moderator

G. The Decision-Making Process

All administrative decisions are concluded by the local conference when an overwhelming consensus of the members present are in agreement. However, spiritual matters, such as setting one forth in the ministry or withdrawing fellowship from a member, are to be decided upon in “one- accord.”

H. The Local Church Finance and Stewardship Committee

The pastor, in cooperation with the local church conference, should appoint or select the members of the Finance and Stewardship Committee. This Committee should meet as often as needed to discharge, monitor, and plan the financial affairs of the church. Responsibilities of the Committee would include the following:

1. Development of a detailed financial plan (budget) that ensures the local church’s operational expenses and income are balanced and presented to the local church conference for approval annually. The Committee should work closely with the pastor and church treasurer to ensure the effectiveness of the financial plan.
2. Ensure that attention is given at the annual planning stage to the disbursement of all funds as outlined by the International Assembly and the national/regional/state convention.
3. The Committee should give a report of its work, at least annually, to the local church conference. The church treasurer,

however, should be the one responsible for giving detailed financial information appertaining to fund balances and accounts at each quarterly conference.

4. Decisions to encumber existing church property or any transaction that would increase the indebtedness of the church should be carefully evaluated by the committee before being presented to the local church conference for approval. (In order to encumber a property, consent must also be given by the General Trustees).
5. Pastors should be careful in presenting any financial matters to the business conference that do not have the overwhelming support of the Committee. The pastor should always be an active member of the Committee.
6. The Committee should encourage and plan for effective year-round stewardship education at the local church along with measures designed to demonstrate financial accountability.

We would encourage churches, both large and small, to empower their Finance and Stewardship Committee to perform fully in the function and role as recommended. This would be a good opportunity for the church to widen the involvement of the membership in the financial management process. By ensuring diversity and balanced representation in the choice of men and women who will serve, a clear statement in respect to openness and accountability can be made (*91st Assembly Minutes* 2000, 95–96).

In the same way that our national/regional/state bishops have found that the National/Regional/State Finance and Stewardship Committees added to the credibility of their offices, we believe that the local church's Finance and Stewardship Committee will similarly be a blessing to pastors.

I. Corporate Giving Structure

The very structure illustrated in creation 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, the Assembly has given directives to our churches today to practice the sharing of their tithes 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 own Church history, it has been our practice to support the global ministries of this worldwide body through the sharing of ten percent of the tithes from our local churches to the International Offices and through mission giving, as adopted by the International Assembly. This is a biblically sound practice, and we therefore recommend that our dedicated congregations continue in these faithful and charitable practices (*92nd Assembly Minutes 2002*, 65–66).

J. Mission Giving

The mission of Global Missions Ministries within the Church of God of Prophecy is to assist national, regional, and state ministries to evangelize throughout the world by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Cooperatively, Global Missions Ministries is composed of three main areas of giving. These are Harvest Partners, Helping Hand Ministry, and One Child Fund.

1. The vision of Harvest Partners is to assist in raising funds for nations, regions, and/or states where resources are not currently sufficient; to facilitate connection and communication by promoting partnerships between local churches and nations, regions, and/or states that have been approved for participation; and to provide a platform for accountability, reporting, and fund distribution.

There are two arms to the Harvest Partner Ministry:

a. Mission Giving

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

b. Project Giving

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.

When choosing a state, region, or nation to partner with, some criteria are important in selecting said areas. Criteria which bring the United States to a level of equality with the other nations of the world for Harvest Partner eligibility may be found in the *101st Assembly Journal* (2022, 64–67).

2. Harvest Partner Project Giving from local churches complements the Helping Hand Ministry whereby individuals may contribute to active mission projects. Together, the funds from these projects combine to assist the nations through ministry support, building construction, vehicles for transportation, and disaster response to every area within our mission network.
3. The third avenue for giving through Global Missions Ministries is through the One Child Fund. This is not simply an outreach for feeding and clothing orphaned and needy children, although these are extremely important in places where food and clothes are so scarce. It is also about expressing the love of Christ to people in desperate need of the Savior and raising up new leaders for the Harvest. These children are experiencing real hope for the future because of the Christ-like compassion of donors.

SECTION FOUR
**MINISTRY
POLICIES**

I. Ministerial Competencies

The competencies below are divided into three broad categories. First are general ministerial competencies, which are applicable to all levels of leadership in the church. (It should be noted that “ministerial” in this instance includes lay ministers and other local leaders as well as licensed ministers.) Second are pastoral competencies that are applicable specifically to those gifted for and called to or within the shepherding ministry of the pastor. The third are competencies for the International Presbytery which includes the national/ regional/state bishops, the General Presbytery, and the appointed directors and translocal personnel of the International Offices as applicable and appropriate to their functions.

It is important to note that these competencies form developmental guidelines and are not necessarily prescribed checklists. Apart from our Lord, no one, not even the apostles, possessed all of these skills, abilities, and functional knowledge. Therefore, these should be used as motivation for continued growth, not as barriers to ministry. Furthermore, it should be strongly emphasized that the mere exhibition of all these competencies would never guarantee success in ministry. Apart from calling, anointing, and a helpless dependence on the Holy Spirit, achievement of these items by an individual is of little real value.

These competencies may be modified in order to best reflect the desired outcomes and goals of regional leadership and to meet the needs of the region’s and local church’s ministries.

A. General Ministerial Competencies

In order to be fully equipped for the work of ministering, a person should know or be able to do the following:

1. learn and practice the process of personal spiritual and character formation in developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and, in so doing, become conformed to His image
2. have a general knowledge of the nature, history, importance, background, and content of the Bible
3. have a working knowledge of various Bible study methods and be able to utilize these in their growth and ministerial work

4. become familiar with the various types of evangelism (personal, mass, cross-cultural, etc.) in order to be personally equipped to effectively share the gospel
5. develop communication skills that will enable effective interaction with other people (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening)
6. develop relational skills that will enable them to work effectively with those to whom and with whom they minister
7. understand and practice biblical principles of stewardship regarding time, money, and service, and teach others to be committed to these principles
8. develop and utilize the basic skills of counseling so that a broad spectrum of people can be helped
9. have a working knowledge of the history of Christianity, including the major events, people, and movements that have brought Christianity to its current state
10. have a working knowledge of the history, polity, organization, and doctrine of the Church of God of Prophecy
11. understand the major issues of Christian ethics and how those issues impact the daily life of the Christian
12. be aware of ways in which the Christian faith can be lived out practically, not just theoretically, by developing and participating in practical ministries that relate to the actual life situations of people
13. learn and practice the skills necessary to be a lifelong learner so that the process of personal development can continue
14. be knowledgeable of the major issues of systematic theology and relate them to the lives of those to whom they minister
15. develop the leadership and appropriate administrative skills necessary to carry out ministry in the church and the world

These competencies are considered of such vital importance that all who acknowledge a call to, or gifting for, any area of ministry, lay or professional, should strive to develop them.

B. Competencies for Pastors

In addition to the general competencies for all ministers, those who serve as pastors should know or be able to do the following:

1. develop and model personal spiritual disciplines (i.e., prayer, fasting, meditation, study of the Word, servanthood, submission, simplicity, confession, etc.)
2. carry out the biblical principles of shepherding and caring for the spiritual needs of the members and friends of the local church
3. understand and utilize a variety of leadership styles appropriate to differing circumstances
4. develop and utilize problem-solving skills
5. develop and utilize skills in personal counseling and human relations
6. exhibit skills in developing the leadership potential of local members
7. understand and be sensitive to the role of the national/regional/state and international church and their various ministries
8. utilize biblical principles and procedures to discipline and restore fallen (erring) members
9. maintain positive intra-church relationships through constant, open, and effective communications with members, fellow workers, peers, and those responsible for the overall supervision of the churches
10. display biblical integrity and ethics in such areas as treatment of others, impartiality, confidentiality, dependability, etc.
11. understand and practice appropriate standards for the management of church property, facilities, equipment, and technology
12. understand and practice sound principles of financial management
13. understand and practice sound principles in legal matters

14. work with the national/regional/state bishop to initiate and carry out church-planting projects and new-field evangelism
15. be familiar with, and be able to use, proper techniques for moderating services and business sessions
16. exhibit effective techniques for program/calendar planning, considering the various activities of the national/regional/state and international church, the local community, and families
17. lead the local church in the process of discipleship and assimilation of new attendees/members
18. act with grace and proper ministerial etiquette in every situation that may arise in the congregation, community, and in the home
19. conduct personal ministry through visitation of both members and non-members in homes, medical facilities, places of business, etc.
20. perform with proper dignity the various ministerial duties required on special occasions such as baby dedications, weddings, and funerals
21. prepare and preach doctrinally sound and effective sermons based on the Word of God under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost
22. provide visionary leadership by clearly demonstrating God-given anointing and vision for the ministries and future of the local church
23. lead* the worship life of the local church, in terms of both public, corporate worship and lifestyle worship
24. lead the local church in fulfilling the Great Commission within the local community
25. lead the congregation in developing a global worldview of the local church's responsibility in expanding world mission efforts through such activities as sending, giving, and personal support of missionaries
26. be aware of and minister to the unique needs of families, both his/her own and those within the local congregation

27. lead the church in, or provide other leadership for, Bible-based educational activities
28. lead the church, when necessary, through the process of change and transformation
29. manage the varied demands placed on the spiritual, physical, and emotional resources of a pastor through balanced seasons of personal retreat, restoration, and recreation
30. encourage and model the habits of lifelong learning

***Note:** The term “lead” includes making adequate provision(s) for, through effective delegation.

C. Competencies for the International Presbytery

In addition to the general competencies for all ministers, those who serve on the International Presbytery by virtue of their service as national/regional/ state bishops, general presbyters, international ministry directors, and translocal personnel, should know or be able to do the following:

1. develop and model personal spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, fasting, meditation, study of the Word, servanthood, submission, simplicity confession, etc.)
2. carry out the biblical principles of shepherding and encouraging bishops, pastors, and other ministers
3. understand and utilize a variety of leadership styles appropriate to differing circumstances
4. develop and utilize problem-solving skills
5. develop and utilize skills in personal counseling and human relations
6. exhibit skills in developing the leadership potential of other ministers
7. understand and be sensitive to the biblical role of the local church and its various ministries as well as of the whole Church and its national and international ministries and purposes

8. utilize biblical principles and procedures to discipline and restore fallen (erring) ministers
9. perform the role prescribed for the national/regional/state bishop in the process of ministerial credentialing
10. maintain positive intra-church relationships through constant, open, and effective communications with church officials, fellow workers, pastors, etc., at all levels of the church
11. display biblical integrity and ethics in such areas as treatment of others, impartiality, confidentiality, dependability, etc.
12. understand and practice appropriate standards for the management of church property, facilities, equipment, and technology
13. understand and practice sound principles of financial management
14. understand and practice sound principles in legal matters
15. promote, encourage, and model the principles of church planting and new field evangelism
16. be familiar with, and be able to use, proper techniques for moderating services, conferences, conventions, and business sessions
17. exhibit effective techniques of program/calendar planning, taking into account the various activities of the local churches and other church agencies
18. encourage and model the habits of lifelong learning
19. develop, promote, encourage, and deliver a leadership development and/or ministerial education program in the nation/region/state and internationally as appropriate

D. General Ministry Advice

The ministry is a high and holy calling and should not be entered into lightly. A deep reverence and sincerity toward God, who has called the candidate, should always be first and foremost in priority as he/she prepares for entering the ministry. It is not the church that calls, but God. Therefore, one's first allegiance should be to God. The candidate must meet the fundamental requirements and

qualifications before he/she is licensed or ordained. God’s work does not operate in a vacuum but in the real world where civil duties, as well as spiritual duties, are required. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (4:5).

II. Recommending a Member for the Ministry

A. The Local Church’s Responsibility

The local church’s responsibility in the matter of ministerial recommendations is no less awesome than the individual’s profession of the calling. It is too sober a business to allow personal feelings or relationships to influence the recommendation. The applicant should be made aware of this from the start so that there will be no feeling of offense if the local conference does not see fit to grant the recommendation or if more time is requested.

B. The Necessity of Examination

The welfare of the church and its mandate to carry out the Great Commission requires that men and women entering the ministry be examined as to their qualifications in order that the ministry not be degraded by being committed to unworthy persons. It is expected that the candidates be of mature spiritual stature and possess the necessary gifts and abilities sufficient to lead and instruct God’s people.

For this reason, no new minister shall be licensed or ordained without first having served a time of apprenticeship with experience in preaching and ministry under the supervision of a seasoned and experienced minister in the Church. In this way, the church will have the opportunity to observe and ascertain the candidate’s potential for the ministry. This time of apprenticeship is referred to as “lay ministry.”

The areas of proof to the local church will include the following:

1. evidence of the spiritual experiences of justification, sanctification, and baptism with the Holy Spirit in the everyday conduct of life, having been baptized by immersion

2. evidence of God's calling
3. evidence of aptitudes and abilities by way of positive response to the requirements
4. evidence of a beginner's knowledge of the Word of God and of the teachings and practices of the Church
5. evidence of consistent and persistent study of the Scriptures
6. an interest in the general, ongoing program of the Church
7. evidence of ability to preach with a dependence on and the unction of the Holy Spirit

Since licensure is a formal endorsement, the Church has the responsibility of requiring the candidate to meet minimum qualification standards before granting ministerial privilege and authority. It should assist the candidate toward meeting those requirements.

The Presbytery has prescribed the completion of the *Foundations: Minister's Development Program (MDP)* before the candidate may receive ministerial licensure. The candidate should be made aware of this so that he/she may begin immediately to apply him/herself in preparation for his/her being set forth as a minister. In some cases, the national/regional/state bishop may exempt the candidate from the courses when duly necessary; however, the course "The Minister and the Church of God of Prophecy" may not be waived.

C. The Official Recommendation

It is the local church in conference that makes the recommendation for those entering the ministry. If there is reason to believe that the applicant is not ready for the ministry, for reasons of which the national/ regional/state bishop may not be fully aware, such should be communicated to the bishop and properly noted on the endorsement form sent to his office.

As a matter of record in the local church's minutes, it would be in order to rescind the recommendation of a candidate for the ministry if the recommendation does not result in acceptance and licensing by the proper authority. This would include recommendations for lay ministers, ministers, and bishops.

III. Lay Ministry

When a person who has been saved, sanctified, filled with the Holy Spirit, and baptized by immersion begins to recognize that he/she has been called by God into the ministry, it is necessary that he/she have a time of preparation and study to prepare him/herself for the ministry. The lay ministry period is a time when a ministerial candidate can prove him/herself deserving of being recommended for the ministry by the local church, examined by the Presbytery, and licensed by the Church. The Lay Minister's Certificate is designed to give the ministerial candidate the recognition needed while gaining experience and being proven. This certificate is to be endorsed by the bishop of the nation, region, or state in which the lay minister is working. It is necessary for the local church where he/she is a member to recommend the one who desires to work for the Lord to the national/regional/state bishop; and if, in his judgment, the candidate is worthy of receiving this certificate, it can be granted (*55th Assembly Minutes* 1960, 134). There may be additional requirements for lay ministry depending on the prospective lay minister's nation/region/state and/or area.

A. Process of Certification for Lay Ministry

The following are the formal steps that will be taken by the local church to prepare the candidate for licensure:

1. The ministerial candidate will be recommended initially for the office of lay minister by the local church in regular or called conference after being formally recommended to the church by the pastor.
2. After the local church approves the recommendation of the pastor in one accord, the Lay Minister's Application will be completed by the candidate. The pastor and church clerk will complete and sign the Lay Minister's Endorsement section of the application. The completed form will then be sent to the national/regional/state bishop for his consideration.
3. The national/regional/state bishop will either approve or reject the application. If he rejects the candidate, he will notify the pastor and the candidate of his reason(s) and inform him/her of what requirements remain to be fulfilled. If the application is approved, the national/regional/state bishop will issue the

official Lay Minister's Certificate for that current calendar year and send it to the pastor with instructions that it should be presented to the candidate in a public ceremony of installation and consecration. The national/regional/state bishop will write to commend and instruct the candidate regarding the exercise of the ministry, under the guidance of the pastor, and the duty to report quarterly to the local church conference.

B. Authorization

The Lay Minister's Certificate authorizes the lay minister to publish, preach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ; to conduct prayer meetings; and to hold revivals. He/she cannot receive members, baptize, conduct business meetings, or perform wedding ceremonies.

C. Policies

1. The lay minister should keep a careful record of all ministerial activities so that an accurate quarterly report can be given to the local church conference on the forms provided in the *Assembly Journals*. This report must be made in duplicate. One copy will be sent to the national/regional/state bishop so that the activities may be observed from that office, and the second copy will be kept on file in the local church office.
2. When the local church concludes that a lay minister has satisfactorily been prepared to become a minister in the church, the church should make known its feelings to the national/regional/state bishop, who could make the recommendation, at his discretion, that the candidate is to be set forth in regular conference (*78th Assembly Minutes* 1983, 135).
3. The local church's endorsement of the lay minister is limited to that ministry only and does not authorize further advancement in the ministry without approval of the national/regional/state bishop and further action by the local church in a "regular" or "called" conference.
4. The Lay Minister's Certificate must be renewed at the beginning of each calendar year if the lay minister wants to continue pursuing the ministry. The request for renewal should be made to the national/regional/state bishop.

5. When a lay minister moves to a new location, his/her membership should be immediately transferred to a church in that area. Preparation for becoming licensed may then continue between the lay minister, the local church, and the national/regional/state bishop. It is to be understood that this new local church would give its consideration [recommendation] at the end of the year to the person's worthiness of continuing as a lay minister. If the local church deems it wise, the lay minister would be set forth in conference in the regular manner as was done initially by the church from which the lay minister transferred (*77th Assembly Minutes* 1982, 83).

IV. Provisional Lay Pastor Ministerial Permits

Due to the need for supplying pastors to churches where licensed ministers are in short supply or nonexistent, lay ministers and those who were called into ministry, but not yet licensed, have sometimes been given temporary, provisional permits authorizing them to do the work of pastoral ministry (baptize, conduct business meetings, etc.).

National/regional/state bishops who issue provisional permits have done so with the intent that the recipient should proceed to fulfill the requirements for licensure, beginning as a lay minister. However, it has often been the case that recipients of the provisional permits were content with their status and privilege, and some did not pursue a valid minister's license, continuing to execute duties designated for licensed ministers only.

- Therefore, the following provisions have been set forth; only newly appointed lay pastors (holding valid lay ministers' certificates) may be issued provisional permits authorizing them to perform pastoral duties normally reserved for licensed ministers (to baptize, and moderate business conferences, etc.) when no licensed ministers are available.
- The permit will authorize the lay pastor to perform these pastoral duties only in the local church to which he/she has been appointed.
- The permit will be issued in the form of a letter, with clear limitations for validity, to extend from the term of appointment

(i.e., for the convention term) which should be no more than two years.

- During the two-year period, the lay pastor holding the temporary ministerial permit is expected to complete the requirements for a valid minister's license, issued by the presiding bishop's office.
- Lay pastors holding lay ministers' certificates cannot perform marriage ceremonies. However, if a couple has previously been legally married in a civil ceremony, a lay pastor may perform a Christian ceremony to bless the marriage of that couple, if they attend his/her local church.
- If at the end of two years the lay pastor holding a temporary provisional permit has not obtained his/her permanent minister's license, he/she may continue to serve as a lay minister, but without authorization to perform the ministry of a duly licensed pastor (*100th Assembly Journal* 2018, 76).

V. Licensed Ministers

Those who are called of God into the preaching ministry may be considered to receive a minister's license following completion of the stated requirements as set forth by the presiding bishop in conjunction with the International Presbytery.

A. Pastoral Ministry

Those experiencing a calling into the pastoral ministry are to be set forth by the local church. After meeting specified requirements over a certain timeframe, they are to be examined by their nation/region/state and licensed through the International Offices.

Pastoral responsibilities include the following:

1. overseeing of the local church (1 Peter 5:2)
2. administering discipline (Titus 1:13; 3:10)
3. settling disputes among Christians (1 Corinthians 1:10)
4. conducting public worship (1 Corinthians 14:26)
5. preaching and teaching the Word (2 Timothy 4:2)
6. administering the ordinances (Matthew 28:19; John 13:15; 1 Corinthians 11:23–34)

B. Evangelistic Ministry

Those who feel called to be evangelists are to preach the gospel, lead sinners to Christ, and baptize. Much of their work will be itinerant; however, the nature of their work should not excuse them from being rooted in a local church where they may receive instruction, care, and discipline.

An individual with an evangelistic ministry is to be acknowledged (set forth) by a local church and licensed through the International Offices, if approved by the applicant's national/regional/state bishop and general presbyter. Upon approval by the presiding bishop, the applicant will be issued a Minister's Certificate (license). Men in this ministry who prove worthy of being recognized as an elder may become ordained as a bishop.

Women are to be acknowledged in the preaching ministries of the church as well. Those who feel a calling on their lives and exhibit the same calling to evangelistic ministry will follow the same process as described above. National/regional/state leadership may place temporary restraints relative to the ministerial functions of women based upon cultural considerations that may hinder the work of the gospel in that area until full implementation can be achieved. The only restraints that seem to be consistent with the New Testament is upon women serving in apostolic (bishopric) or eldership roles, such as ordaining elders. Therefore, women may not be ordained as bishops.

The evangelist should have accountability to a shepherd (pastor) and local church. Churches should consider sponsoring an evangelist as a missionary and contribute to his/her ministry. The evangelist should return periodically to the sponsoring church to labor in outreach and instruct others in soul winning.

C. Procedures for Ministerial Licensure

1. After the candidate for licensure has completed a minimum of one year as a lay minister and has demonstrated competence as a minister, the pastor, with the national/regional/state bishop's approval, may recommend to the local church that he/she be set forth for the ministry in a regular or called conference of the local church.

2. Once the local church has set the candidate forth for the ministry and the church clerk has recorded the action in the minutes of the church conference, the pastor and church clerk will complete the Church and Pastor Endorsement Form. The clerk will forward this to the national/regional/state bishop for his consideration.
3. When the national/regional/state bishop has received and approved the Church and Pastor Endorsement Form, he will ensure the candidate is enrolled in or has completed the *Foundations: Minister's Development Program (MDP, hereafter)* which has been prepared by the Center for Biblical Leadership department of the International Offices.
 - a. The *MDP* is the official training program for ministers in the Church of God of Prophecy. The program consists of six courses, each of which is comprised of several lessons that equip ministers with sound biblical and theological instruction, practical leadership skills, and applicable ministry training. This training may be completed online, on-site, or through a hybrid mix of the two.
 - b. In order for the ministerial candidate to complete *MDP* courses for free online, the candidate should register for the courses by visiting lddtraining.com/register/. Upon visiting this site, the ministerial candidate will be led to a form which will ask for some personal and contact information. Complete the form and click to accept the terms. The candidate will then receive an email asking for the candidate to verify his/her account. After registering, the candidate will have access to the six courses that make up the *MDP*. These do not have to be completed in any particular order.
 - 1) The Minister and God's Word
 - 2) The Minister's Personal Life
 - 3) The Minister and Practical Ministry
 - 4) The Minister's Role as a Leader
 - 5) The Minister's Commitment to Evangelism and Discipleship
 - 6) The Minister and the Church of God of Prophecy

- c. At times, the national/regional/state bishop may have these courses taught in person, virtually, or in a hybrid method. The national/regional/state bishop simply needs to communicate with the executive director of the Leadership Development and Discipleship division at the International Offices in order to ensure that the style of instruction will satisfy the requirements that are outlined for licensure.
 - d. Completion of the *MDP* does not automatically ensure ministry licensure; however, it is required to advance to the point of being considered for ministry licensure.
 - e. If the candidate has completed the program online or onsite with instructors whose educational credentials were verified and approved through the Center for Biblical Leadership, a participant may be eligible to request a transfer of nine credit hours towards a Certificate of Ministry and Theological Studies from the Church of God of Prophecy's educational institution, Spirit & Life Seminary.
 - f. After completing the *MDP*, the participant/ministerial candidate must go to their dashboard in the online platform (LDD.Training) to a section called "Forms." Click on that section and fill out the "Individual Completion Form." The completed form must include the pastor's signature. After it is completed, send the form to ldd@cogop.org. A representative from the LDD office will process the information and send the "Numbered Certificate of Achievement." The candidate should submit a copy of the certificate to his/her national/regional/state bishop, as a copy of this certificate is required to accompany the candidate's application for ministry when sent to the candidate's general presbyter.
4. After the applicant has completed the Ministerial License Application, the national/regional/state bishop will arrange for the candidate to appear before a Ministerial Review Board (MRB) of three to five able ministers, including the national/regional/state bishop, who will examine the candidate regarding his/her knowledge of Scripture, doctrine, church history, polity, personal and family devotional life, family life,

personal business, finances, and his/her personal standing with those outside the church.

5. The official meeting with the MRB should open with prayer; after which, the moderating national/regional/state bishop will read an appropriate scripture verse or passage and speak regarding the purpose of the meeting, the profound significance of the sacred calling to the ministry, and why adequate preparation is important.
6. Following this, general questions may be asked by members of the MRB in the areas named above. The applicant will be counseled as the situation requires and as the Spirit of the Lord directs.
7. When the MRB is satisfied that the candidate is ready for licensure or ordination, it shall recommend that the candidate be licensed or ordained by the Presbytery. Should the MRB decide that the candidate is not ready to be licensed, such should be stated. The candidate may also be given more time to prepare.
8. When more time is needed, an additional meeting with the MRB will be scheduled, in consultation with the candidate. If the candidate is not approved after the third appearance before the MRB, the Presbytery may conclude that he/she not be reconsidered for at least one full year.
9. The national/regional/state bishops' MRB serves in an advisory role. The ultimate authority of licensure is limited to the General Presbytery, composed of the presiding bishop and the general presbyters. Upon approval by the MRB, a recommendation letter will be written by the national/regional/state bishop and placed in the candidate's file in the national/regional/ state office. A copy of this letter, along with the Church and Pastor Endorsement Form, Minister's Application, *MDP* Certificate of Achievement, a portrait image of the candidate (preferable a jpeg digital photo), and any other requirements for licensure as indicated by the Assembly, International Presbytery, or the general presbyter of that specific area should then be sent to the general presbyter's office by the national/regional/state bishop.

10. Upon receipt of all necessary documents, the general presbyter, followed by the presiding bishop, will review the candidate's documents and either approve or disapprove of the candidate. Upon approval, a minister's license or ordination certificate as well as a Minister's ID Card will be issued and mailed to the national/ regional/state bishop or general presbyter, as applicable.

D. Ordination of Licensed Ministers

From a practical point of view, all of our licensed ministers have the right to say they are ordained without necessarily referring to the distinct ordination of bishops or deacons. For consistency and compliance with biblical principle, when persons receive their ministerial license, this should be accompanied by the "laying on of hands" with prayer. The ordaining of brethren as bishops or deacons should also be a distinct, unique ceremony and certification, as has been our practice.

After licensing, the minister continues to be a private member of the local church and is subject to its government and discipline as prescribed by the International Assembly. However, in matters relating to his/her ministry, the minister is under the supervision of the International Presbytery. The local church may take no action regarding the termination of a licensed minister.

The same would apply in the case of deacons/deaconesses. Complaints may be lodged with the national/ regional/state bishop's office, but any revocation of licenses must be initiated by the national/regional/state bishop in the usual manner (*92nd Assembly Minutes* 2002, 64–65).

E. Authorization of Licensed Ministers

Licensed ministers are authorized to preach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ, establish churches, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper and the washing of the saints' feet. Those who pastor have the authority to conduct local business conferences, and pastors credentialed with a minister's license may solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages. Ministers who are not currently pastoring a church may receive permission from their

national/regional/state bishop to solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages that are biblically valid according to the Church's understanding.

VI. Licensed Bishops

Men who are called of God into eldership offices and positions may be licensed with a bishop's license following completion of the requirements as set forth by the presiding bishop in conjunction with the International Presbytery.

A. Bishops

It is important to realize that individuals function according to their giftedness within an office. The bishop is one of the eldership offices that provides oversight leadership to the church. A bishop could function as a general appointee, national/regional/state bishop, district supervisor, an evangelist, or as a pastor. Bishops serve either on local or translocal levels. Whatever the level, bishops are to lead "among" those they serve, rather than "over" those they serve. They are responsible for the diligent supervision of the flock in their particular area of the work. Some of the functions of the bishop include the following:

1. properly caring for the flock (1 Peter 5:2)
2. shepherding in a Christlike manner
3. declaring the counsel of God
4. protecting the flock against grievous wolves
5. watching in spiritual matters
6. caring for the weak and needy (Acts 20:28–35)

Scripturally, as an elder, a bishop is not to be a novice but must display a mature, Christian lifestyle. He is to be a male and at least 30 years of age. He must fulfill the qualifications as described in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9. Prior to receiving a bishop's license, he should have fulfilled significant years of faithful ministerial service, without reproach, making full proof of his ministry. Those who are to be considered for ordination as a bishop should be involved in a program of ministerial development. The nature of his ministerial service should indicate that he is worthy to be

recognized as a biblical elder in maintaining the integrity of the scriptural requirements.

In light of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:12) concerning some men gifted to celibacy/singleness, we further recommend that bishops may also be individuals who have a God-called commitment to celibacy for the sake of their ministry in the kingdom (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, 152).

Because of local and translocal functions, bishops are to be acknowledged (set forth) by a local church and licensed through both the national/ regional/state and International Offices. Bishops who are no longer under specific appointment should function under the authority of their local church as they continue to make full proof of their ministry. The International Presbytery should make provisions to ensure that the quality of ministry is maintained through periodic review. During this time of transition, national/regional/state leadership should recognize tenured pastors as elders in the process of becoming ordained as bishops.

1. Recommending

An individual should not be set forth by the local church for a bishop's license except at the request of the national/regional/state bishop (*55th Assembly Minutes* 1960, 135).

2. Authorization

The bishop is authorized to publish, preach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ; to baptize, establish churches, administer the Lord's Supper and the washing of the saints' feet, assist in ordaining elders by special appointment, and solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriage as outlined in the New Testament and interpreted by the International Assembly. The bishop who is pastoring has the authority to conduct all local church business conferences.

3. Procedure for Licensure

The process to obtain the minister's license is also used for licensure of the bishop except that the national/regional/state bishop must first make a recommendation to the local church, and the minister must be involved in a program of ministerial development before appearing before the Ministerial Review Board. In the absence of the apostles, it was determined that the

authority to ordain should be in those the Assembly invests with such authority.

4. Ordination

A bishop should not be ordained until the presiding bishop's office has issued the candidate's official Bishop Certificate. Following this, the ordination of the bishop may occur by the laying on of hands by at least two members of the International Presbytery. It is most preferred that, when possible, the presiding bishop and/or the candidate's general presbyter along with the candidate's national/regional/state bishop jointly officiate the laying on of hands. Additional national/regional/state bishops and bishops under appointment at the International Offices may also serve in this capacity.

With written authorization, the presiding bishop or a general presbyter may also delegate other qualified bishops—such as bishops on the national/regional/state plurality team—to participate in the ordination service when two members of the International Presbytery are unable to attend the ordination service. Finally, all bishops joining in the laying on of hands are advised to participate in a period of fasting prior to the ordination service.

After ordination, the bishop continues to be a private member of the local church and is subject to the government and discipline of the local church as prescribed by the Assembly. However, in matters relating to his ministry, he is under the supervision of the Presbytery. The local church may take no action regarding the termination of a bishop. After ordination, the Presbytery shall also continue to show constant and personal concern for the growth and enhancement of the bishop and his work.

B. Bishop's Jurisdiction

The general practice has been that jurisdiction over a minister (minister's license) under appointment is with their supervising national/regional/ state bishop. For ministers not under appointment, jurisdiction follows his current place of residence—where he actually lives—and not necessarily where his membership is registered.

VII. Ministers/Bishops Coming from Other Organizations

When ministers/bishops come from another organization, they may be licensed or ordained after they have been examined to determine their qualifications and their spiritual and doctrinal purity. In exceptional cases, with the specific order of the presiding bishop and/or their general presbyter, some of the standard provisions for examining candidates may be waived with the exception of the completion of the *MDP* course, “The Minister and the Church of God of Prophecy.”

VIII. Deacons/Deaconesses

Both biblical and historical records concerning the activities of deacons confirm they served alongside and in harmony with the national/regional/state bishop and/or pastor as servants to the congregation. They were assigned responsibilities which contributed to the spiritual and social well-being of the congregation. This office functions to

- A. complement the office of the bishop or pastor (Acts 6:1–7)
- B. serve more in the temporal needs of God’s work, such as coordinating relief to the poor and needy (Acts 6:1–5)
- C. conduct church business affairs and conferences when officially authorized by the pastor or national/regional/state bishop
- D. teach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ

They constitute a vital part of local church government (Philippians 1:1). The qualifications of a deacon are similar to a bishop, except for the requirements of age and the teaching and direct oversight of the flock. Their qualifications are taken from the scriptural references of 1 Timothy 3:8–12 and Acts 6:4 (as a prototype). The New Testament account regarding the office and function of deacons/deaconesses gives very clear understanding that their activities are generally confined to and carried out in the local congregation. This ministry is local rather than translocal.

Since deacons/deaconesses function in the arena of a local church, they are to be acknowledged (set forth) by the congregation and with pastoral recommendation. They serve first as trial deacons/deaconesses for a

period of not less than one year, after which time they are to be recommended to the national/regional/state bishop of their respective area for approval and licensure. Because their service and ministry are based more within a local area, there is no need for them to be licensed through the International Offices.

The location for ordination of the candidate should be left to the discretion of the national/regional/state bishop; should the national/regional/state bishop be unable to participate in the ordination of a deacon, the national/regional/state bishop may designate a representative of his office, such as a district supervisor, to participate alongside the pastor in the deacon ordination. Typically, however, deacons/deaconesses are ordained at the local church or national/regional/state convention by the national/regional/state bishop, their pastor, and other deacons of their local church.

The deacon/deaconess should report quarterly to his/her local conference and annually to the national/regional/state bishop. Should discipline become necessary, the local church would work in conjunction with the national/regional/state office to address the situation. The office of deacon is not translocal; consequently, in the event of a deacon/deaconess transferring his/her membership from one local church to another, the recognition to the diaconate is subject to the discretion of reaffirmation by the new local church for the individual to serve as a deacon/deaconess (*100th Assembly Journal* 2018, 72–75).

The deacon/deaconess should never attempt to transact business matters over the desire of the pastor or the local church, nor usurp the authority of the pastor or local church (*66th Assembly Minutes* 1971, 44).

Given there is scriptural evidence that supports having female deacons, called “deaconesses,” we recommend women who qualify as “deaconesses” be set forth by the local church in the same manner and according to the same requirements as their male counterparts.

Furthermore, the age of deacons and deaconesses is to be left to the discretion of the local church and pastor with consultation with their national/regional/state bishop. These candidates should be mature

individuals who have been proven faithful (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, 175–176).

IX. Elders

The principle of eldership serves as a framework for understanding how leadership is selected and recognized within the church. Leadership should be chosen from among those whose experience, moral life, and abilities are manifest in such a way that the hand of God is evidenced upon them. Such leadership is needed in every dimension of the church’s life. This principle applies to those who will provide leadership in “prayer and word” (bishop) and those who provide care for the temporal needs of the church (deacon). It should not, however, be misconstrued that eldership always requires a license within the church. Some will function as elders because of their quality of life and not because of a license in the church. At the same time, it is apparent that those who serve in leadership roles should possess eldership character.

A study presented at the 89th International Assembly in 1996 affirmed the understandings of elders as passed in two previous Assemblies. In the 18th International Assembly of 1923, it was stated, “We recommend that the presiding bishop’s recommendation, as to making all bishops and deacons elders, be accepted by the Assembly . . .” (*18th Assembly Minutes* 1923, 24).

X. General Instructions

A. Guidelines for Ministerial Expense

First of all, let every minister look upon tithing as both a privilege and responsibility. The Word of God is very explicit concerning tithing. Ministers should see to it that tithing is carried out in such a way as to have the favor of God upon it and not in any way seek to take advantage of the Lord in this regard.

Each minister must distinguish between living expenses and ministerial expenses. Everyone has living expenses, consisting of food, clothing, shelter, etc. However, there are individuals in certain professions, including ministers, who have expenses in the course of their work which the average wage earner does not have.

In no case shall living expenses such as house rent, water, lights, grocery bills, etc., be paid before paying one's tithes; all these shall be paid out of the remaining nine-tenths (*13th Assembly Minutes* 1917, 294-295).

Since some ministers are provided with parsonages, others without such benefits have felt that their cost of housing should be considered as expense in the ministry. The more realistic approach would be for those who are provided housing to consider this as supplemental income on which they would pay tithes, even as they do on grocery poundings and other things they receive as a means of additional support. After all, food, clothing, and shelter are basic expenses that everyone has.

A minister's automobile in many places is almost indispensable in carrying on their work; therefore, it seems proper to pro-rate automobile expenses in proportion to the amount it is used in ministerial work. This relates to the cost of the vehicle and its operating costs. Consideration may also be given to other types of travel—plane, train, bus, etc.—and computing expenses accordingly.

For income tax purposes, some ministers keep a record of the actual expenses of each trip that is a function of the ministry. For these ministers, automobile expense is not a problem when computing their income that is to be tithed.

Other ministers, especially in the United States, may prefer to keep a strict record of miles traveled in the ministry and take a credit for this mileage as outlined by the Internal Revenue Service. In countries where this is not applicable, ministers could use a reasonable amount per mile/kilometer traveled in the ministry for calculating their expense.

Many ministers also have secular jobs to supplement their income, and they use their automobiles in going to and from their jobs. Of course, this is not an expense in the ministry, as neither are other personal uses of these vehicles, such as shopping, visiting relatives, etc.

The purchase of books for study in sermon preparation and for preparedness in other facets of one's ministerial work would be chargeable as expense in the ministry, as would expenses to attend ministerial training programs, conventions, and International Assemblies.

These guidelines are not meant to be all-inclusive but to serve as markers that guide the individual conscience and one's desire to worship the Lord through tithing and giving. With regard to calculating the tithe, it seems that one who is capable of counseling others in separating professional expenses from living expenses is also able to properly make such judgments regarding their own expenses. A good rule of thumb to follow is for the minister to tithe personal income in the same manner that others would be counseled to tithe. Basically, expense in the ministry is that which is incurred in the discharge of ministerial duties that would not have been otherwise acquired. Tithing is a form of worship, and ministers should be examples to other Christians in honoring God with their substance.

B. Tithing by Ministers

A minister should not be allowed to retain a license who does not tithe on personal income. Paul's instructions to Timothy are timely in reference to this question: ". . . be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Tithing is a teaching made prominent in the Bible and affirmed by the Assembly. Every minister, in being examined for the ministry, stated that they paid tithes faithfully on all personal income. When a licensed minister in the Church fails to be an example in this matter of stewardship, it indicates a spiritual problem. It is the Presbyter's responsibility to investigate and, if possible, help the failing minister overcome this problem. If a minister does not respond to such attempts to help by repenting and resuming faithfulness in being an example of the believers, the Presbytery has no recourse but to see that their ministry is terminated (*81st Assembly Minutes* 1986, 35).

C. Ministers to Respect Guidance of Assembly in Doctrine

A minister should not be allowed to preach anything that brings confusion and conflicts with the doctrine of the Church. If this is done, the attention of the national/regional/state bishop should be called to it. The individual should be admonished and cited by the national/regional/state bishop to the findings and rulings of the International Assembly. If such a one persists and continues in the practice, then the minister should be brought before, and dealt with by, the Presbytery (*54th Assembly Minutes* 1959, 128).

D. Identification Card

In some cases, a pastor needs identification to certify that he/she is a duly appointed pastor. It was therefore recommended by the Assembly that a uniform identification card be made available by the International Offices (*75th Assembly Minutes* 1980, 165). The identification cards are issued automatically upon being licensed as a minister/bishop and are reissued each time one's license is renewed. The identification cards have a ten-year expiration date and are of little legal value if they are not renewed prior to the date of expiration.

E. Secular Work

National/regional/state bishops should discourage ministers from working at manual labor where the tithes are sufficient for their support (*48th Assembly Minutes* 1953, 107).

F. Observing Ordinances

The pastor of the local church should ensure that the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and Feet Washing are conducted at least quarterly (*57th Assembly Minutes* 1962, 134). Baptism is also an ordinance which should be observed when appropriate.

1. Water Baptism
 - a. Water baptism is the act of being immersed in water according to the commandment and instructions of Christ (Matthew 28:19). This ordinance has no power to wash away sins but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21) and represents for the believer an identity with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:3–5).
 - b. Baptism, then, is outward evidence of our submission to Christ in salvation and our public declaration that we are his followers. It identifies us with his people in his kingdom.
2. The Lord's Supper
 - a. It is recommended that "The Lord's Supper" document passed by the 102nd International Assembly be studied for personal and corporate edification.

- b. While the Church affirms that the Lord’s Supper should be observed at least every quarter, as passed by the 57th Assembly, it is also encouraged that consideration be given that more frequent observance of this sacrament take place which has both biblical and historical precedent.
 - c. The Lord’s Supper is a believer’s meal that mainly occurs within the context of the local church. In corporate worship and local church ministry, the primary officiant of this sacrament is the pastor. It is recommended that pastors train and empower mature believers to administer the Lord’s Supper both in the context of corporate and family worship, as well as extended ministries.
 - d. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial celebration conveying the real presence of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit and the participation of the believer in the blessings of the new covenant.
 - e. The Lord’s Supper is a believer’s meal. All who have confessed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, having been forgiven by the shedding of Jesus’ blood for the forgiveness of sins, are eligible to receive the elements of Communion (Matthew 26:28). Furthermore, the Church of God of Prophecy practices open Communion, with the biblical admonition that all believers should examine themselves before coming to the Lord’s Table (1 Corinthians 11:31–32) (*102nd Assembly Journal* 2024, 113).
3. Footwashing
- a. We affirm the practice of the ordinance of Footwashing as taught and commanded by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
 - b. We recommend that it be observed as often as possible, whether after Communion or at a separate time.
 - c. We recommend it to be observed in a spirit of humility and love toward one another.
 - d. We recommend that this updated version of the doctrine of Footwashing be taught to the members of the Church of God of Prophecy (*100th Assembly Journal* 2018, 94).

G. Ministering Outside Area of Licensure

Licensed and ordained ministers have been examined and approved by the Presbytery as being duly authorized to preach in the Church of God of Prophecy. If for some reason a national/regional/state bishop objects to a particular minister who desires to minister within his area of supervision, the basis for his objection should be communicated directly and personally to the minister. If this is done, it would not then be necessary for every minister in good standing to secure approval before preaching in another nation, region, or state.

Where a minister feels that a national/regional/state bishop's objections are unjust, the matter may be brought to the general presbyter who will either hear the case himself or appoint a select committee to assist in resolving the situation. We must endeavor always and in every way to relieve tensions between fellow-licensed ministers, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (*82nd Assembly Minutes* 1987, 51).

H. Performing Marriages

The minister should be thoroughly acquainted with the Church's teaching regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage as presented, amended, and passed by the 94th International Assembly in 2006, and be guided by its provisions and any guidelines set forth or authorized by the General Presbytery for its implementation (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, 152–177).

The minister should inquire of both parties to be married if they are of age according to the requirements of the particular area in which they reside. If either is underage, inquiry should be made to determine if the parents have given consent to their marriage. If they have not given consent, it is not advisable to perform the ceremony until the parents give consent. Marriage ceremonies should be performed in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. If, in some cases, the minister needs additional advice, he/she may consult the national/regional/state bishop.

Pastors credentialed with a minister's license and bishops are authorized to perform marriages by virtue of their roles and offices (*95th Assembly Minutes* 2008, 13). However, those who are not serving as pastors, or are not capable of providing marriage

counseling, should seek the permission of their national/regional/state bishop before performing marriages. A special permit to perform marriages may be granted upon the request of the national/regional/state bishop to licensed ministers who are not pastoring. All special permits are ultimately subject to the General Presbytery and may be recalled at any time. Neither this permit nor the minister's license takes the place of the national/state law. A minister must meet all the requirements of the state or country in which the wedding ceremony will be held.

XI. Reporting & Tithing System of the Ministry

Licensed ministers and pastors are to send the tithes of income from the ministry with their monthly reports to their national/regional/state office.

A. Bishops

1. Report monthly to their national/regional/state office.
2. Tithe on ministerial income to their national/regional/state office.
3. Tithe on secular income to their local church.

B. Licensed Ministers

1. Report monthly to their national/regional/state office.
2. Tithe on ministerial income to their national/regional/state office.
3. Tithe on secular income to their local church.

C. Lay Ministers

1. Report quarterly to their Local Church Conference in duplicate or, if serving as pastors, monthly to their national/regional/state office.
2. Duplicate report is to be forwarded to their national/regional/state bishop by the church clerk.
3. Tithe on ministerial and secular income to their local church.

D. Provisional Lay Pastors (Unlicensed)

1. Report monthly to their national/regional/state office.

2. Tithe on ministerial income to their national/regional/state office.
3. Tithe on secular income to their local church.

E. Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference and annually to their national/regional/state office.
2. Tithe on all income to their local church.

F. Trial Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to their Local Church Conference.
2. Duplicate report is to be forwarded to their national/regional/state bishop by the church clerk.
3. Tithe on all income to their local church.

G. Retired Ministers

1. If there is no ministerial income, the minister must only report annually to their national/regional/state office.
2. If the minister is receiving ministerial income, the retired minister should submit a report to their national/regional/state office each month that ministerial income is received.
3. Tithe to their local church on secular income.

H. Ministers Unable to Report

1. No report is required, but they should inform their national/regional/state offices of any changes of address.
2. Tithe on ministerial income to their national/regional/state office.
3. Tithe on secular income to their local church.

XII. Ministerial Discipline

A. The Nature and Purpose of Discipline

Discipline is the church's exercise of authority given by Christ through the Scriptures: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). The goals of discipline

are that God may be honored, that those who fall into error may be brought to repentance and restoration, and that purity, integrity, and the general welfare of the church may be maintained.

The purpose of discipline is for correction and edification, not for destruction. Being redemptive as well as corrective, it should always be exercised with mercy and humility in the spirit of Galatians 6:1–2: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

B. Offenses that Require Disciplinary Action

Offenses, both private and public, being sins against God, are grounds for discipline. However, there are levels of discipline that are to be determined by the nature of the offense and the attitude and restitution of the offender. Some private matters can be settled to the satisfaction of both the offended and the offender by following the principle of Matthew 18:15: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Or the offender may take personal initiative and the matter be settled in accordance with the principle of Matthew 5:23–24: “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

1. A private offense is defined as being something which the minister commits against one or very few persons and which violates the divine law and does wrong or injury to particular individuals.

Following the principle of Matthew 18:15, the offended should go to the offender in the spirit of meekness and tell him/her of his/her fault and entreat him/her to make restitution. If he/she makes restitution and is reconciled, that should be the end of the matter.

If the offender is contentious and uncooperative and refuses to be reconciled, then the offended should select one or two others of reputation to go with him/her for the purpose of

effecting a reconciliation (Matthew 18:16). If he/she still refuses to be reconciled, then the offender must be brought before the bishop since a local church is not authorized to discipline a licensed or ordained minister. In the event the offender is a bishop, the matter may be brought before the presiding bishop/general presbyter and pursued according to the general principles outlined below.

In most cases of private offenses, the national/regional/state bishop should try to bring about a restoration when the case is brought to his attention. He should endeavor to bring the offender to repentance and restoration before any further disciplinary action is taken. The principle is established in 2 Timothy 2:24–26,

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

Any accusations made against a minister must be verified by two or more witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

2. A public offense is more notorious in nature and less personal in its focus. Some examples of public offenses requiring disciplinary action are the following: moral indiscretions; gross incompetence and/or negligence which would render the minister unfit to represent the Church adequately; insubordination, the manifestation of a contentious spirit by refusing to submit to the counsel of those over him/her in the Lord; refusal or inability to minister in harmony with the teachings and polity of the Church in word or conduct; the assumption of a harsh and dictatorial authority toward those with whom he/she works, which could be described as acting as a lord over God’s heritage (1 Peter 5:2); a deliberate and serious perversion of sound doctrine; habitual failure to manage personal finances so that delinquent debts become a reproach to the church; any violation of the Church’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage; ministry without prior approval in another church or institution on an extended basis;

and neglect of consistent tithing and giving as a faithful steward of the Lord.

C. Discipline Procedures

These procedures were developed in accordance to the resolution of 84th Annual Assembly (*84th Assembly Minutes* 1989, 133):

1. The Presbytery is empowered to examine candidates for the ministry, to issue licenses, to ordain, and to terminate a minister's endorsement when any infraction is considered serious enough to warrant such discipline.
2. Great care should be exercised in receiving accusations against a minister. In accordance with the principle given in 1 Timothy 5:19, no charges should be received by the Presbytery against a minister unless there are two or three reliable witnesses who have presented to the national/regional/state bishop sufficient evidence of wrongdoing. First Timothy 5:19 says, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." No witness should be accepted who is known to have ill-will toward the accused, who is not of sound character, who is him/herself under censure, who may have ulterior motives for having the accused person disciplined, or who is known to be contentious and imprudent.
3. In every instance of accusation, the accuser must be warned that if he/she fails to show reasonable grounds for the charges made, the accuser shall be censured as a slanderer of the brethren and shall be disciplined in proportion to the weight of the accusation made against the minister. When the malicious accuser is a lay member, discipline will be exercised by the local church. Where the false accuser is a minister, discipline will be directed by the Presbytery.
4. In all investigations of offenders, it must be remembered that the admonition of Galatians 6:1 governs.
5. Any charges made against a minister must be made by two or three responsible persons who are convinced that the evidence warrants investigation. The accused must be informed of the

charges. At a pre-announced time, the charges shall be clearly stated before the national/regional/state bishop. The accused should be present, if possible, to hear the charges as they are formally presented to the bishop. If the accused confesses, the bishop may deal with the person according to his discretion. If he/she rejects the charge and desires a further hearing, a formal hearing of the case should occur within 30 days from the time the charges are formally presented before the Ministerial Review Board (MRB).

6. Before the hearing begins, the presiding bishop/general presbyter should be apprised of the charges against the offender so that he may follow the case and participate as he deems necessary.
7. The national/regional/state bishop shall appoint a panel of five ministers from his region. If panel members are limited, it may be necessary to use only three ministers on the MRB. The accused shall be given proper notification advising him/her to attend the hearing. Should the person not appear for the hearing (unless providentially hindered, in which case the panel should be properly notified), such failure to respond should be entered into the records, along with a written account of the charges; and their ministry shall be dealt with as the Presbytery deems appropriate.
8. When the hearing is about to begin, the bishop/moderator shall solemnly remind the panel of their awesome responsibility as representatives of Jesus Christ to hear the charges against a fellow minister and to dispose of the case in a manner that would be acceptable before the High Court of Heaven. The moderator shall at this time caution the participants in the hearing to maintain strict confidentiality of the proceedings.
9. The substitution of a panel member is permitted, if for good reason the member desires to be removed from a particular hearing, or if either the accused or the accuser should give the moderator reasons acceptable for substituting another person in that place on the panel.
10. Before and during the hearing of a case, any panel member who expresses an opinion on the merits of the case to either

party or any other person who is not a member of the panel shall be disqualified from taking part in this and subsequent proceedings. The member shall be replaced with a qualified and responsible person.

11. If either party insists, no witness who is to be later examined shall be present during the examination of another witness in the same case.
12. The order of the hearing shall be as follows. The moderator shall charge the panel. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard. If charges are denied, the accuser(s) shall be heard and examined, then the witnesses for the accused shall be heard and examined. After the witnesses have been heard and examined, both parties and their witnesses shall be excused from the room, and members of the panel shall express their opinions in the case. When a unanimous decision has been made, both the accuser and the accused shall be recalled to the room for the recommendation of the MRB to the Presbytery. The recommendation shall be announced and entered into the record of the proceedings.
13. The Presbytery shall review the findings of the MRB and make a determination of the minister's status. As early as possible thereafter, the national/regional/state bishop will give the decision of the Presbytery to the accused.
14. When a minister is found by the national/regional/state bishop or MRB to be innocent of any charges that have been made, the national/regional/state bishop should ensure that those who may have been aware of the charges are informed that the minister in question has been exonerated.

D. Terminations of Ministerial Credentials

The three types of ministerial terminations are detailed below. After having terminated a minister/bishop's credentials, the individual is no longer an active minister. All rights and responsibilities of such have been rescinded. If the former minister wishes to regain his/her license, he/she will need to go through the full licensure process again. Terminations may occur for the following reasons:

1. Resignation

When a minister, against whom no charges have been filed, has elected to remove himself/herself from the body of licensed or ordained ministers, acceptance of the resignation is subject to the decision of the Presbytery.

2. Revocation

A minister who has been found guilty of, or has confessed to, a serious violation of biblical principles shall be disciplined, and where the nature of the case requires it, their ministry shall be revoked. It is understood that prior to this action, the minister shall be duly informed of the decision.

3. Lapse

Any minister who has not reported to the national/regional/state offices, or who is inactive for two consecutive years (who has not preached at least 12 times per year)—unless due to ill health, retirement, or other justifiable cause—shall be notified by the Presbytery that their ministry has lapsed.

E. Adjustments of Ministerial Credentials

In the event that the status of a minister/bishop requires a change that does not merit the total recension of the individual's ministerial credentials, one of the following adjustments will take place.

1. Decease

When the death of a minister is verified and reported to the national/ regional/state office, their name will be relayed to the International Offices in order for the ministerial database to reflect the passing of the minister.

2. Change of Status

A change of status occurs when an individual no longer meets the criteria for being an ordained bishop yet does meet the requirements for being a licensed minister. In the event that the wife of a bishop falls into sin and there is no charge against the bishop himself, the Presbytery shall not change the status of his ministry to that of a licensed minister unless circumstances so warrant. If a change is warranted, he shall be informed of the

change. A widowed bishop who marries a wife not meeting the criteria for the wife of a bishop shall have the status of his ministry changed according to that of a licensed minister as well. There is to be no change of status in the case of a bishop who is widowed (*82nd Assembly Minutes 1987, 57*).

3. Suspension

When a minister is censured for an offense that the Presbytery does not deem to be serious enough to warrant revocation, his/her minister's license or ordination certificate shall be held in the national/regional/ state office for the period of rehabilitation. Suspension does not affect the minister's ministerial benefits, insurance, or pension. The extent to which he/she can minister shall be determined by the national/regional/ state bishop.

Suspension should not be regarded as a permanent adjustment. After having been suspended for a predesignated probational period of time, the national/regional/state bishop and the Ministerial Review Board of that nation/region/state should determine if the minister should have his/her suspension lifted or prolonged, or if their license should be terminated.

F. Restoration of Ministers

1. Restoring Fallen Ministers

The apostle Paul referred to ministers as stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). He wrote, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (v. 2). When a person is called by God into the ministry and set apart with due recognition by the church for this high calling, it is expected that their life be above reproach. A minister must be faithful in all things.

When a minister goes back into sin and brings reproach upon the name of Christ, it places a blot upon the church's image before the world. We want to be merciful and dare not fail to forgive one who truly repents of having failed the Lord. However, it is necessary that a person prove faithfulness as a Christian and as a member of the Church before returning to the ministry. To be licensed too soon before demonstrating faithfulness in all things does damage to the image of the ministry of the Church of God of Prophecy.

When a minister's license has been terminated due to sin, the person may not be relicensed until after an extended time of help and counseling directed toward complete rehabilitation. The confidence of the church should be fully restored in order for them to recommend the reissuing of ministerial credentials in the Church of God of Prophecy.

In the case of a bishop who was terminated because of moral (sexual) failure, he cannot be restored to the office of bishop, but under a supervised restoration process by the Presbytery, he may be relicensed as a minister as said Presbytery may deem appropriate (*94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, 152).

The primary help and counsel should come through the pastor and local church. However, where possible, it is highly recommended that the national/regional/state bishop be directly and actively involved in the restoration process. The factors relating to the minister's failure should be explored and properly identified so as to prevent any recurrence.

Although there is no specific time period for effecting the full restoration of a fallen minister, no one should be relicensed until a proven record of faithfulness and integrity has been established. In some cases, this might require a year; in others, a longer period may be needed depending upon the degree of damage suffered from the seriousness of the sin and the rate of progress being made by the candidate.

With the underlying principle in discipline being redemption, justice can best be served with mercy. A local church should readily extend its support and strength to a minister who is repentant.

When restoration is considered to be complete, the candidate may then be set forth for the ministry with the approval of the national/regional/ state bishop. The person will be relicensed by following the procedures required of all candidates for the ministry.

2. Procedure for Restoration

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench: till he send forth judgment unto victory” (Matthew 12:20).

When a minister fails and undergoes discipline, it is imperative that responsibility be immediately assigned for their restoration.

Regardless of one's previous position, the pastor will normally be the primary person to initiate the restoration process. Contact should be made with the erring one as soon as possible. It is vital that the pastor convey genuine Christian love and support. Sometimes, there will be attempts to justify oneself, to deny guilt, to accuse superiors of mishandling the case, or to experience bitterness. At other times, there will be open confession and a true spirit of penitence. In any case, it is the role of the pastor to establish a good rapport with the person with the aim of leading him/her away from negative attitudes and back to spiritual health.

At the earliest possible time, the pastor, national/regional/state bishop, and the former minister's immediate supervisor (when such is the case) will meet together as a committee and coordinate their approach. Each one should accept a significant role in helping their former co-worker in the ministry. They should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and recognize that every person is unique and therefore must be worked with on an individual basis. He/she must be made to feel the support and willingness of those helping.

The candidate should meet with the committee regularly for prayer, counsel, reinforcement, and guidance. The pastor should appoint a prayer/visitation group or class of Spirit-filled individuals who will minister daily by telephone, cards, etc. The companion must also be included in the restoration process. In most cases, the spouse has been wounded and needs healing.

Often, the committee will find that those involved would benefit from professional Christian counseling. Help should be given in finding competent counseling. If the former minister is the head of a household, he/she may need help in finding employment, and the pastor should see that help is given in that area.

The membership of the local church should see the penitent minister as a wounded member of the body who needs healing. Members who are acquainted with the individual should be encouraged to call and/or write expressing their confidence that he/she will make it.

During the first several months, the local church should be patient and supportive as the healing process begins. At some point, depending on the individual's progress, the person should have an opportunity to participate in the services of worship. As progress is made toward full recovery, he/she may be permitted to minister. After a year or so, if the progress is satisfactory, the candidate may be recommended for relicensing in the ministry through the normal process if the local church and national/regional/state bishop feel the person is ready. The exception is that anyone having experienced moral (sexual) failure cannot be restored to the office of bishop yet may again seek licensure as a minister.

SECTION FIVE

**GOVERNANCE
DOCUMENT**

I. The Revised Governance Document, July 2016

INTRODUCTION

After the 98th International Assembly of 2014, the presiding bishop and the general presbyters approached the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee requesting the revision and rewriting of the Governance Document to further simplify the selection process of presiding bishop and general presbyters. It is clear that we need to periodically review the guidelines that direct this body. The International Presbytery (IP) has the responsibility to amend procedures no longer helpful or effective to perform their sacred responsibility. This new document addresses our current understanding and vision for the church, while preserving the principles embodied in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, this document will supersede all prior documents and versions. We submit this document to the International Presbytery as a means to better explain and not as an end, as if we had obtained a perfect understanding. We continue to recommend this document be reviewed every four years (or when deemed necessary) to keep it current and applicable to our changing dynamics. We realize fully that this harmonization may not be complete, yet it is submitted with respect for what the IP has requested. Regardless how well any group writes this governance document, this body must always rely on Holy Spirit discernment that we constantly pursue his leading in all our procedures and decisions. May it provide an instrument for better servanthood by the International Presbytery to Christ and his people!

THE OFFICE OF PRESBYTER (GENERAL, INTERNATIONAL)

The selection to serve as a presbyter in the Church of God of Prophecy began first with the wondrous call to follow Christ and afterwards with the individual's call into the ministry. Following considerable experience in mission and ministry, the selection to be a presbyter is ordinarily accomplished by God through the avenues of church government. It is a great honor to be selected to serve in this capacity and, as such, should be taken with seriousness, with meekness, and with a determination to represent Christ, the Church, and the office of presbyter with dignity, grace, and integrity. The Church of God of Prophecy presbyter should always conduct himself with a Christlike character that is representative of a mature leader.

The Character of the Presbyter

(1 Peter 5:1–3; Acts 6: 3–7; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Exodus 18:21)

The office of the Church of God of Prophecy presbyter is a position of importance and necessity. The individuals that fill these positions throughout the nations of the world are esteemed, honored, and respected by the people whom they serve. Therefore, each presbyter should approach his responsibilities with solemnity and prayerfulness, and the office should in no way, and at no time, be used to further one's own personal agenda. Moreover, while this leadership role should exemplify several desirable qualities, none is more important than for the individual to have a Christlike character in actions, communications, and deeds.

An important indicator of the character of the presbyter is the testimony of his spouse and his family. All current and potential presbyters should have the full blessing of their spouses and family members under his legal care. A presbyter who does not have the full support of the family will be severely handicapped in work, travel, and relationships. Therefore, during the selection process of all presbyters, the state and support of his immediate family should be considered. During the qualifying process, the wife of the candidate should be interviewed in regard to his spiritual and moral character.

The presbyter should strive to have the character and the mind of Christ in all things. According to the Apostle Paul, one who reflects the character of Christ does nothing that is motivated by selfish ambition and glory. The promotion of Christ and the work of the gospel should be the heart's desire of all who hold the office of presbyter. Jesus modeled unselfishness in all of his words and his deeds. He, Jesus, did not come to do his own will, but he came to do the will of the Father. Throughout history, men and women, who were spiritual giants, served as Christ did and looked out for the best interest of others over their own. The propagation of the gospel must always be the paramount goal.

The presbyter should be characterized by his love for both God and for others. Godly love requires and calls for self-sacrifice. Loving leadership embraces not a spirit of dictatorial dominion over others, but rather, it takes on the gentle, loving role of the Good Shepherd

who leads with gentleness and unselfishness. While it is understood that the presbyter will at times be required to make difficult decisions that will affect the lives of many, the authority exercised must always be from a position of love.

The presbyter must be a leader of moral, mental, and physical courage. God has not called his people to live in fear and dismay, but, rather, he calls them to trust him at all times and in all situations. Many of the nations of this world are faced with economic, social, political, and religious unrest, yet the Church of God of Prophecy presbyter must be courageous in the face of all these difficulties. If the presbyter displays courage in times of trouble, it will bring comfort and inspire hope in those that he leads. The Scripture admonishes God's people to be strong and courageous, and it is imperative that the Church of God of Prophecy presbyter possess and exhibit these virtues.

The presbyter must be decisive. Continuous procrastination in decision-making cripples the morale of the church, and it causes discouragement and frustration. To refuse to make a decision is to decide for the status quo. In making decisions, the presbyter should strive to apply the principles that are set forth in the Scriptures, seek advice through plurality, and endeavor to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The presbyter must strive to be like Christ who demonstrated humility in all things. Humility is the virtue of esteeming others more than oneself. In addition, when one possesses this virtue, he is neither a self-seeker nor is he a self-promoter. The presbyter who is humble seeks neither credit nor applause as long as the work of Christ is accomplished. Humility is exemplified by submission to God and to others. As is in all things, Christ is the perfect example of a spiritual leader as he esteemed others, took on the role of a servant, and humbled himself to the will of the Father to die on the cross.

The presbyter must be a person of forgiveness and one who refuses to be vindictive or to hold a grudge. In the work of ministry, confrontations are inevitable, and occasions will arise when hurtful things may be said against the presbyter; however, the presbyter must avoid all temptation to retaliate. A swift, angry, and carnal response

always proves harmful to the work of the Lord. Therefore, a presbyter must never react hastily and should always demonstrate the ability to handle criticism (fair and unfair) with grace. Christlike character strives to forgive all injustices.

The presbyter must be a person of integrity and sincerity. Integrity is the quality of being complete, undivided, and sound. It is represented by a firm adherence to the Christian code of moral values and is necessary in all matters of lifestyle, conversation, personal communications, finance, and business. The leader with integrity does not attempt to serve two or more masters, but his heart is set solely upon serving and obeying Christ. The sincere presbyter strives to live a life of purity both inwardly as well as outwardly.

The presbyter is not to be a servant to money or to greed. Many of those that the presbyter serves may do better financially than he himself. However, the presbyter must never allow greed to dictate his motives or actions. Since the Church preaches the gospel to the rich as well as the poor, there may be occasions when individuals with financial means will try to sway decisions through the influence and power of money. The presbyter should never be given to the influence of monetary wealth and should, at all times, make decisions based upon the will of God and according to the Scriptures.

The presbyter must always be careful how he presents himself through the avenues of social media. Technology has made it possible for anyone with a computer to communicate with potentially millions of people. Therefore, the presbyter should, at all times, be considerate of Christian brothers and sisters of other cultures and act as an instrument of peace, unity, and reconciliation rather than confusion. It is unbecoming to the office of presbyter to use social media as a means for self-promotion and for social and political expressions that are insensitive to the feelings of others. The presbyter should never allow himself to be drawn into conversations via social media that are demeaning regardless of the subject matter. The presbyter should be aware and intentional as to how his character is advertised to others. Since the presbyter is a bishop, it is expedient that he offers this same admonition to his wife and family.

The Church of God of Prophecy presbyter is to be a person filled

with the Holy Spirit, given to prayer, and walking in holiness. It is a great work and a tremendous honor for the individual that is called to serve in this capacity. The office of presbyter carries a weighty responsibility, and it cannot adequately be undertaken without divine guidance, strength, and wisdom. Therefore, it is essential that the presbyter maintain a strong, personal relationship with Christ and daily seek the continuous filling of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill his calling with excellence.

The Church of God of Prophecy international presbyter should be an example to those that he serves and leads. It is important that he demonstrate a spirit of generosity, grace, and love in order to draw out those same qualities in those he leads. Therefore, if it comes to light that he is not personally tithing, reporting, or leading his nation to support the International Account, he will not be allowed to speak in International Presbytery meetings. Also, he must come into compliance with these disciplines and show consistency as prescribed by his leaders, or he will not be reappointed. In essence, he is disqualifying himself to serve as a presbyter.

Clarifications and Definitions

The following terms, definitions, and ministry descriptions are to be understood as defined below.

Presiding Bishop: While the presiding bishop works in conjunction with the general presbyters to provide leadership, inspiration, vision, and governance, he remains the leader among leaders. Therefore, all members of the General Presbytery and International Presbytery should show deference to his position in all relevant matters. Their attitude towards his leadership and authority should reflect the spirit that our Lord Jesus Christ modeled in his life (Philippians 2:3–8, 12–14; Hebrews 13:17). In like manner, the presiding bishop should respect and honor the position and the office of the general presbyter as outlined by the International Assembly. In so doing, he embraces the spirit of plurality as he pursues relational leadership in his work.

General Presbyter: The general presbyter is a servant leader who oversees large areas of the world. His area may encompass one or more continents and will certainly include several nations and states. General presbyters are selected by the International

Presbytery and shall be evaluated every four years by the national/regional/state bishops in their area of the world where they have been assigned. The general presbyter's location should be a decision made in consultation among the presiding bishop, general presbyters, and area bishops where he serves. Although the general presbyters may have oversight for vision and order, they shall not view a specific area as their own domain to rule, but should seek consultation with the presiding bishop and the other general presbyters as the need arises.

General Presbytery: The presiding bishop and all general presbyters, who are chosen by the International Presbytery, make up this body. Together they perform the duties of general oversight for the Church of God of Prophecy globally and for their particular divisions or world regions. In this context, the presiding bishop would be chairman of the General Presbytery, with the two vice chairmen (those chosen among the general presbyters) to serve in day-to-day matters with the presiding bishop. The general presbyters may also moderate the Assembly at the discretion of the presiding bishop. If the presiding bishop, in consultation with the general presbyters, determines that additional general presbyters are necessary for specific areas of the expanding global work, the International Presbytery would have to approve this decision. Areas that are not in full participation with the reporting and financial system of the general church may instead have a representative appointed by the presiding bishop in consultation with the general presbyters. The General Presbytery is accountable to the International Presbytery and to the International Assembly for their function and work. They shall meet twice yearly, or whenever the need arises, to handle administrative work and strategy.

International Presbytery: The presiding bishop, general presbyters, national/regional/state bishops, and the International Offices executive directors and its ministers who serve in translocal ministries constitute the International Presbytery. This body meets regularly at the International Assembly and at other times as determined by the presiding bishop and general presbyters. It convenes for counsel, recommendations, and decisions on church-wide matters that fall within its Assembly mandates. The General

Presbytery may invite individuals to observe and/or address these meetings as they deem necessary.

Area Presbytery: A general presbyter with the national/regional/state bishops under his jurisdiction sitting together for discussion and counsel on national/regional/state matters or any area-wide matters that may be referred to them or about which they may be consulted as a body.

THE PRESIDING BISHOP

Qualities of the Presiding Bishop

The person chosen to fill the office of presiding bishop should be an individual of outstanding character and integrity, and this person should exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. It is expedient that the presiding bishop be a man of prayer with a burden for those that are lost. His concern should be for all the nations of the world and not for one geographical region. He should be devoted to equipping others for the work of the ministry and be a person with administrative skills. First Peter 5:1–3 states that the qualities of humility and of shepherding are essential to leadership. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy in six broad categories regarding qualifications for a godly leader. They are as follows: (1) be faithful in the preaching of biblical truth, (2) be bold in exposing and refuting error, (3) be an example of godliness to the flock, (4) be diligent and work hard in the ministry, (5) be willing to suffer hardship and persecution in service for the Lord, and (6) be one who serves his family well and has their respect. Acts 6:3–7 and 1 Timothy 3:1–7 list qualities such as “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” “given continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word,” “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,” and “blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; . . . not a novice,” lest he be lifted up in pride; and “he must have a good report of them that are without.” Exodus 18:21 admonishes that leaders be “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.” From these passages and others, it is clear that integrity, faith, even-temperedness, soundness

of judgment, a teachable spirit, peacemaking qualities, purity, cooperativeness, sensitivity to God's Spirit, submissiveness, humility, leadership abilities, good governance, unshakable commitment, and Christlikeness reside in the person selected to fill the office of presiding bishop.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Presiding Bishop

The International Assembly recognized and passed that the presiding bishop "... provides, to the membership in general and the leadership in particular, God given direction to accomplish the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18 20) given by the Lord Jesus Christ," and "... should have freedom to exercise his spiritual giftedness, and realize the potential for ministering as the Holy Spirit directs." Due to the enormity of the responsibilities of the position of presiding bishop and knowing that the Holy Spirit is the Guide, the duties and responsibilities of the presiding bishop can never fully be defined. However, certain outlines can help facilitate orderliness in the work without infringing the Holy Spirit's divine prerogative to lead where he will.

Regarding the presiding bishop's authority pertaining to the International Offices, significant matters should be resolved through mutual consultation between the presiding bishop and the general presbyters. The principle of "first among equals" applies to the presiding bishop and deference should be given to his office. With this in mind, as well as the biblical practice of "shared leadership" (*Assembly Minutes* 1994, 153), we propose the following:

It shall be the duty of the presiding bishop, assisted by the general presbyters, to provide inspirational leadership to the Church by and/or through:

- A. Overall comprehensive, world outreach planning and strategies consistent with the Church of God of Prophecy's renewed emphasis on the proper role of the local church and the practical responsibilities of area, regional, and International Offices

- B. Encouragement of leadership development both with existing church leaders and by discovering and engaging leaders that God is raising up
- C. Represent the Church of God of Prophecy among other Christians and the greater kingdom of God in order to foster good relations and promote biblical unity
- D. Nurture the ministry by taking oversight. This includes, but is not limited to, counseling and establishing, in conjunction with the International Presbytery, procedures and requirements for ministerial licensure, ordination, discipline, and restoration.
- E. Arrange and convene special meetings or events such as International Assemblies, General and International Presbytery meetings, leadership gatherings, and global promotions
- F. Recognize, appoint, and commission executive directors, International Offices leadership, and personnel; facilitate and participate in the selection of general presbyters and/or make effective arrangements thereof. In the spirit of plurality, he should also be consulted in the appointments of national, regional, and state leaders
- G. Develop plans for organizational infrastructure to meet changing administrative, relational needs of the Church with a focus on unity, fellowship, and effectiveness
- H. Take oversight of all budgetary finances to see that funds are properly distributed within the framework of the Church's accounting procedures and ensure that proper audits are performed by independent accounting organizations and reported to the International Assembly
- I. Initiate, interface, and participate in the selection and evaluation of the general presbyters

Vacancy of the Office of the Presiding Bishop

The office of the presiding bishop may become vacant in one of four ways: (1) Church body recognition, (2) personal/health reasons, (3) death or incapacitation, and (4) moral improprieties.

1. Church Body Recognition

Once chosen, it is expected that the presiding bishop serve the Church as long as the Lord's hand is upon him. Every six years, the International Presbytery should discern the manifestation of God's presence upon the individual serving in the capacity of presiding bishop. If a continued confirmation of the Holy Spirit is upon him, the International Presbytery should reaffirm this observation. However, if at that time it is discerned that God's hand has lifted from the individual for this office, the International Presbytery will be asked to evaluate this assessment and determine if the Lord desires to release the individual from this position.

2. Personal/Health Reasons

In the event that the presiding bishop desires to no longer serve because of personal, health, or age-related reasons, he should make his intent known to the General Presbytery and the International Presbytery and should maintain his position, where possible, until arrangements can be made for the selection of the new presiding bishop at the upcoming International Assembly.

3. Death or Incapacitation

In the event of the presiding bishop's death or incapacitation that leads to his inability to fulfil his duties, the function of the office will continue with an interim presiding bishop who should be chosen from among the sitting general presbyters. The general presbyters have the responsibility of informing the International Presbytery within ten days of the situation, and arrangements should begin in order to fill the office of the presiding bishop at the upcoming scheduled International Assembly.

4. Moral Improprieties

In the unfortunate event of moral failure by the presiding bishop, it will become the duty of the first vice-chairman to call a meeting of the general presbyters, and together, the general presbyters will declare the office of presiding bishop vacant. If the general presbyters deem it necessary to remove the presiding bishop from his office, the function of that office will continue in the manner as stated in the next paragraph.

When the office of the presiding bishop becomes vacant, the first vice- chairman will call a meeting of the general presbyters, and they will decide among themselves within ten days the person from among the sitting general presbyters who will immediately assume the role as the presiding bishop. This person will function as the interim presiding bishop with all rights and duties until the upcoming International Assembly and will simultaneously retain his role and responsibilities as a general presbyter and will work within the boundaries of plurality. It should be understood that this individual will not necessarily, nor automatically, become the next selected presiding bishop, nor should he be excluded from consideration. It is imperative that the normal governance and procedural process be followed in the selection process of the presiding bishop, and full communication should take place with the International Presbytery within ten days, or sooner if possible, of the selection of the presiding bishop.

Qualifying Group for the Presiding Bishop

The presiding bishop, the International Offices executive directors, two designees chosen by the International Presbytery, and the general presbyters of areas with nominees will form the Qualifying Group for presiding bishop. No individual shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of presiding bishop. They will function in a similar manner to the Qualifying Group for the general presbyter when reviewing potential nominees and when presenting them to the International Presbytery for consideration.

Selection Process for the Presiding Bishop

1. The presiding bishop will be chosen by the International Presbytery in a closed meeting. Their choice will be presented for approval to the International Assembly by the general presbyters, and an expression by acclamation will be called for from the Assembly delegates. Upon the acceptance of the presented candidate by the International Assembly, the new presiding bishop should be anointed with oil and prayed for by the laying on of hands of the general presbyters while a prayer of unison is made by the entire Assembly. When this is complete,

the new presiding bishop shall be given a time to express his heart, and afterwards, he will assume the responsibility to moderate the remainder of the International Assembly in the event there is no sitting presiding bishop.

2. On the Assembly year that a new presiding bishop is to be chosen, the candidates for that office will be selected in the following manner. Approximately nine months prior to the Assembly, each international presbyter will be asked to spend a minimum of three days in seclusion, private prayer, and some form of fasting, for the purpose of seeking God's will. He or she should have in hand a printed or electronic directory of all the international leaders that include a picture and a short resume that introduces the work, ministry, family, and education of each. After the period of prayer and seclusion, he or she will submit one name for consideration via email or other designated means to the qualifying committee. Note: A presbyter may submit the name of a fellow presbyter or any bishop, whom he knows very well, that has exceptional abilities, godly character, cooperates with others, and has proven to be a gifted leader. A presbyter who nominates a minister who is not already a part of the international presbytery should be able to demonstrate that the nominated minister is willing to serve in this capacity and is able to meet all the rigorous ethical demands and background checks. He should also submit a biographical sketch of the minister similar to that provided for the International Presbytery in preparation for the next step.
3. After receiving all the nominations for presiding bishop, the qualifying committee should remove all names that did not receive at least two expressions, except for the ministers who are not part of the International Presbytery. (Note: These ministers from outside the International Presbytery automatically move forward because they may not be widely known. Moving to the next step gives all of the International Presbytery the opportunity to read their biography and prayerfully consider their nomination. Afterwards, they will be subject to the same rules as the other nominees.) Those ministers should be allowed to move forward after the qualifying committee has been satisfied. Of course, every person who has been nominated has the right to withdraw

his name from the process. All persons meeting the above criteria are to have their names submitted back to the International Presbytery via email or other means along with those ministers from the field with their resumes for further consideration within 30 days.

4. Upon receiving the qualifying list, the international presbyter will have up to 21 days to pray over the list. He or she will then cast one expression for one candidate back to the qualifying committee by the prescribed date. The qualifying committee will then take the top seven candidates based on the numeric record and arrange for all of them to be interviewed. The interview should be, where feasible, conducted by the same person, asking the same questions, recorded, posted securely, and made available for a limited time to only the International Presbytery approximately 21 days before the International Assembly.
5. It is appropriate, but not mandated, for an extra day to be placed into the schedule to relieve the pressure of time. The first meeting should begin with prayer, singing, a sermon, and Communion. The sermon should address the needs of the Church and the qualities necessary in the person to become the next presiding bishop. This part of the process should be planned by the acting presiding bishop. After the time of worship and recollection, all individuals that are not necessary to the process of selecting the presiding bishop will be asked to leave the room. The international presbytery and translocal ministers will be the only ones remaining in the room along with those individuals deemed necessary for technical matters. All cell phones and computers will be turned off (not silenced), and full attention will be given to the matter at hand. Participants are asked not to communicate in any manner or form with those outside the meeting in any capacity.
6. To better prepare for the meetings of the International Presbytery (IP) and the selecting process of general presbyters, the IP would be asked by the office of the presiding bishop to choose four national/regional/state bishops (at least two from outside North America) from among themselves at least 60 days prior to the Pre-Assembly Meetings. These four will serve as IP counselors during

sessions where a moderator is to be chosen to serve for the selecting process. All four of these IP counselors would be selected prior to the Assembly through the oversight of the office of the presiding bishop. It is important for all the IP to know the document, and it is essential for the four counselors to study and fully understand the Governance Document. They would be expected to arrive one day prior to the International Presbytery meetings for an intensive training in the Governance Document, as well as spiritual discernment and appropriate procedures of moderation by the BDP chairman and secretary. One of the four counselors will be chosen by the International Presbytery to serve as the moderator. The remaining three will serve as his counselors during the selection process of the presiding bishop or general presbyters.

7. Following a prayer for God's help, the moderator and the counselors will ask the candidates to leave the room. These four counselors will not mark ballots for the selection so that they can moderate and judge the proceedings effectively. They will be called back in one at a time and given the opportunity to share their heart. They will also allow the International Presbytery to ask questions of each candidate, being careful to keep the allotted time for each one approximately the same. All candidates should be asked a standard series of questions. It is important that the moderator make every attempt to keep the process fair and unbiased for all.
8. Once all candidates have had their opportunity to speak and answer questions, the moderator will call for the first ballot. Each member of the International Presbytery will have a card with the names of the nominees on it. Each participant will cast his/her expression with solemnity and integrity. The name placed on each individual ballot by a member of the International Presbytery will be one of those on the final qualifying list. All of those receiving five or less votes would have their names removed. As names are removed from the list throughout the process, those individuals would be allowed to return to the meeting room and participate in the selection process.

9. At the completion of the second round, all names receiving ten or less votes would be removed; after the third round, all names receiving 15 or less votes will be removed; after the fourth round, all names receiving twenty or less votes would have their names removed. This procedure would continue until two names remain.
10. The moderator will open the floor for discussion, and the Presbytery should feel the freedom to discuss—without any fear of retribution—the ministry, character, family, and abilities of these two individuals. There should once again be a time of prayer, and afterwards the expressions will be cast. If one candidate does not receive a two-thirds majority, the moderator should again open the floor for discussion and prayer, after which the expressions will be recast. If after three attempts neither person gets at least two-thirds of the expressions, the moderator should call for the counselors to meet with the current presiding bishop and the general presbyters for the purpose of discerning the way forward. After their consultation, they shall bring a recommendation to the International Presbytery for approval. Note: At any point in the process above, should a person receive 70 percent of the expressions, the moderator would call for submission, and a one-accord decision should be sought. The International Presbytery makes the final selection of the new presiding bishop based upon the “one-accord” principle (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 153).
11. In the event that the general presbyters decide to withdraw themselves from the selection process, they should first consult with the international presbyters from their regions of oversight. The International Presbytery should have a voice in resubmitting the name of their general presbyter, with his consent, as a candidate for presiding bishop.

GENERAL PRESBYTERS

Duties and Responsibilities of the General Presbyters

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Global Leadership—to work with the presiding bishop in

providing shared leadership to the worldwide church in accomplishing its Christ-ordained mission (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 155)

2. Oversight—oversee the work of the church in their area. This will of course be done in conjunction with the presiding bishop, as each of these will be under the order of plurality.
3. Licensing—direct the licensure of ministers in their area
4. Leadership Development—facilitate the thrust for training of ministers in their area at every level and assure effective communication of Assembly decisions to those leaders within their areas of responsibility+
5. Evaluation—conduct evaluations of national/regional/state bishops and overall ministry effectiveness in their area as a whole
6. Discipline—provide means for discipline of bishops or other ministers where there is no presbyterial leadership. This would likely be through an Area Review Board or similar body.
7. Area Plurality—create a body of leadership for the area that reflects plurality in decision making
8. National Plurality—work to encourage the practice of plurality in the area
9. Placement—pray for and initiate the process for replacement of the presiding bishop as outlined by the Governance Document
10. Assembly Actions—lead their area in understanding and implementing Assembly actions
11. Funds Flow—coordinate movement and disbursement of funds into the region and out to the national treasurers
12. Reporting—monitor the reporting of the nations to assure a continued flow of valuable information that provides accurate knowledge of the state of the church in each nation
13. Budget—make budget decisions for the area in a manner complimentary to plurality
14. Accountability—develop and maintain a unified system of stewardship and accountability within their area

15. Harvest Partners—lead in promoting and facilitating the work of the bishops in their connection with Harvest Partner churches
16. Legal—confirm and help safeguard the legal standing of the church in each nation

Inspirational Responsibilities

1. Vision—seek God for the visionary leadership needed in the region. This can also be done in the plurality of leadership.
2. Strategy—work with the bishops as a whole or the plural leadership body of counselors to coordinate strategies for the area overall
3. Outreach—lead the area in outreach to the unreached regions as God opens doors and with systematic emphasis. Church planting would certainly be a major method here.
4. Primary Ministries—give inspirational leadership for primary ministries, as well as others inspired of the Spirit. These certainly include prayer, praise/worship, spiritual warfare, evangelism/ missions, youth, children, and family ministry.
5. Pastoral—provide pastoral leadership and ministry to the bishops of his area
6. Presence—be a visible presence representing the church universal and the Assembly

Leadership in the Nations of their Area

1. Conferences—design and hold meetings that will draw together the leadership of the area, and possibly representatives from beyond, for fellowship, information, training, inspiration, vision casting, dialogue, and other functions best done in this setting
2. Recruiting—evaluate the need for laborers in the area and work with Global Missions Ministries or general presbyters from other areas to recruit those from whatever regions possible
3. Communication—communicate as a spokesperson the needs, victories, opportunities, and all that would build bridges

of cooperation between the various areas of the Church ministries

4. Discernment—continuously seek God for discernment to see the unique cultural context of the nations in the area and how these can be woven into the gospel work and church life, or how they can enhance our universal body

Global Responsibilities

1. Evaluation—sit regularly with all international presbyters as the plurality of leadership to review, discuss, and give input on the global status of the Church
2. Assembly—work as a general presbyter in providing leadership to the International Assembly of the Church
3. Interfacing—connect with other areas to create harmony and unity in ministry and in doctrinal essentials
4. Accountability—receive counsel from the other general presbyters concerning their area of the General Presbytery
5. Service—serve the church universal by sharing in the burden that the church fulfill its mandate and reach its destiny for this age
6. Facilitation—facilitate the flow of inspirational services that come from the International Offices, as well as provide a response as to more effective helps possible
7. Representation—bring to the general presbyters’ meetings a representation of the needs, views, and gifts of one’s area so that their place in the body is manifest

In all matters of the work of the general presbyters, they shall have involvement in subjects before the presiding bishop for consultation, decision, or dissemination. While they should be available for consultation to the presiding bishop, at no time should the general presbyters usurp the authority in a specific area assigned to the presiding bishop, nor interfere in the internal operations or ministerial cohesiveness of an area assigned to another general presbyter. Where questions of this “balance of plurality” have been overstepped, all offices involved shall work this out through mutual respect and prayer. If the issue cannot be resolved, the presiding bishop or

general presbyters may bring such matters to the attention of the International Presbytery at their next session. The International Presbytery shall at all times serve as the servants of the Lord and of the Assembly to hold accountable both the presiding bishop and the general presbyters to their honored positions.

With the aforementioned responsibilities, the International Presbytery has requested that all presbyters of the IP be informed at least 60 days before their meetings of any subject or decision that will appear before their body. This will permit the IP's reasonable time to study and pray about those issues or subjects they will be addressing while they are in session.

Selection of General Presbyters

1. Where vacancies occur among the International Presbytery, the presiding bishop, with the respective plurality group from that area, will decide how that work is to be carried on until a new selection is made.
2. The presiding bishop, the International Offices executive directors, two designees chosen by the International Presbytery, and the general presbyter of areas with nominees will form the Qualifying Group for general presbyters. No individual shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of general presbyter. They will function in a similar manner to the Qualifying Group for the presiding bishop when reviewing potential nominees and when presenting them to the International Presbytery for consideration.
3. The presiding bishop shall initiate the process of selection of general presbyters when necessary: (1) personal/health reasons, (2) church body recognition, (3) moral improprieties, or (4) death. The procedure will begin with a meeting of the national/regional/state bishops of their particular area moderated by the presiding bishop or his designee. Such meetings would be preceded by proper notification to the national/regional/state bishops in writing, and a call to prayer and fasting in preparation for the meeting. As far as practical, the principles and procedures outlined for the selection of the presiding bishop

will be observed with modifications where necessary, to conform to area needs.

- a. Call to prayer by the presiding bishop for ministers in the area of concern
- b. International presbyters who oversee ministers in that area are to consult with them about potential candidates they may recommend. It should be understood that the nominee would not necessarily have to be from or live in that nation, region, or state. Once candidates are nominated, each national/regional/state bishop, along with his plurality group, shall reduce the list of names to two that will be recommended from their nation, region or state to the presiding bishop or his designee.
- c. It would seem biblically sound and wise in light of the presiding bishop's global knowledge and working relationship with all presbyters, that he also has the authority in consultation with the GPs to submit one name to be included to the final list.
- d. The presiding bishop or his designee would convene a meeting of the bishops in that area (or otherwise consult with them in an effective manner) and narrow the names to not more than three before submitting them to the Qualifying Group.
- e. The Qualifying Group performs background and stewardship checks and reports their findings to the presiding bishop. Note: The presiding bishop, in consultation with the GPs, must approve all nominees being presented to the International Presbytery.
- f. The Qualifying Group presents the names that have been qualified to the International Presbytery. If only one nominee or possibly none are available, then this should be deferred to the presiding bishop in consultation with the general presbyters and international presbyters to help come up with two or more nominees.
- g. After review, qualified nominees would be identified and a

biographical data sheet prepared for each one being submitted to the International Presbytery by the Qualifying Group. All qualified persons (names), their biographies, and appropriate information gleaned by the Qualifying Group shall be submitted to all the international presbyters at least 30 days before the IP Meeting. It is to be understood that the Qualifying Group would have observed an appropriate time of prayer and fasting, both individually and corporately, in attempting to qualify nominees.

- h. To better prepare for the meetings of the International Presbytery (IP) and the selecting process of general presbyters, the international presbyters would be asked by the office of the presiding bishop to choose four bishops (at least two from outside North America) from among themselves at least 60 days prior to the Pre-Assembly Meetings. These four will serve as IP counselors during sessions where a moderator is to be chosen to serve for the selecting process. All four of these IP counselors would be selected prior to the Assembly through the oversight of the office of the presiding bishop. It is important for all the international presbyters to know the document, and it is essential for the four counselors to study and fully understand the Governance Document. They would be expected to arrive one day prior to the International Presbytery meetings for an intensive training in the Governance Document, as well as spiritual discernment and appropriate procedures of moderation by the BDP chairman and secretary. One of the four counselors will be chosen by the International Presbytery to serve as the moderator. The remaining three will serve as his counselors during the selection process of the presiding bishop or general presbyters.
- i. The moderator selected shall state the purpose of the meeting. A representative of the Qualifying Group (with the exception of the presiding bishop or a general presbyter) shall present all nominees by calling them forward and reading their biographies. The biographical data should have already been distributed to all presbyters thirty days prior to this IP meeting. In addition, the name of each nominee shall be

placed on a separate sheet of paper with sufficient copies for all participants (changed presbyters), rendered without order of preference of any kind, and free of markings, notations, or other comments. Anyone whose name appears on the list may not moderate or participate in the presentation.

- j. Nominees selected for the process shall be given fifteen to twenty minutes to address the International Presbytery to express his heart and vision. The IP will then be given the opportunity to ask questions of the nominee.
- k. The moderator that was selected by the IP may consult with the three counselors as needed. These four will not mark ballots for the selection so that they can moderate and judge the proceedings effectively. In addition, a secretary and assistant shall be chosen for the meeting. The names of nominees may not be considered for moderator or counselors for this special process. The moderator shall call for prayer for all the nominees and thereafter excuse them from the meeting to another site where they will continue in prayer and reflection. They will remain away from the meeting until recalled by the International Presbytery. The moderator shall call immediately for a time of concert prayer, after which there shall be at least thirty minutes in session for private reflection, meditation, and personal prayer. During this time there shall be no person-to-person or group discussions or comparisons whatsoever.
- l. The presiding bishop and general presbyters may give an expression when selecting anyone for presiding bishop or general presbyter, as long as they are not one of the nominees for the particular position that they will cast an expression for during the meeting.
- m. When the time mentioned above has expired, the moderator shall call the session to order to begin the process of selection. Each member of the International Presbytery will have a card with the names of the nominees on it. Each participant will cast their expression with solemnity and integrity.

- n. The moderator shall call for a time of prayer, after which the first expression will be made. All of those receiving five or less votes would have their names removed. At the completion of the second round, all names receiving ten or less votes would be removed; after the third round, all names receiving fifteen or less votes will be removed; after the fourth round, all names with twenty or less votes will be removed. This procedure would continue until two names remain. The moderator will open the floor for discussion, and the Presbytery should feel the freedom to discuss—without any fear of retribution—the ministry, character, family, and abilities of these two individuals. There should once again be a time of prayer, and afterwards the expressions will be cast. If one candidate does not receive a two-thirds majority, the moderator should again open the floor for discussion and prayer, after which the expressions will be recast. If after three attempts neither person gets at least two-thirds of the expressions, the moderator should call for the counselors to meet with the current presiding bishop and the general presbyters for the purpose of discerning the way forward. After their consultation, they shall bring a recommendation to the International Presbytery for approval. Note: At any point in the process above, should a person receive 70 percent of the expressions, the moderator would call for submission and a one-accord decision should be sought. The international presbyters make the final selection of the new general presbyter based upon the “one-accord” principle (*88th Assembly Minutes* 1994, 153).
 - o. Once a general presbyter is selected for recommendation to the Assembly and presented to the International Presbytery in session, the moderator will no longer direct the meeting. He shall relinquish the role of moderator to the presiding bishop, who shall report the selection to the International Assembly in an orderly and dignified manner befitting the occasion.
4. The Assembly has provided that the qualifications of general presbyters are essentially the same as the presiding bishop.

5. Persons chosen as general presbyters would be announced and presented to the International Assembly at the first opportunity after their selection. Where applicable, general presbyters would be formally introduced to their respective areas. An appropriate installation ceremony should be devised in either case.
6. All general presbyters are selected by the International Presbytery and shall be evaluated every four years by the national/regional/state bishops in their area of the world where they have been assigned. They may be retained after this evaluation process if recommended by the international presbyters, or they may be replaced at the discretion of the same body. Where the presiding bishop feels a strong sense of a need for a change in a general presbyter, he should first speak to the individual personally asking him to consider rotating out. If they agree, then the process of replacement would begin. If not, the presiding bishop should bring this to the attention of their respective area for them to pray about and consider. If the area presbyters do not agree and he still feels a strong burden for a need of change, the presiding bishop, in consultation with the general presbyters, then may present this conviction to the IP for their consideration. It is imperative that we maintain anointed, dynamic leadership at all levels.

SECTION SIX

**THE FINANCIAL
SYSTEM**

I. The Present Financial System

The Finance and Stewardship Committee expresses gratitude to all members, ministers, and churches that are tithing faithfully and giving generously into the present Financial System of our Church. Let us stand together on the promises of God’s care for us as mentioned by the psalmist David: “I have been young and now I am old. And in all my years I have never seen the Lord forsake a man who loves him; nor have I seen the children of the godly go hungry. Instead, the godly are able to be generous with their gifts and loans to others, and their children are a blessing” (Psalm 37:25–26 TLB).

As we collectively face the challenges now before us, let us together resolve to pray for the following: (1) for God to reveal to us his plan: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7 KJV); (2) for God to instruct us: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3 KJV); (3) for godly wisdom to be manifested among us: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do . . .” (1 Chronicles 12:32 KJV); and (4) to stand in the council of God: “But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds” (Jeremiah 23:22 NIV) (*95th Assembly Minutes* 2008, 72–77).

A. National/Regional/State Bishop & Pastoral Compensation

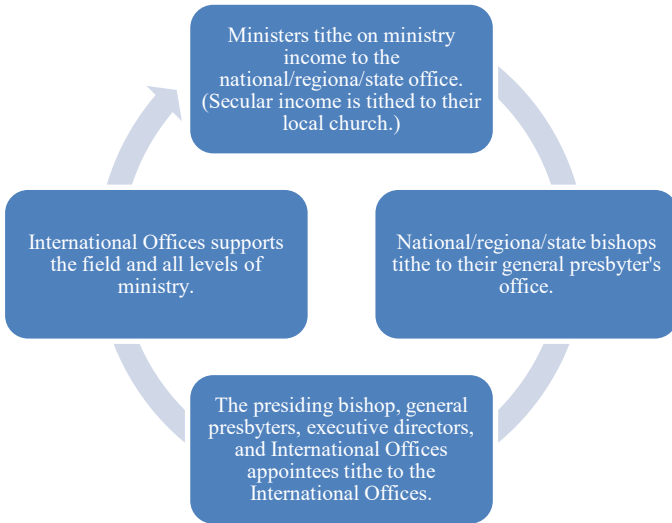
When an increase in an allotment is considered for a national/regional /state bishop or pastor, if the Finance and Stewardship Committee (or its equivalent) for the nation, region, state, or local church is vested with the delegated authority of the convention or conference, correspondingly, to consider national/regional/state bishop or pastoral compensation (in addition to the current annual allotment set by the Administrative Committee), then any increase in compensation, merit, or cost of living adjustment may be approved by this same commissioned group, who is serving as the fiduciary agent of accountability for the convention or conference being served. Otherwise, any increase (in addition to the current annual allotment set by the Administrative Committee)

in compensation, merit, or cost of living adjustment should be approved by a task force (see 95th *Assembly Minutes 2008*, 72-3) via the ministers paying tithes to that office (nation, region, or state) at their convention or by the members paying tithes to the local church at their regular conference, respectively. However, the Finance and Stewardship Committee (or its equivalent) is not authorized to increase national/ regional/state bishop or pastoral compensation (in addition to the current annual allotment set by the Administrative Committee) in cases when and where the national/regional/state or local offices have personnel who are supplemented from sources external to their offices and/or conventions/conferences. In such cases, said personnel are subject to the decisions of the Finance and Stewardship Committee (or its equivalent) of the offices supplementing them with funds.

B. Flowchart/Diagram of Present Financial System

The following diagram of the Present Financial System is offered as an additional visual aid. The focus of the diagram is to bring more clarity about the tithing/giving procedures among the ministers and various church offices. These illustrations (i.e., flowchart and diagram) are to be updated automatically by the Assembly Committee for Finance and Stewardship as approved changes occur.





1. **Tithes of National/Regional/State Bishops:** National/Regional/State bishops tithe to their respective General Presbytery office. This action has redirected funds away from the International Offices and toward the General Presbytery offices, thereby allowing for more funds to assist with struggling intermediate offices and to be used for church planting and evangelization.
2. **Harvest and Leadership Development Offering:** An offering to help the national/regional/state offices with operations, harvest outreach, church planting, and leadership training is to be received monthly at the local church. One hundred percent of this is to be sent to the respective national/regional/state offices. This offering has great potential to bless the intermediate offices.
3. **Supplementary Funds for the National/Regional/State Offices:** When there is a need for more operational funds at the national/regional/state offices beyond the ministerial tithe, the respective conventions of these intermediate offices may now adopt resolutions (that are not in contradiction to the current Assembly rulings or the present financial system) to have their local churches send in an additional amount (i.e., equivalent to a certain percentage of the tithe sent to the International Offices) in order to provide them with much-needed additional financial support.

4. **Fiscal Responsibility:** An annual report of all pastors, national/regional/ state bishops, presbyters, and general appointees is now to be given from the supervising office to the local church or office being served that affirms whether or not the minister is faithful in reporting and tithing. This practice should promote transparency and accountability and encourage our ministers to both model and mentor faithful tithing, per International Assembly guidelines.
5. **Retirement Planning:** All ministers under appointment have been encouraged to participate in a retirement plan in conjunction with their local churches, national/regional/state presbytery, or the International Offices, allocating a portion of their annual budget to include some amount to give to their respective pastor, bishop (national/regional/ state), general presbyter, presiding bishop, or International Offices' ministry director, as matching funds for retirement. Where no retirement plan currently exists, the national bishops, in coordination with the International Offices (i.e., Stewardship Ministries) and their respective general presbyter, are asked to establish an appropriate retirement plan for their ministers under appointment who serve as pastors, national/ regional/state bishops, or presbyters within the existing laws of their sovereign nations.
6. **Parsonage Allowance:** Each local church, national/regional/state office, presbytery office, or the International Offices, with respect to the laws of their sovereign nations, are to now designate a reasonable portion of the monthly allotment as a housing or parsonage allowance for their respective pastor, bishop (national/regional/state), general presbyter, presiding bishop, or International Offices ministry director, to assist him/her in the upkeep of his/her residence (whether owned personally or by the Church) to defray the costs of maintenance, repairs, rent/mortgage, utilities, furnishings, etc. In some cases, designating most or all of the compensation as a parsonage allowance may be reasonable and may also have a tax advantage (depending on the nation/state) for the pastor, national/regional/state bishop, presbyter, ministry director, etc.

II. International Assembly Expense Offerings

The International Assembly has been a pinnacle point of this movement. It has had a distinct purpose and function in our past and will continue to do so in our future. The Assembly provides the Church of God of Prophecy with direction, fellowship, inspiration, connection, as well as serving as our platform to transact business. It holds a special place in all of our hearts. Its roots go back to our inception, and it is a vital part of who we are.

The Assembly has great value and worth to this Church. However, it does not occur without a tremendous investment of our financial resources. This biennial event comes with financial challenges to our already demanding International Offices budget.

In an effort to relieve this share in the expense on our International Offices' finances and not thwart the current ministries provided, we therefore recommend that consideration is given to implementing an Assembly Expense Offering, to be received by every local church globally each year or as an annual budgeted amount. Each local church should feel the flexibility to receive this offering at a date before May 1, should it work in their overall budget process. The May first date will give adequate time for it to be sent to the national/regional/state office, then to the International Offices before the Assembly begins.

This annual offering (or a budgeted amount) from each local church would provide additional funds necessary for International Assembly expenses and would make it possible to maintain our commitment to our core values.

While we see an annual Assembly Expense Offering as a proactive way to share in funding the International Assembly, we may be approaching a time to consider an adjustment in our Assembly cycle. In light of the above information, we request the presiding bishop and general presbyters ask the appropriate Assembly committee to analyze this for feasibility and present it to the International Assembly as they deem necessary.

SECTION SEVEN

**BELIEFS,
STATEMENTS,
AND POSITIONS**

I. A Statement of Faith for the Church of God of Prophecy

Introduction and Rationale

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3 NKJV).

In 2015, the presiding bishop and general presbyters asked the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee to write a statement of faith that would clearly and concisely express the core beliefs of the Christian faith that have been historically embraced by the Church of God of Prophecy. In the course of its writing, members of both the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee and the General Presbytery made contributions to the document’s content. It is important to affirm that the resulting document does not replace the doctrinal positions in *Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy*. On the contrary, we continue to hold the biblical and theological truths that identify and distinguish the Church of God of Prophecy as a church within the Classical Pentecostal movement.

The Church of God of Prophecy Statement of Faith offers a public statement of the basic tenets of the Christian faith in clear and simple language. The beliefs stated in the document express our solidarity and commonality with Christians within the church throughout the world, while preserving some of our theological distinctions. It does not attempt to address every biblical teaching, theological position, or practice in orthodox Christianity or the Church of God of Prophecy. Instead, we hope to offer a clear and concise statement of our faith that will introduce people of other Christian traditions, and even people of non-Christian faiths to the Church of God of Prophecy. We are convinced that our present exposure to and cooperation with other Christians, and our exposure to people of non-Christian religions, make such a statement imperative.

The Church of God of Prophecy Statement of Faith also offers a standard, unified, and cohesive declaration of the foundational articles of our faith that can be used by ministers and churches in printed and digital media.

Our prayer is that, as members of the Church of God of Prophecy, we may continue to boldly and “earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

(Report of the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee to the 99th International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, 2016)

Statement of Faith (Amended 2018)

We believe in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through him and for him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and he will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through him, the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering Presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent his Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that he died in our place. The believer’s sins are forgiven by the shedding of his blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christlike life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of

Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God’s revelation of himself and his will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian’s rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (*100th Assembly Journal* 2018)

II. Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy

Since the beliefs of the Church of God of Prophecy are based on biblical principles, we realize that we are on a spiritual journey striving to “walk in the light” when it comes to our understanding of timeless truth. The following doctrinal insights reflect our current findings through our International Assemblies. We must always be acutely aware that as human instruments, we are subject to limited comprehension. As such, we desire to continually seek greater light that better aligns us to Scripture and brings correction to our finite knowledge. Henceforth, following each Assembly, the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee would be expected to make any further adjustments that would be required in light of this mandate to reflect Assembly decisions.

From its beginnings, the Church of God of Prophecy has based its beliefs on “the whole Bible rightly divided.” We accept the Bible as God’s Holy Word, inspired, inerrant, and infallible. We believe the Bible to be God’s written revelation of himself to mankind and our guide in all matters of faith; therefore, we look to the Bible as our highest authority for doctrine, practice, organization, and discipline.

The Church of God of Prophecy is firm in its commitment to orthodox Christian belief. We affirm that there is one God eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, his sinless life, the physical miracles he performed, his atoning death upon the Cross, his bodily resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and his personal return in power and glory at his second coming. We profess that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of sinful mankind. We believe the sinner is brought to an awareness of the need for salvation through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in sanctification by the blood of Christ, one is made holy. We affirm the present, active ministry of the Holy Spirit who guides the church and by whose indwelling and empowerment we are able to live godly lives and render effective service to God and others. We believe in the oneness and ultimate unity of believers for which our Lord prayed, and that this should be visibly displayed “that the world may know, see, and believe” God’s glory, the coming of his Son, and the great love he has

for his people (John 17:20–23). We are committed to the sanctity of the marriage bond and the importance of strong, loving Christian families.

The Church embraces all biblical doctrines as taught in the New Testament and have listed some that may be helpful to believers seeking to mature in Christ Jesus:

REPENTANCE

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the world and upon the human heart through the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 16:8–11) brings CONVICTION, an awareness and acknowledgement of sin against God and the need to confess that guilt with godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10). In short, repentance means not only being sorry for sin, but a turning from and forsaking the old life (sin habits) for a new walk by faith in God through the Holy Spirit and in company with the people of God (Acts 2:42). The result of repentance is salvation, a work that is both instantaneous (new birth—John 3:3–8) and life-inclusive, beginning with the giving of new life by the Holy Spirit to the believer and climaxing with a glorified body (Hebrews 9:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19). Repentance results in justification, regeneration, or what is called the “born again” experience as explained on the following pages.

JUSTIFICATION

“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1–2). Justification is both a state and an act. On the part of the repentant one, it is the state of being without offense toward God. On God’s part, it is his act in forgiving the actual sins for which one has repented and declaring the individual accepted in a new relationship. The individual is said to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ; that is, one’s sins are covered (atoned for), and God no longer holds that person accountable for those sins. New spiritual life has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17), a beginning sometimes referred to as “regeneration.”

REGENERATION/BORN AGAIN

Regeneration describes the work of God in providing new spiritual life in the believer. Human beings without Christ are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) and must be made alive or regenerated through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). This giving of new spiritual life through Jesus Christ enables right relationships with God, the ability to

worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and is simultaneous with justification (previous paragraph). It is God’s gracious act to rekindle the spiritual life lost in Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22) so one may now walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Romans 8:1–11). Accordingly, the individual is said to be “born again” or born of God (1 John 5:1). In responding to the double question of Nicodemus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:4–5). To be born again, then, is to become a new creation in Christ, a child of God, justified and regenerated as a result of true repentance and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to enter the kingdom. This entrance into a new life of discipleship to Christ (Acts 2:42) engages the believer in actively seeking more of God, fellowshiping and worshipping with God’s people, and intentionally obeying God’s Word as the believer learns how to “possess his vessel [whole body] in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification, like salvation, ultimately spans the entire life of the believer. Initially, it is a work of grace subsequent to being justified, regenerated, or born again. It is an instantaneous work, which both sets one apart for God (1 Corinthians 1:2) and crucifies and cleanses the old nature, enabling the believer to be free from the dominant rule of sin: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For, he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:6–7). “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). This dethroning of the old nature, this cleansing, this setting apart, places upon the believer the scriptural demand to “mortify the deeds of the body” through the Spirit (Romans 8:12–13) and to “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication [sexual immorality], uncleanness, inordinate [abnormal] affection, evil concupiscence [desire for earthly things], and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Second Peter 3:17–18 further encourages growth in God’s grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye

also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” There is then in sanctification, a responsibility on the part of the believer to “put off” some habits and practices, and to “put on” others, which means there must be intentionality to holiness (Ephesians 4:22–32). Sanctification empowers us against sin’s control; the believer responds with a renewed mind to be transformed into the image of Christ (Romans 12:1–2) and to be holy in life and conduct (2 Corinthians 7:1).

HOLINESS

Holiness is a command of our Lord: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:14–16), the state of being free from sin (sin’s dominance) made possible by God’s sanctifying and cleansing work (Romans 6:11–14; 1 Corinthians 6:11), and further sustained by active, whole-hearted pursuit of a life of Christlikeness on the part of the maturing believer. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11–12). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7). “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Holiness must also be the church’s collective goal as the body of Christ to demonstrate the praises (virtues) of him “who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9–10).

BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38–39). The baptism with the Holy Spirit as it occurred at Pentecost and in subsequent places in the book of Acts (8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:2–7) is a definite experience that is subsequent to the salvation and sanctification experiences or may accompany them in a somewhat simultaneous way. Jesus said to His disciples, “. . . for he

dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). This indwelling is a definite, instantaneous experience described in the Scriptures by the word “baptism” and is accompanied by the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. The baptism is also the Holy Spirit’s enduement of the believer for service in the kingdom, as the church was empowered at Pentecost to go forth with the message of the gospel: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This experience should not be confused with water baptism, regeneration, or sanctification.

The Holy Spirit “is come” (has been sent by Christ; Acts 2:33) to “reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,” to serve as the church’s guide and director, and to reveal the things of Christ (John 16:7–15). As such, it is important for believers to seek both the baptism (Acts 2:38–39) and his fullness (Ephesians 5:18) in order that they may become familiar with his leadership and guidance and cooperatively participate in his work, both for personal Christian maturity and for service in Christ’s mission to the world.

SPEAKING IN OTHER TONGUES

Speaking in (with) other tongues (languages)—magnifying God through uttering his wonderful works in languages normally unknown to the speaker (Acts 2:4–8, 11; 10:44–46)—is common in the book of Acts to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit upon believers as clearly stated in the foregoing scriptural texts. Acts 19:6 also shows the same result (speaking in tongues and prophesying) when the apostle Paul laid hands on 12 believers in the city of Ephesus for them to receive the Holy Spirit. In regulating the order and use of spiritual gifts to the Corinthian saints (1 Corinthians 12–14), Paul also allows for the private use of tongues in prayer to God and indicates that this edifies the individual believer’s spirit (14:2–4). The gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues for public use in the assembled congregation are, of course, to be distinguished from the baptism with the Spirit as applied in the individual’s experience. Paul makes this clear by referring to his own experience (cf. Acts 9:17–19) when he says, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all” (1 Corinthians 14:18). While closing his admonition by prioritizing the gift most useful

for the public edification of all (prophecy), he was careful to add, “and forbid not to speak with tongues” (v. 39).

Following the biblical pattern in Acts, the Church of God of Prophecy and other classical Holiness/Pentecostal churches teach that speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance is the initial evidence (observable by others) of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. However, it is not to be regarded or sought as an “end-all” experience. Daily walking and living in the Spirit (Romans 8:1–14) will continue to build Christian character (the fruit of the Spirit) and should be the desire and practice of every believer.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

As mentioned above, daily walking and living in the Spirit will cause the fruit of the Spirit to be regularly manifested in the life of the believer: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23). Such fruit cannot be produced by the flesh or by human nature. Indeed, the opposing nature and starkly contrary deeds of the flesh are partly enumerated in the same text with the concluding remark, “. . . they which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 21). “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (v. 16). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Ephesians 5:8–9). The Spirit’s work is crucial to the life of the believer and to the church.

FULL RESTORATION OF THE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

In accordance with the Spirit’s work, various spiritual gifts are given to the church and are manifested through individuals sometimes in an apparently resident manner (repeatedly) and, at other times, spontaneously, as by direct unction of the Spirit in a given setting (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Romans 12:4–8; Ephesians 4:7–16). Although there are historical periods during which spiritual gifts were not as prevalent as other times, there is no scriptural warrant to support the idea that these gifts ceased. Based on the foregoing scriptural texts and others, the Church of God of Prophecy teaches that spiritual gifts exist in the body of Christ and are owned, distributed, controlled, and operated by the Spirit as it pleases him. The Church does not advocate personal

claims to the gifts, but encourages individuals to humbly know and fulfill their callings to Christian service in response to the Spirit's leading and with the abilities he gives. As the church is restored to New Testament power, the gifts of the Spirit are expected to serve to edify the body of Christ in these last days just as those same gifts did in earlier times.

SIGNS FOLLOWING BELIEVERS

Because of spiritual gifts and the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, miraculous signs and wonders may accompany the works and ministries of true believers. Mark 16:17–20 records, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

. . . And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” While Jesus identified for his apostles what may follow in the lives of those who believe, the import of this text, when balanced against other salvation scriptures such as Romans 10:8–13, does not allow for these to occur (whether simultaneously or one by one) in every instance of salvation. However, the Church sees no scriptural warrant for the ceasing of these signs, but believe they have occurred and are still occurring today. “For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy [Spirit], according to his own will?” (Hebrews 2:2–4).

DIVINE HEALING

God's sovereign grace and mercy, through the atonement of Jesus Christ for all our sins and ultimately for all the consequences of sin, provides for the healing/salvation of our souls as well as our bodies in his work on Calvary. In the tradition of Jesus and his apostles as recorded in the Gospels and Acts (Mark 3:1–5, 9–12, 14–15; Matthew 10:8; Acts 5:12), the Church believes that divine healing is accomplished by the power of God without the aid of medicine or surgical skills (Matthew 8:14–17). While it is clear that God does not

always heal instantaneously in response to all prayers for healing (whether of the individual or of someone else praying on behalf of an individual—see 2 Timothy 4:20), it is also a clear biblical duty of the elders and ministers of the church to pray for the sick and to visit the sick (James 5:13–18 with Matthew 25:34–40). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2–3). This text specifically addresses the soul, but the whole person (spirit/soul and body) can be divinely healed by the power of God. The healing of persons in response to faith and prayer (Acts 3:11–16) and by God’s special mercy (to spare certain of his servants more sorrow, cf. Philippians 2:25–27) is definitely confirmed in Scripture. We have a duty to continue to pray fervently for the sick, humbly leaving it in God’s hands to work his sovereign will.

WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is the act of being immersed in water according to the commandment and instructions of Christ (Matthew 28:19). This ordinance has no power to wash away sins, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21) and represents for the believer an identity with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:3–5). Mark 16:16 further reinforces the necessity of this step of obedience: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter told those under conviction what they should do: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Obviously, the apostles literally followed the Lord’s instructions, and we can do no less. Baptism, then, is outward evidence of our submission to Christ in salvation and our public declaration that we are His followers. It identifies us with his people in his kingdom. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (2:41; see also 10:47–48 and 16:30–33).

THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper is a sacred ordinance that our Lord himself instituted on the night he was betrayed as he ate the Passover with his disciples (Luke 22:14–22). He instructed that this be done in remembrance of him. It is representative of our communion and fellowship with him

and is a memorial celebration conveying the real presence of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit and the participation of the believer in the blessings of the new covenant. The apostle Paul reiterated the Lord's instructions to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:23–25), adding some helpful details: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily [in an unworthy manner], shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, so that we are not condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another" (vv. 26–33).

The Lord's Supper is a believer's meal that mainly occurs within the context of the local church. In corporate worship and local church ministry, the primary officiant of this sacrament is the pastor. We recommend that pastors train and empower mature believers to administer the Lord's Supper both in the context of corporate and family worship, as well as extended ministries. All who have confessed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, having been forgiven by the shedding of Jesus' blood for the forgiveness of sins, are eligible to receive the elements of Communion (Matthew 26:28).

It is therefore the Church's position that this be observed with all gravity and in an orderly manner. No one should approach the Lord's Table with unforgiven sin in one's heart, and all should consecrate themselves in prayer before and upon every occasion of this observance. The Lord's Supper consists of "the fruit of the vine" (unfermented grape juice, as is our practice), representing the blood of Christ, and unleavened bread, representing his broken body on the cross. The Church encourages the Lord's Supper to be observed at least once a quarter, but to do so more often is certainly compatible with scriptural teaching: "They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47 NLT).

WASHING THE SAINT’S FEET

Footwashing was instituted by Jesus on the night of the Last Supper and is considered by the Church a New Testament ordinance that we are enjoined to observe. As the Lord’s Supper represents our communion with Christ, washing the saints’ feet represents our common unity (community) with each other as followers of Christ and partakers together with him and reminds us that we are to serve one another. Footwashing also symbolizes a ‘cleansing of post-baptismal sins.’” Just as water baptism does not provide cleansing from sin but symbolizes an inward work of grace wrought through the Holy Spirit in the life of the new convert, Footwashing likewise may be an outward expression [or symbol] of the continual cleansing that is effectuated through the Holy Spirit.

In scripture, Jesus sent two of his disciples to the home of a special friend in Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover meal (Mark 14:12–17). These preparations would have included a basin, water pitcher, and a towel for the customary washing of feet. According to verse 17 above, the 12 came with Jesus, but there is no mention of the washing of feet. Luke tells us there was anguish among the disciples as Jesus announced that one of them would betray him and also that there was a quarrel between them as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22:21–24). Jesus taught them servanthood as their right relationship (vv. 25–27) and demonstrated his posture as a Servant among them by washing their feet (John 13:3–5). In establishing this spirit of servanthood among them, Jesus said, “. . . Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (vv. 12–15, 17). The Church encourages that footwashing may be observed in the same service as the Lord’s Supper or whenever possible and in a decent and orderly manner.

TITHING AND GIVING

Tithing means to bring one-tenth of our increase into the treasury of the church (Proverbs 3:9–10). The first biblical record of tithing to God’s work began with Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchisedec (priest of

the Most High God) of the spoils from his battle with the kings (Genesis 14:18–20), continued under the law, and received the approval of our Lord (Matthew 10:5–10; 23:23). Other New Testament writers reference God’s provisions that they who preach the gospel should live (be supported) of the gospel hearers (1 Corinthians 9:6–14; Luke 10:7). See also Hebrews 7:4–10, which gives tithing a certain generational transcendence. The Church considers that the scriptural obligation to tithe is not fulfilled by just giving directly to the poor or to individuals or good causes. While the Church espouses and participates in all such support, her understanding of the biblical practice of tithing is that tithes are paid—brought into the treasury of the church for the Lord’s work, especially for the benefit of those who minister in the Word (Hebrews 7:8). God’s blessings and favor will follow in all the productive areas of life (Malachi 3:7–12).

Giving of offerings differs from tithing and is done in addition to tithing. Both are part of God’s plan to finance his work on earth (1 Corinthians 16:1–4; Philippians 4:10–19). A spirit of generosity has always permeated the church from very early times (Acts 4:32–35), and the apostle Paul quoted our Lord to the Ephesian elders in his farewell address advising them “. . . to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (20:35). Once received into the church’s treasury, tithes and offerings are regulated through appropriate Church decisions and are administered by authorized Church policies and personnel.

RESTITUTION WHERE POSSIBLE

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken or the satisfying of one who has been wronged. Making things right as far as is humanly possible is a natural result of salvation by God’s grace as seen in the way Zacchaeus responded to our Lord’s saving visit to his house: “And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham’” (Luke 19:8–9). Where it is impossible to make contact with the person or institution involved, the believer should still exhibit a desire to return what was taken, to restore a relationship, or to seek forgiveness. When necessary, those who make restitution

should bear patiently any consequences that may result such as legal sanctions, financial costs, or even rejection by the persons approached. “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

PRE-MILLENNIAL SECOND COMING OF JESUS

Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to earth again (Acts 1:11), and the Church understands this coming in two phases: First, in mid-air to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to meet him so that all who are in Christ can attend the marriage supper of the Lamb: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51–52). “And he saith unto me, ‘Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he saith unto me, ‘These are the true sayings of God’” (Revelation 19:9). Second, Jesus will return with the saints to reign on earth for a thousand years: “. . . And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (20:4–5; see also Zechariah 14:4–9; Revelation 5:10; 20:6).

RESURRECTION

God’s plan for the world includes a time of accountability of all people (living and dead) before his judgment seat. For this reason, all the dead, both righteous and wicked, will be resurrected. As part of the assurance of this judgment, God raised Jesus from the dead and appointed him judge (Acts 24:15; Daniel 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:30–31). However, the resurrection of the wicked dead and their time of judgment will not occur until after the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth with his saints (Revelation 20:4–6). Paul expressed the Christian’s hope in the resurrection this way: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10). We look for the Savior from heaven. Paul says, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (v. 21).

ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

In Jesus' high priestly prayer, He defined eternal life as follows: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The New Testament everywhere teaches that eternal life is promised to those who believe in Jesus: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Those who die in the Lord and those who are serving him when he returns will receive the reward of eternal life: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:22–23).

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

How we live our lives in this present world determines our destiny in the next, our eternal reward (Daniel 12:2; Romans 2:4–9). The unconverted and the wicked are doomed to eternal punishment from which there is no escape—no liberation, no annihilation: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

ABSTINENCE FROM ALL LIQUOR OR STRONG DRINKS

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isaiah 28:7). "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags"

(Proverbs 23:20–21). Because of these and other biblical texts, the Church of God of Prophecy teaches abstinence from the use of intoxicating beverages. Scriptural teaching is, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). We are also advised “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4). See also 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; 10:31; Galatians 5:21.

CONCERNING TOBACCO, OPIUM, MORPHINE, ETC.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The use of tobacco in any form is forbidden as well as the habitual use of narcotics or other habit-forming drugs. Addictions and enslavements to drugs or other substances are incompatible with the surrender of our bodies to the Lord as holy vessels of honor for his use (Romans 12:1–2; 1 Thessalonians 4:4). “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

CONCERNING FOOD OR DRINKS

The New Testament makes no rigid rule concerning what foods a Christian shall eat or drink with the exception of strong drink and addictive and enslaving substances. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16–17). Thus, we have no right to judge what our brother or sister eats or drinks. The legal restrictions of the Mosaic Law concerning these were not extended into the Grace Dispensation: “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy [Spirit]” (Romans 14:17). See also 1 Corinthians 8:8 and 1 Timothy 4:1–5.

ON THE SABBATH

The book of Genesis tells us that on the seventh day, God ended his work and blessed that day and sanctified it (Genesis 2:2–3). This was no doubt his preparatory plan to set Israel apart as a special people, for to

them he gave the Law, which included the observance of the Sabbath.

Jesus' corrective to the Pharisees' strict observance of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27–28) placed people above enslavement to the day and asserted his lordship over the day. As such, the Church of God of Prophecy teaches that observance of that day per se was not carried over into the Grace Dispensation. Sunday is not the Sabbath but merely a day set aside to give special attention to the worship of God. In the early church, they referred to Sunday as “the first day of the week” and later as “the Lord’s Day” or “Resurrection Day.” Therefore, worship on Sunday is also very appropriate. Christians are required to keep every day holy rather than just one particular day. The Jewish Sabbath was also a type of Jesus Christ who is presented in Scripture as our rest (Hebrews 4:1–11). “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16–17). See also Romans 14:5–6.

ADORNMENT

Scripture does not prohibit the use of a cultural wedding symbol due to marital, social, and cultural conditions; nor does it establish its necessity. In certain instances, the marriage symbol or emblem may strengthen the marriage arrangement and order, and thus, its use is not for ornamentation. Therefore, the cultural wedding symbol or emblem, though not necessitated, may be worn due to marital, social, and cultural situations in order to preserve the headship principle and the integrity of marriage (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:8; Ephesians 5:22–23). Scripture neither prohibits (absolutely) nor necessitates the use of ornamental adornment. It does give strong precautionary principles for its use such as modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety, and calls attention to the ornament of the inner man, that of “a meek and quiet spirit” (1 Timothy 2:9–10; 1 Peter 3:3–4). Ornamentation must not be used in any way that lends itself to idolatrous, occult, or lustful practices (Isaiah 3:18–22; Acts 8:9; 19:19; 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9; Galatians 5:19–21; Revelation 2:20–23). It is also important to remember that adornment includes more than jewelry alone. To apply the prudent principles of Scripture (both for those who wear and those who do not), an overriding principle is found in Romans 14:13: “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s [sister’s] way.”

MEMBERSHIP IN LODGES/SECRET SOCIETIES

The Bible is opposed to the people of God being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–18); it is opposed to deeds done in secret, and it demands the complete and undivided loyalty of God’s children (John 18:20; see also Luke 16:13). Many secret societies/ organizations require the taking of an oath of secrecy, and oath-taking is expressly forbidden (see the following paragraph)—as we shall see shortly (Ephesians 5:12–13).

WHOLESOME SPEECH OF THE BELIEVER

The taking of an oath is a vain thing and condemned in the Scriptures. An affirmation to the truth of anything is sufficient and usually accepted even in courts of law: “But I say unto you, Swear not at all... let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34–37; see also James 5:12). The term “swearing” is also used of profanity, which the Bible teaches against: (Ephesians 4:29; see also 5:4).

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY¹

Marriage is sacred and should not be entered into lightly without proper preparation. Marriage was originally instituted by God as a properly recognized covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. The Church affirms the biblical family as a father and mother in wedlock who may procreate children. The Church further asserts that the home, including the extended family, is to be guided by love, discipline, and other nurturing aspects as taught in God’s Word. Because the Church is committed to the sanctity of marriage and human life, we diligently stand against abortion, incest, abuse, euthanasia, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, and lesbianism, which we believe are contrary to God’s original design as expressed in his Word. All biblically unlawful unions such as same-sex, incestuous, or polygamous marriages are renounced by the Church even if they are recognized as legal by civil governments.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Concerning “divorce” in the above context, the Church means the breaking of a legitimate, lawful, biblical marriage and holds firmly to the

¹ Genesis 1:26–27; 2:18–25; Deuteronomy 6:7; Matthew 5:32; 14:3–4; 19:3–12; Mark 10:12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2–3; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 6:9–18; 7:2, 11; Colossians 3:18–21

principle that such divorces are not God’s will, especially between Christians. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing should be sought as a first priority in order to preserve marriages and prevent divorce. The Church also recognizes that despite biblical teaching and honest human effort, divorces do occur sometimes against the will of one or the other party. Therefore, the Church recognizes (in a pastoral sense) those causes, in addition to death, that would be recognized as ending a previously valid biblical marriage. In such cases, delineated on the following page, marriage partners would not be classed as adulterers even though remarried:

1. If persons were divorced and remarried for any reason prior to their personal salvation and have demonstrated a willingness to seek restitution (forgiveness from the offended spouse) and restoration where possible
2. If a divorce occurred because of a spouse’s habitual adulterous behavior and efforts to bring reconciliation are no longer possible
3. If divorce occurred because of spousal or child abuse, such as incestuous behavior that seriously endangers the life and health of the spouse or family and violates the sanctity of holy matrimony

Under no circumstances should Christians or church members initiate or seek divorce without completely exhausting all biblical and counseling avenues to restore, rebuild, and sustain their marriages. Marriages that clearly violate biblical standards (such as incestuous marriages) may be appealed to the Presbytery for specific consideration. All divorce and remarriage cases not falling within the categories described above should be referred for counsel and resolution to the pastor and local church leadership, the National/Regional/ State Presbytery, or the General Ministerial Presbytery (which includes the presiding bishop and general presbyters) as may be appropriate.²

² See “The Biblical Institution of Marriage” *94th International Assembly Minutes* (2006), pages 152–177 and “The Family Manifesto,” originally written and owned by FamilyLife, and specially adapted (with permission) by Family Ministries for inter-church use by the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices.

III. The Global Immigration Challenge

Resolution by the Church of God of Prophecy 95th International Assembly, 2008

Today a significant amount of fear and hatred is negatively affecting the mindset of many nations because of the redistribution of population groups through immigration. As Christians, we must ensure that our response to the issue of immigration is directed by a Christian world view that is shaped by biblical principles rather than secular or current attitudes. A number of biblical principles relevant to immigration run through the Bible. Primarily, we as Christians are aliens on this earth: “. . . And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth” (Hebrews 11:13 NIV). Our status as aliens and strangers formulates the basis for our attitudes and responses toward those people who live outside our society.

We affirm as Christians that our material possessions do not really belong to us. The Promised Land belonged to the Israelites only in the sense that as host, God allowed the Israelites to dwell in the Promised Land as his guests (Leviticus 25:23). Indeed, the children of God were strangers and foreigners in the land they lived in. Similarly, as aliens and strangers in our world today, the material resources of this world do not belong to us. We have what we have because of God; as our host, he has distributed material resources to us, his guests. As recipients of God’s graciousness and generosity, we need to guard against selfishness and possessiveness, which would cloud our attitude toward immigrants.

We affirm that we are all strangers and foreigners in this world. Borders and national ethnic identity should never separate us as God’s people. As non-citizens working in their country of residence, aliens exist outside the social and political network of the society they are residing in; thus, they are rendered powerless. Aliens are very vulnerable to exploitation. As Christians, we should recall our roots as aliens and, thus, identify with their plight (Exodus 23:9) by treating them with kindness and helping them as earlier nations did to Israel and were blessed by God for their generosity. As Christians, no one should ever be considered an outsider. “. . . The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself . . .” (Leviticus 19:33–

34 NIV). The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37–40; Mark 12:30–31; Luke 10:27) is to apply to the alien because he or she is our neighbor.

We affirm the privilege of serving the outsiders of society that mirrors the ministry and life of Jesus. Because Christ identified with the stranger, we are to extend the same treatment to the alien and stranger that Jesus would give to others (Matthew 25:3–5 KJV). Historically, immigration policies around the world appear to be directed more by racism and economic self-interest than compassion. Immigration quotas throughout many nations have favored people groups established long ago because of political interest or racial preferences while limiting immigrants from less desirable nations because of education, economic status, or trade skills. We must be people of compassion who pray and extend love to those caught up in the confusing and unjust immigration maze, as the Lord would be to the outcast of his day.

We affirm that God has a purpose in the migration moves of people around the world. “‘Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites [Nile region]?’ declares the LORD. ‘Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor [Crete] and the Arameans from Kir?’” (Amos 9:7 NIV). God has never asked us to understand his purposes; however, today’s immigration situation presents the church an opportunity to do ministry among diverse people of every race or ethnic background. By his grace and only for his grace alone, we could have been one of these “little ones” (e.g., Matthew 10:42; 18:6) had we been born in a different time or another country where the suffering and political and social injustices would have forced us to flee looking for a better life for our loved ones. Therefore, we did not choose the country where we were born, but we can make the choice to show God’s love for the lost, his compassion for the afflicted, and his Spirit of service toward our neighbor, the “stranger at our gates” (Deuteronomy 14:21; 24:14; 31:12). As his children, we are called by God to aid the vulnerable. We must see the alien and the stranger as individuals made in the image of God, the object of Christ’s love. Furthermore, we must see not only them, but all people from every nation, as having intrinsic worth by God, needing our affirmation and acceptance.

IV. Human Trafficking

Resolution by the Church of God of Prophecy 101st International Assembly, 2022

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 (Genesis 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” (Galatians 3:26–28 NIV).

V. Race, Relations, and Reconciliation

Resolution by the Church of God of Prophecy 102nd International Assembly, 2024

The malicious presence of racism, classism, xenophobia, and extreme nationalism, including bigotry and prejudice in this world, remains some of the most destructive moral failures of humankind. Racism—“the systemic oppression of a racial or ethnic group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another”³—has existed for centuries, bringing disparities such as subjugation and unfair treatment to many people groups through slavery, Jim Crow segregation,⁴ ethnic cleansing, and other unfair practices. Classism, “a belief that a person’s social or economic status in society determines their value in that society,”⁵ most often results in the systemic oppression of the lower and middle class to the advantage of the upper class such as the caste system of Asia⁶ or the many social classes of the Western world. Xenophobia (“the fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or anything else that is strange or foreign”⁷) and extreme nationalism (“exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on the promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations”⁸) have no place in the body of Christ. These are not simply sociological issues but sin issues. If you really fulfill the royal law stated in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show

³ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Racism,” accessed September 18, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>.

⁴ “*Jim Crow* refers to a series of racist laws and measures that discriminated against African-Americans,” as defined by *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Jim Crow,” accessed October 31, 2023, [https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Jim Crow](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Jim+Crow).

⁵ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Classism,” accessed September 18, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/classism>.

⁶ “A *caste system* is a class structure that is determined by birth. Loosely, it means that in some societies, the opportunities you have access to depend on the family you happened to be born into,” as defined by *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Caste System,” accessed October 31, 2023, [https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/caste system](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/caste+system).

⁷ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Xenophobia,” accessed September 18, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/xenophobia>.

⁸ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Nationalism,” accessed September 18, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>.

favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors (James 2:8–9).⁹

We are in a fallen world, and racism is a sin that can be traced back to our fallenness. Biblical racial reconciliation demands that we, the body of Christ, address the sin that causes this divide. We must become intentional about bonding together across racial and ethnic lines to heal any indignities, great or small, with the goal of fostering our shared commitment to Jesus Christ in service to one another. When Jesus established the church, he created it to reflect his kingdom on earth. The church was designed as a place where race distinctions and class divisions are not used as tools to divide because we are all unified in Christ. Accordingly, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). All humans have been created to have fellowship with God, and the offer of salvation is open to all persons.

The pernicious stain of racism brings into question what God’s Word says about his creation and his plan. The apostle Paul stated in his sermon at Areopagus that God “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). The church is to be a model for the world while operating in the world. If the church is to reflect God’s kingdom here on earth, then we must dismantle and renounce the foundations of discrimination, prejudices, and injustice in all forms. James says that it is not possible to have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and show partiality to persons. “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism” (James 2:1 NIV). James begins his letter with specific and direct admonitions and instructions, notably the danger of the tongue, as well as the attitudes of the believers. He highlights the differences between the poor and the rich and the treatment shown to them by the body of Christ. James was obviously displeased with the inconsistencies among the brethren, and he condemned the attitudes these believers demonstrated toward others, as well as criticized their failures to act as they should. He first denounced the attitude of favoritism, stating that as believers, we must not show favoritism. It is the fault of one who, when called on to give judgment, has deference to the outward circumstances of man and not to their intrinsic

⁹ In this section of the report, all biblical citations are provided in the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

merits. He or she prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, highborn, or powerful, to another who does not have these qualities. In short, partiality does not mix with having faith in God. It is the pinnacle of spiritual immaturity to exhibit such inconsistencies in equality, love, and fidelity for all. One must learn to accept others, whatever their status or class, by showing courtesy and compassion with consistency. God shows no favoritism (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25); therefore, neither should Christians. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul had a strong disagreement with Peter over his treatment of Gentiles after being influenced by certain Jewish men. “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision” (Galatians 2:11–12 NKJV).

The Bible condemns prejudice and preferential treatment. While prejudices, racial biases, and favoritism are culturally accepted norms, the job of the church is not to adapt to the culture and its norms but to exemplify and live by the values of the kingdom of God. God is at work in the church, and the church is empowered to influence the culture. We welcome God’s creative distinctions as a way to make us stronger, better, and more representative of his kingdom. The church is bigger than individualized groups and preferences, and “we are a people with a purpose made up of many members brought together in one body.”¹⁰

Race and Ethnicity

While Scripture recognizes diversity among human groups based on geography, language, ancestry, and spiritual state, it stresses the unity of all people as made in God’s image and as descendants of Adam and Eve. The concept of race is a social construct that has often been used to discriminate among persons based on (only the most obvious) physical characteristics—an approach antithetical to biblical teaching.¹¹

¹⁰ Tony Evans, *Oeness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2011), 257.

¹¹ Naomi Noguchi Reese, “Race,” in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, edited by Mark Ward, Jessica Parks, Brannon Ellis, and Todd Hains (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Publishers, 2018), Logos Bible Software.

Race is usually distinguished by the color of one’s skin, hair, or facial features. Ethnicity is rooted in social distinctions like dialect, geography, values, customs, and even religious practices. The term *ethnicity* is drawn from the same word the Greek New Testament uses for nations (*ethnos*).¹² This term is used to classify humanity based not on physical traits but on shared cultures, religions, land, laws, and languages. Both “race and ethnicity” have been employed to differentiate and exploit certain populations, communities of people, or cultures. However, we were all created in the image and likeness of God:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26–27)

In his book, *A Biblical Theology of Race*, J. Daniel Hays asserts, “Image refers to natural qualities such as reason and personality. Image refers to the mental and spiritual faculties that people share with their creator, as well as a physical resemblance. It refers to a capacity to relate to God.”¹³ As image bearers, we are to live in harmony with each other and reflect the character of a God who “shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). Theologian Millard Erickson states, “The first human, Adam, is not racially identifiable. The Hebrew term ‘*adam*’ simply means ‘humankind’ and makes no reference to race. Hence, Adam did not belong to an identifiable ethnic or national group, but rather represented the origin of all people.”¹⁴

It is clear from Scripture that God did not view any of the nations as inherently superior or inferior to the others. Even in Abraham’s call in Genesis 12, God promised to bless “all the families of the earth” through

¹² Walter Bauer, s. v. “ἔθνος,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 277.

¹³ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson, vol 14 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 48–49.

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 458–459.

Abraham and his seed (Genesis 12:3). In the New Testament, Jesus emphasized that the temple should be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). Paul reminds the Colossian believers that after having put on the new man, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, . . . put on tender mercies, kindness, humility. . . . But above all these things put on love, which is the perfect

bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:11–12, 14). Unfortunately, racism also exists in the church, but any form of racism is a sin against God and those who are made in his image. Jarvis Williams, author of *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity*, contends that the “belief that there are actually different races of people within the human race to be viewed as superior or inferior is false, antithetical to biblical anthropology, and contrary to what the Bible says about the image of God in all humans and about the people of God.”¹⁵

A Denominational History of Race Relations

In Bishop A. J. Tomlinson’s 1935 Annual Address to the General Assembly, he wrote the following:

I have a matter of much concern upon my heart that I would like to mention just as lovingly and tenderly as I can. It is an undisputed fact that we have the “every creature” message. This includes all of the great races of the world. . . . We all know that there is to be no difference as far as their souls are concerned. The middle wall of partition has been broken down by the blood of the cross, says Paul, and all have access to God through Jesus Christ alike. All are to be members of His body, the Church, and thus under the same government represented by the same flag.¹⁶

From the inception of the Church of God, A. J. Tomlinson, the first General Overseer, had an affinity for diversity in leadership and the constituency. Amidst extreme racial prejudice, Jim Crow laws, and against cultural norms, on May 31, 1909, Bishop Tomlinson granted

¹⁵ Jarvis Williams, *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 153.

¹⁶ A. J. Tomlinson, “The Colored Race,” part of “Annual Address of General Overseer,” in *Minutes of the 30th Annual Assembly of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God, 1935), 36.

evangelist licenses to two Bahamians (African Caribbeans), Edmond and Rebeca Barr, who served as missionaries to both Florida and the Bahamas.¹⁷ Amidst persecution from the Bahamian government, other organizations, including the established church, the zeal of these missionaries and the work of God continued. According to Michael S. Swann, in his book titled *The Holy Jumpers, A Concise History of The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas 1909–1974*,

The Barrs, likewise, endured much persecution, hardships, and privation as did many of the new Bahamian converts. But because of their vision for the lost, they pressed and continued to make full proof of their ministry by holding prayer meetings in homes, and campaigns on the streets and in a large rented hall.¹⁸

Historian of Pentecostal Studies Harold D. Hunter observed that

by 1913, three Hispanic congregations were operating in New Mexico. In 1915, Edmond Barr became the overseer of The Black Work in Florida for two years. In 1919, Bishop Tomlinson appointed C.F. Bright as Overseer of Pennsylvania and, in 1920, New Jersey. Under Tomlinson’s leadership, in the 1919 and 1920 Assembly, blacks were now able to preach at the General Assembly. By 1921, an African American named T.J. Richardson, two more African Caribbeans, and one Hispanic were appointed to the Council of Seventy and various assembly committees.¹⁹

Hunter also contends,

In some states, the Church of God of Prophecy may have been the first church to defy Jim Crow laws in their worship services. African Caribbeans, African Americans, and Latin Americans have been charged with the leadership of states, some of which include European- Americans as the majority. This unprecedented approach distinguishes the Church of God of Prophecy, not only among classical Pentecostals but many denominations in the United States.²⁰

¹⁷ Harold D. Hunter, *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 284–286.

¹⁸ Michael S. Swann, *The Holy Jumpers, A Concise History of The Church of God of Prophecy in the Bahamas 1909–1974* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2018), 8.

¹⁹ Hunter, *Azusa Street Revival*, 284–286.

²⁰ Hunter, *Azusa Street Revival*, 284–286.

Reconciliation

Recent events such as the George Floyd murder, economic disparities among racial groups, and other racial disharmonies have served as a catalyst for addressing the need for reconciliation amongst the nations. We acknowledge the ethnic cleansing occurring across European and Asian nations as well as the blatant genocide in the continent of Africa. The Church of God of Prophecy is aware of the wars, military actions, civil unrest, and political infightings in European nations. We are aware of the discriminatory colorism practiced in Hispanic countries. The Church of God of Prophecy acknowledges the unfair and unjust treatment of women in the Middle East, Asia, America, and across the world. The Church of God of Prophecy is keenly aware of the venomous and increasing anti-Semitic and anti-Palestinian sentiment that is exploding globally not only because of recent wars, but a deep-seated resentment dating back to biblical times. The Church of God of Prophecy acknowledges the injustices and racial biases and the present flaring up of racial and ethnic tensions that are reflective of ongoing realities of economic and social disparities across this globe. Historically, the New Testament church has actively participated in addressing social issues in the church. Luke addresses the concern of the Greek-speaking Jews who felt as if their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, giving the advantage to the Hebraic Jewish widows. In response, men were appointed to handle this matter, and the entire body was pleased because of the actions of the church elders (Acts 6:1–5). As a church, we directly and openly challenge these global trends and actively engage in pointing our membership back to the Cross, duly executing our mandate to the ministry of reconciliation. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he states that

all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)

The responsibility of the church, according to Paul, is

to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:9–11)

We, the global body of the Church of God of Prophecy, join those who mourn and are suffering at the ugly hands of injustice. We stand against hatred, bigotry, and racial prejudices of any form. We commit ourselves anew to teaching, preaching, and ministering a gospel of hope that promotes justice and freedom from fear. We encourage our leaders and our laity to aspire to model a life of racial reconciliation in our global church body. We do so because we are called and empowered by the Lord Jesus, the great Healer, who has by his death, burial, and resurrection, achieved a reconciliation that is to be proclaimed in word and deed to all people. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Ephesians 2:14 KJV). Any reticence on the church’s part to seek justice and reconciliation undermines the credibility of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We must communicate that we see great intrinsic value in building deep and abiding relationships with one another. The New Testament explicitly show us that Jesus Christ has reconciled racially and culturally divided groups into one new humanity, “so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace” (Ephesians 2:15 NKJV). He has united them into one body, thus making peace so that the church can function in unity. While the church is the place where race and class distinctions are no longer to be used as tools of division and disunion, this does not mean that diversity and differences do not exist both culturally and socially. However, as a church, we can no longer allow these differences to separate us and overshadow the fact that God’s kingdom values all people. We have unique strengths and attributes that, when joined together in oneness, make us more complete, balanced, and whole in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:16).

Diversity and distinction are not to be denied but celebrated. God has people from every background, group, and demographic represented in his kingdom. We must engage and celebrate each other's differences socially and respectfully if we are ever to be one in Christ, but we must also refuse to allow the distinctions of culture to interfere with the truth of God's Word. The New Testament demands active unity in the church, a unity that explicitly joins differing ethnic groups together because of our common identity in Christ. The gospel that we preach demands that we carry compassion and the message of Jesus Christ across ethnic lines: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). When Paul and Barnabas are sent to the Gentiles in Acts 13, the leadership of the church is diverse as well: "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord . . ." (Acts 13:1–2).

We, as the church, cannot formulate our theology through the lens of culture but through the lens of Scripture. It is only when we know the truth of God's Word, and that truth becomes the absolute standard by which our beliefs, behavior, and commitments are aligned, that we will experience freedom in Christ. Reconciliation will never be achieved by one group or a particular culture imposing its ideas, preferences, and contexts over another. In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council met to settle the dispute over the circumcision of Gentile believers demanding that they strictly adhere to the Law of Moses. Peter assured them that "the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. . . . God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:7–9). Biblical racial reconciliation can only happen through an environment created with one purpose in mind: the advancement of the kingdom of God. It is an environment where people are loved and accepted, and there is a merging of diversities and strengths through which the glory and the power of God can manifest themselves, and the people of God can mutually serve and celebrate one another. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the

people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46–47). This is the model set by the early church.

Conclusion

Racism is pervasive and destructive, and its ongoing presence in our society is incongruent to the teaching of Scripture. Discrimination is not a skin problem but a sin problem. Racism is a condition of the heart, and before we can be biblically reconciled, we must acknowledge and address the sin that is causing the divide in our churches. Until we come face to face with this volatile situation and speak out in righteous indignation against injustice, nothing will change. We must repent of this stain and bond together in unity across racial and cultural lines as a church if we ever want to receive the commanded blessings upon our church as decreed in Psalm 133:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—
Life forevermore. (Psalm 133:1–3)

Discrimination is wrong, and it must be condemned, judged, and changed, not applauded or excused by any means, regardless of the circumstance. Prejudice and partiality have no place in the body of Christ or in this world, and we as a church must stand firmly against them. “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Indifference has smothered and snuffed out impulses for reconciliation. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face” (Psalm 89:14). Our continued silence could make us appear complicit with injustice and inequity. Therefore, we must actively and aggressively advocate for our brothers and sisters who have been adversely affected by the sin of racism. “The goal of the church should be to glorify God by reflecting the values of God among the people of God through letting the truth of God be the standard by which we measure right and wrong and the way

we accept skin color, class and culture.”²¹ God enjoys variety and diversity, and all of God’s children have value.

There must first be **confession and repentance**. These two elements are paramount to this discussion and will allow the body to move forward. Clarity is equally vital so there may be understanding, and understanding leads to **unity**. We must shed light on this murky problem so that it may bring revelation, and revelation leads to **reconciliation**. There must be a cutting away of contaminated flesh in order to bring healing to the body, and healing leads to **restoration**. In order for this to come to fruition, we must exercise **love and forgiveness**.

We must never forget that we are and always will be a church that is filled with grace, love, and forgiveness. “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14–15 NIV). We concur with Dr. Tony Evans in his book *Oneness Embraced*:

The church is to be viewed as a community, that is, a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common who are inseparably linked together by a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals; more specifically, a group of interdependent organisms of different species growing or living together in a specified habitat.²²

The 101st International Assembly affirmed the following statement:

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

²¹ Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 27.

²² Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 156.

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.”²³

²³ Church of God of Prophecy, *Business Acts of the 101st International Assembly* (Church of God of Prophecy, 2022), 6.

VI. Sexual Harassment

Resolution by the Church of God of Prophecy 101st International Assembly, 2022

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 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9–10; 7:2; 10:8; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:3–5; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6; Revelation 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.

SECTION EIGHT
APPENDIX

I. Amended Bylaws of the Church of God of Prophecy

AMENDED
BYLAWS OF
CHURCH OF GOD OF
PROPHECY

Article I
Name and Principal Office

Section 1. The name of this Corporation is Church of God of Prophecy (the "Church").

Section 2. The principal office of the Corporation is located at 3720 Keith Street, NW, Cleveland, Tennessee 37312.

Article II
Directors

Section 1. The corporate powers of the Church are vested in a Board of Directors (the "Board") of at least three Board members. The Board members are the Presiding Bishop selected by the International Presbytery and confirmed by the International Assembly, the General Presbyters selected by the International Presbytery and affirmed by the International Assembly, the Executive Ministry Directors and up to four other persons selected by the Presiding Bishop. For internal and other purposes, the Board is also referred to as the Administrative Committee.

Section 2. The term for a Board member is from International Assembly to International Assembly.

Section 3. If the position of Presiding Bishop becomes vacant, the First Vice-chairman will call a meeting of the General Presbyters, and they will decide among themselves within ten days the person from among the sitting General Presbyters who will immediately assume the role as the Presiding Bishop. This person will function as the interim Presiding Bishop with all rights and duties until the upcoming International Assembly.

If a vacancy occurs in the Board because a General Presbyter ceases to serve in that position for any reason, the Board may select another Board member to fill the remainder of that term (as Board member and not as a General Presbyter).

If a vacancy occurs in the Board for a Board member selected by the Presiding Bishop, the Presiding Bishop will select another person for that position.

A successor Board member will serve the balance of the predecessor's term.

Section 4. Any Board member may request, with the approval of the Presiding Bishop, a special meeting of the Board.

Section 5. The Board may elect, appoint, remove, or discharge officers, agents, or employees of the Church, prescribe their duties (in addition to those set out in the Bylaws); fix their compensation; and require from them security for money or property in their control. However, the Board cannot take any actions contrary to the other provision of these Bylaws.

Section 6. The Board will conduct the affairs of the Church, decide its policies consistent with the Minutes of the International Assembly, and may enact rules and regulations for the conduct of the affairs of the Church that are consistent with the laws of the State of Tennessee, the Charter of the Church, and these Bylaws.

Section 7. The Board may contract, and incur indebtedness, for the Church. The Board may authorize the President or Treasurer to execute a note, contract, or other obligation of the Church necessary to effect a loan or secure credit for the Church.

Section 8. A Board member will not be compensated for serving as a Board member. However, the Church may reimburse a Board member for expenses incurred in attending a meeting of the Board or attending to the business of the Church.

Section 9. The Board will designate the depositories for the funds of the Church.

Section 10. The Board will meet immediately following each International Assembly of the Church at the office of the Church, or any other place that the majority of the Board members agrees upon, and may adjourn the meeting to a later date. The Board may meet at other times also. The Board may meet outside the State of Tennessee if a majority of the Board members agrees to do so and if the notice of the meeting specifically designates the meeting place.

Section 11. Any actions required or permitted by the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act to be taken at a meeting of the Board may be taken without a meeting if all Board members consent to taking such action without a meeting. The affirmative vote of the number of Board members that would be necessary to authorize or take such action at a meeting is the act of the Board. The action must be evidenced by one or more written consents describing the action taken, signed by each Board member, and included in the minutes filed with the corporate records reflecting the action taken. Written consents and votes taken by consent action may be in electronic form pursuant to the Tennessee Uniform Electronic Transactions Act.

Section 12. The Board shall present to each International Assembly of the Church a general statement of the affairs of the Church at the end of the immediately preceding fiscal year. On non-Assembly years an audited statement will be available at the corporate office upon request.

Section 13. As long as due notice is given, a simple majority of the Board members constitutes a

SECTION EIGHT

quorum for the transaction of business, but a smaller number may adjourn to a later date.

Section 14. A Board member acting individually, and not as the Board, has no power or authority to bind the Church.

Section 15. A Board member may be indemnified by the Church as authorized by the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Section 16. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board. The Board may elect a vice-president to serve in the absence of the President.

Article III
Members

Section 1. The Members of the Church are those persons who have taken the covenant of the Church.

Section 2. Each International Assembly of the Church shall constitute a meeting of the Members of the Church.

Section 3. The President, Secretary, or other officer of the Church shall give notice of the International Assembly consistent with the past practice of the Church.

Section 4. A quorum consists of a simple majority of those present at the officially designated business session of the International Assembly.

Section 5. A Member may act in person or by proxy according to the procedure established by the Church.

Section 6. The Board may call a special meeting of the International Assembly.

Section 7. At a special meeting of the International Assembly only the business specified in the notice of the meeting may be transacted.

Article IV
Officers

Section 1. The Presiding Bishop, who is selected by the International Presbytery and confirmed by the International Assembly, shall serve as the President. The Board shall appoint the Secretary and may appoint one or more General Presbyters to perform the duties of the President in the absence, disability, or death of the Presiding Bishop. The Executive Director of Finance

and Administration shall serve as Treasurer, unless the Board appoints a different individual. The Board may appoint a vice-president and other assistant officers.

Section 2. Officers, other than the president, shall serve until the Board appoints their successors. However, the Board may remove an appointed officer before the expiration of the term. The appointment to an office is not an employment contract to serve until the term of office expires.

Section 3. The same person may hold two offices, except that the President cannot also serve as Secretary.

Section 4. The Presiding Bishop in conjunction with the General Presbyters has general oversight and management of the affairs of the Church.

Section 5. The Secretary shall keep appropriate permanent records of the proceedings of the minutes of the Board.

The secretary, or the president, may issue all notices of the meetings of the Board.

The Secretary will perform the duties of the Treasurer in the event of the Treasurer's absence or disability.

The Secretary has charge of and shall preserve the books, records, files, and documents of the Church unless the Board designates this duty to be performed by another person. The Secretary shall hold these books and records at all times subject to the inspection of the Board members.

Section 6. The Treasurer (or some other person designated by the Board) shall keep a strict account of the financial affairs of the Church and be able to account for the assets and liabilities of the Church. The Treasurer is the custodian of the funds and accounts and obligations of the Church but is subject to the direction of the Board in selecting depositories for Church funds.

In the absence or disability of the Secretary, the Treasurer will perform the Secretary's duties.

Section 7. Each assistant officer has the same power to perform the duties of the office if the officer is unable or unavailable to perform the duty.

Section 8. An officer may be indemnified by the Church as authorized by the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Article V
Corporate Seal

Section 1. The Corporation has a seal.

SECTION EIGHT

Article VI
Dissolution

Section 1. Upon dissolution the Board shall transfer the net assets of the Church as authorized by the Charter and the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act, and the transferee shall be an organization that is qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

Article VII
Amendment of
Bylaws

Section 1. The Board may amend these Bylaws at the meeting following the International Assembly or at an interim meeting if notice for the interim meeting announces the amendment that will be considered.

Adopted June 13, 2024.

II. Amended And Restated Charter

**AMENDED AND RESTATED CHARTER
of the
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY**

Pursuant to the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act, Church of God of Prophecy amends and restates its Charter as follows:

1. The name of the Corporation is Church of God of Prophecy.
2. The street address of both the registered office and the principal office of the Corporation is 3720 Keith Street NW, Cleveland, TN 37312, County of Bradley.
3. The name of the registered agent at the registered office of the Corporation is Bishop Daniel Felipe.
4. The Corporation is a public benefit corporation and is organized exclusively for charitable purposes within the meaning of § 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended from time to time.
5. The Corporation is a religious corporation.
6. The Corporation has members.
7. The Vision Statement of the Corporation is as follows:
Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. The Mission Statement of the Corporation is as follows:
The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with a passion for Christian union.
9. The Corporation will, at all times, act in conformity to the doctrines and beliefs contained in the "Biblical Principles, Beliefs and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy" as contained at any time, and from time to time, in the most recent International Assembly Minutes of the Church of God of Prophecy.
10. The Corporation is formed for any lawful purpose or purposes not expressly prohibited under the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Corporation's purposes also include the limited participation of the Corporation in any other activities, including taxable activities, but only to the extent the activities would be permitted by a tax-exempt corporation. More particularly, without limitation, the purposes of the Corporation include:
 - a. To bear witness for Christ and his truth and to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God in all its fulness and power, so that the rule of God is brought about in the hearts of humankind;
 - b. To promote the Christian religion by any appropriate form of expression, within any available medium, and in any location, through the Corporation's combined or separate

- formation of a church, ministry, charity, school, or eleemosynary institution, without limitation;
- c. To ordain, employ, and discharge ordained ministers of the gospel, and others, to conduct and carry on divine services at the place of worship of the Corporation, and elsewhere;
 - d. To handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities;
 - e. To collect and disburse any and all necessary funds for the maintenance of the Corporation and the accomplishment of its purpose within the State of Tennessee and elsewhere; and
 - f. To make distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under §501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as amended.

This Corporation is also organized to promote, encourage, and foster any similar religious, charitable, and educational activities; to accept, hold, invest, reinvest, and administer any gifts, legacies, bequests, devices, funds, and property of any sort or nature, and to use, expend, or donate the income or principal thereof for, and to devote the same to, the foregoing purposes of the Corporation; and to do any and all lawful acts and things which may be necessary, useful, suitable, or proper for the furtherance of accomplishment of the purposes of the Corporation.

1. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Charter, the Corporation will not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by an organization exempt from federal income tax except under §501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as amended.
2. If the Corporation is ever determined to be a private foundation as defined in §501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as amended, it will comply with the requirements under §501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as amended.
3. Upon dissolution of the Corporation, the Board, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the Corporation, shall dispose of all of the assets of the Corporation, if any. The local Church will be the first beneficiary in the disposal of such assets, and second, such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes as then described in Section 170(b)(1)(A) (other than clauses [vii] and [viii] of the Code or the corresponding provisions of any future United States internal revenue law) as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Code, as the Board shall determine. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of the City or County in which the registered office of the Corporation is then located exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes, as said Court shall determine.
4. The directors of the Corporation shall have no personal liability to the Corporation for monetary damages for breach of their fiduciary duties as directors. Specifically, each director and each member of any committee designated by the directors shall, in the performance of such director's duties, be fully protected in relying in good faith upon the records of the Corporation and upon such information, opinions, reports, or statements presented to the Corporation by any of the Corporation's officers or employees or committees of the Directors, or by any other person as to matters such member reasonably

believes are within such other person's professional or expert competence and who has been selected with reasonable care by or on behalf of the Corporation.

However, this provision does not eliminate the liability of any director: (i) for breach of the director's duty of loyalty to the Corporation; (ii) for acts or omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law; or (iii) under Section 48-58-304 of the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended.

5. The Corporation has the power to indemnify its directors to the fullest extent permitted by the Tennessee Nonprofit Corporation Act.

Dated: October 8, 2024



Timothy D. Coalter
Presiding Bishop

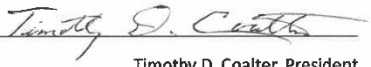
CERTIFICATE REQUIRED BY

TN Code § 48-20-107 (d)

Bishop Timothy D. Coalter, Presiding Bishop and President of Church of God of Prophecy, certifies to the Secretary of State that:

1. the Amended and Restated Charter does not contain any amendment requiring approval of the members, and
2. the Amended and Restated Charter was duly adopted by the Corporate Board of Directors of Church of God of Prophecy on July 18, 2023.

CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

By: 
Timothy D. Coalter, President

IV. Lay Minister Application



LAY MINISTER'S APPLICATION

Church of God of Prophecy International Offices



Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit

PLEASE NOTE: Per the Ministry Policy Manual (scan or click the QR code above to access the most current edition), a lay minister is required to report to the local church conference at least quarterly, is authorized to publish, preach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ, and may conduct prayer meetings and revivals. A Lay Minister's Certificate does not authorize an individual to receive members, baptize, conduct business meetings, or perform weddings. Further, a Lay Minister's Certificate must be renewed at the beginning of each calendar year with a formal request being sent to the individual's National/Regional/State Bishop.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEAR! (Print your name exactly as you want it to appear on your lay minister's certificate.)

1 Name First Middle Last Suffix
2 Address City State/Province Postal Code Country
3 Phone Number Email
4 Date of Birth Month Day Year Gender Male Female
5 Marital Status Single Married Widowed Divorced Divorced/Remarried
6 In what year were you: Saved Sanctified Filled with the Holy Ghost Baptized in Water
7 How long have you been a member of the Church of God of Prophecy?
8 Do you feel a call to the ministry? Yes No
9 Will you commit to completing the Minister's Development Program (MDP)? Yes No

*Signature of Applicant Date

CHURCH/PASTOR ENDORSEMENT

This section is to be agreed upon by the local CHURCH of the applicant and completed by the CLERK.

This is to affirm that the local church, (Print name of local church.)
with pastor, (Print name of pastor.), has hereby duly considered that the applicant, (Print name of applicant), should be considered for lay ministry and recommends that a lay minister's certificate be issued, as agreed upon this day, (Print date of local church conference.)

*Signature of Clerk Date

*Signature of Pastor Date

This form is being sent to:

National/Regional/State Bishop's name

Nation/Region/State Date sent

V. License Application



MINISTERIAL LICENSE APPLICATION

Scan or click the QR Code for Digital Access to the Ministry Policy Manual.

Church of God of Prophecy International Offices

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Timothy 1:12).

Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit



For which license are you applying? **Minister:** Male Female
Bishop: Provide Minister's License Number _____

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY (Please print your name *exactly* as you want it to appear on your license certificate and ID card.)

① Name _____
First Middle Last Suffix

② Address _____
 City _____ State/Province _____
 Postal Code _____ Country _____

③ Phone Number (include area code) _____ Email _____

④ Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____
Month Day Year

⑤ Present Occupation _____ Nationality _____

⑥ Marital Status Single Married Widowed Divorced* Divorced/Remarried*
* If you or your spouse have ever been divorced or divorced/remarried, please explain in a separate writing.

⑦ Name of Spouse _____ Number of Children _____

⑧ Signature of spouse indicating full support of applicant's call to ministry _____
(Spouse's Signature)

PLEASE CIRCLE WHERE NECESSARY

⑨ Date converted _____

⑩ Have you experienced sanctification as a second definite work of grace? **Yes No**

⑪ Have you been baptized with the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in tongues? **Yes No**

⑫ Have you been baptized in water by immersion? **Yes No**

⑬ How long have you been a member of the Church of God of Prophecy? _____

⑭ At which local church are you currently a member? _____

⑮ Have you served as a lay minister for at least one year? **Yes No**

⑯ How long have you known that you were called into the ministry? _____

⑰ Is it your understanding that your calling includes a preaching (pulpit) ministry? **Yes No**

⑱ Would you be willing to dedicate yourself to the ministry as your first vocation? **Yes No**

⑲ Do you give priority to daily personal development and spiritual formation? **Yes No**

⑳ Are you committed to lifelong learning and spiritual formation? **Yes No**

㉑ Did you complete the *Foundations Course* ("no longer offered")? **Yes No** Certificate Number: _____

㉒ Have you completed the *Minister's Development Program (MDP)*? **Yes No** Certificate Number: _____
If yes, please submit a copy of your MDP certificate of achievement along with this application. **Required**

㉓ Please list any academic or professional degrees you have been awarded and their corresponding dates:

㉔ Have you previously been licensed by this or any other church or religious organization(s)? **Yes No**

㉕ If yes, please indicate which organization(s) and disclose if you voluntarily surrendered your credentials or if they were revoked: _____

SECTION EIGHT

PLEASE CIRCLE WHERE NECESSARY

- 26 Are you currently credentialed with any other church or religious organization(s)?..... **Yes No**
- 27 If yes, please indicate which organization(s) and if you are willing to resign your credentials with the organization(s): _____
- 28 Are you faithful in tithing and giving as approved by the International Assembly? **Yes No**
- 29 Will you commit to reporting monthly to your national/regional/state office? **Yes No**
- 30 Will you commit to tithing your ministry income to your national/regional/state office? **Yes No**
- 31 Do you commit to putting off the very appearance of evil and living a life of ministerial ethics and integrity: abstaining from alcohol and strong drinks, smoking, tobacco, pornography, illegal or recreational drug use, unwholesome speech, and any sinful behavior prohibited by scripture? **Yes No**
- 32 Have you ever been charged or convicted of any sexually related offenses? **Yes No**
**If yes, please explain in detail in a separate writing.*
- 33 Have you ever been charged or convicted of any financially related offenses? **Yes No**
**If yes, please explain in detail in a separate writing.*
- 34 Are you willing to submit to those over you in the Lord? **Yes No**
- 35 Are you willing to go wherever God's will dictates in order to fulfill His ministry through you? **Yes No**
- 36 Are you committed to making an effort to participate in and support functions produced and hosted by the Church of God of Prophecy at local, district, national/regional/state, and international levels? **Yes No**
- 37 Upon being approved as a licensed minister/bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy, are you willing to make a personal commitment to the doctrine, polity, and governance of the Church of God of Prophecy as illustrated in the *Ministry Policy Manual* and *Assembly Journals*? (If yes, sign below.)

Applicant's Printed Name _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

DIGITAL PHOTO REQUIRED

Please submit a digital copy of a recent photo of yourself with a solid background along with this application.

The digital photo must be a JPG file titled as your "Last Name, First Name."

The photo will be printed onto a Ministerial Identification Card for the applicant.

Please submit all necessary documents listed below. Applicants without all required documents will NOT be processed.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Ministerial License Application | (4) JPG Photo of Applicant |
| (2) Church/Pastor Endorsement Form | (5) Potential Responses to Questions #6, #32, and/or #33 |
| (3) Copy of MDP Certificate of Achievement
<i>(or Foundations Course Certificate issued prior to 1/1/2023)</i> | (6) Any Additional Documents Required by Applicant's
National/Regional/State or General Presbyterian's Office(s) |

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

NATIONAL/REGIONAL/STATE OFFICE

Foundations or MDP Certificate Number: _____ Date Certificate Issued: _____

Date of Ministerial Review Board Meeting: _____ Was the Applicant Approved? _____

Signature of National/Regional/State Bishop: _____ Date: _____

National/Regional/State Bishop of: _____

GENERAL PRESBYTER'S AREA OFFICE

Date Received: _____ Date Sent to Presiding Bishop's Office: _____

Signature of General Presbyter: _____ Date: _____

PRESIDING BISHOP'S OFFICE

Date Received: _____ License Number: _____

Signature of Presiding Bishop: _____ Date Issued: _____

VI. Membership Transfer Form



MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER REQUEST

Church of God of Prophecy International Offices

Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Greetings,

This certifies that _____ has on this date, _____

requested his/her membership be transferred from the _____

Church of God of Prophecy located at _____

to the _____ Church of God of Prophecy

located at _____.

We hereby commend this brother/sister to your Christian care and fellowship.

Clerk

Date

Membership transfers may only take place in a local church business conference or by the national/regional/state bishop following the disbanding of a local church. This form should always be sent directly between local church clerks and never through the transferring member. When difficult and unusual conditions arise involving the transferring of members, the pastor may refer such cases to the Presbytery.



MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER ACCEPTANCE

Church of God of Prophecy International Offices

Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Greetings,

This serves to verify that the request to transfer the membership of _____

was received on this date, _____, from the _____

Church of God of Prophecy located at _____ and has

been effectively transferred to the _____ Church of God

of Prophecy located at _____.

Clerk

Date

Upon accepting the membership transfer, please complete this portion of the form and return it to the transferring church. If the membership transfer was not accepted, please send a letter to the local church which made the initial request and inform them of this decision.

Revised July 2024 - Presiding Bishop's Office

VII. Warranty Deed



WARRANTY DEED

Church of God of Prophecy International Offices

Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit

FOR AND IN CONSIDERATION OF the sum of _____ Dollars (\$ _____) cash in hand paid and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, we, the Church of God of Prophecy with International Offices at 3720 Keith Street NW, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A. ("Church") have this day bargained and sold and by these presents do hereby bargain, sell, transfer, and convey unto _____

as local Trustees for the _____ Church of God of Prophecy for the use and benefit of the Church of God of Prophecy with International Offices at 3720 Keith Street NW, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., and their successors and assigns, with warranty, the described real estate, to wit:

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD said real estate unto the said local Trustees for the use and benefit of the Church of God of Prophecy, with International Offices at 3720 Keith Street NW, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., and their successors and assigns forever, provided, however, that neither they nor their successors in office as such local Trustees may sell, convey, or encumber the said real estate without the written consent of the General Trustees of the said Church at Cleveland, Tennessee, which consent may be evidenced by a separate writing or by the Chief Clerk of the said General Trustees joining in the execution a deed of the above-named Trustees or their successors in office for the purpose of certifying the consent of the General Trustees to the execution of such conveyance.

WE COVENANT that we are lawfully seized and possessed of said real estate; that we have a good and lawful right thus to sell and convey the same; that the title thereto is clear, free, and unencumbered, and that we will forever warrant and defend said title against the lawful claims of all persons.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness our hands and names, this the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Revised July 2024 - Presiding Bishop's Office