

Ministry Policy Manual



Church of God of Prophecy

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Revised—96th International Assembly 2010

Editor's Note:

Due to the scope of the word “International” and its overlap with, and inclusion of, the meaning of the word “General” (worldwide) as used by the Church of God of Prophecy, the General Overseer’s Office decided as of the **95th International Assembly, 2008**, to drop the word “General” from the designation “International General Assembly” and use only the term “**International Assembly**” when referring to the Church’s highest governing body. Therefore, all references to “General Assembly” in this volume and in all *Assembly Minutes*, reports, and documents shall also mean “**International Assembly**” and vice versa.

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Organizational Structure
International Level
Church of God
of Prophecy



Organizational Structure of the Church of God of Prophecy

The organizational structure of the Church of God of Prophecy exists and operates at three interdependent levels—international, national/regional/state, and local. The international level of the church organization 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 the thousands of cities, towns, and communities around the world where the Church’s mission is carried out on a daily basis. These local bodies of believers form the framework within which the Church meets its objectives of worship, evangelization, equipping believers, and preparation for Christ’s return. At all levels of organization in the Church, efforts are being made to retain a 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 be a mobile and pilgrim people who move when He moves and who stop when He stops. Thus, the organizational structures described below are currently serving our mission, but they are subject to review and revision as God’s Holy Spirit may direct.

I. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly, a meeting open to all members, is the highest decision-making body in the Church of God of Prophecy. It currently convenes every two years. The General Overseer 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. The time has come where it seems most appropriate to develop a system whereby every local church and nation throughout the world can have true representation in business decision-making. Since there is a changing dynamic in the globalization of the Church, the term “delegate” would be maintained when it comes to dialogue and debate; however, decision-making expressions would be by official representatives only. Therefore, each local church or region would be allowed to have a prescribed number of representatives based on membership.

In concluding the General Assembly business procedure adopted in the 88th General Assembly, we recommend that 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. In order 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, p. 333). The Assembly also provides times of inspirational worship, preaching, teaching, and fellowship. It is during the General Assembly that the General Presbytery reveals the burden of its heart and provides vision for the direction it believes God is leading the Church. At the international level of organization, the General Presbytery, led by the General Overseer, who is selected by one accord in the General Assembly to serve for an indefinite term, has a broad range of spiritual and administrative leadership responsibilities. It makes the final selection of all international leadership, including the national/regional/state overseers and the standing Assembly Committees. Furthermore, the General Presbytery constantly seeks God for spiritual direction and casts vision for the worldwide outreach efforts of the Church.

A. The Purpose of the General Assembly

The primary purpose of the General 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 the place at which members of the Church and their official representatives assemble together under the headship of Christ to search the Scriptures. As the Bible is illuminated by the Spirit, understanding and resolution of differences of interpretations, which tend to be divisive among the churches, will be received. The General Assembly accepts the Bible as its highest authority.

A secondary function of the General 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 regions, will be handled by the Presbytery in that region in harmony with accepted Assembly interpretations.

B. The Infrastructure of the General Assembly

1. The Chief Moderator

The General Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy shall serve as Moderator of the General Assembly. In this role, in consultation with the General Presbyters, they will have the following responsibilities:

- a. The authority to convene a General Assembly as outlined by the General Assembly
- b. The moderation of the General 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 will serve as the Assembly Counselors (*90th Assembly Minutes*, 1998, p. 87).

3. The Role and Duties of the Assembly Committees

Over the last several years, it has become increasingly apparent that the roles and duties of the three primary Assembly Committees (Administrative, Biblical Doctrine and Polity, Finance and Stewardship) needed to be better defined and articulated to avoid occasional confusion or overlapping of functions. These three Committees are referred to as “Standing Committees” because the nature and influence of their work is ongoing even when Assemblies are not in session. These Committees require enormous time, effort, and cooperation to carry out their assigned functions as well as to provide the best possible ministry they can to this body. In an effort to help clarify the Church 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 these three Assembly “Standing Committees” appointed by the General Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy. We humbly submit these clarifications based upon research of past rulings concerning these Committees and the intent seen in their origin. We offer these observations and recommendations:

Definition of an Assembly “Standing Committee”

- a. A Committee appointed at the Assembly by the General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters.
- b. A Committee that functions on an ongoing basis with meetings outside the Assembly.
- c. A Committee that gives a report to the Assembly for their consideration and response.
- d. A Committee that has a global scope or sphere of influence in this Church.

Administrative Committee

- a. Both the General Properties Committee and the Executive Committee served in much more limited roles with fewer duties. The Administrative Committee (hereafter AC) was birthed out of a 1983 ruling that changed the name to the AC that assumed many of these roles (*83rd Assembly Minutes*, 1988, p. 45).
- b. With the reorganization of the General Overseer's Office in 1991, the General Overseer was given the authority to use his own discretion in appointment of International Offices Committees and in the number of persons who would compose such Committees (*86th Assembly Minutes*, 1991, p. 108).
- c. The AC is appointed by the General Overseer. They will serve to bring items of an administrative and practical nature needing Assembly approval. They are to arrange for various personnel and International Offices Committees who need to report to the Assembly (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, pp. 150, 151).
- d. It is not the responsibility of the AC to set the agenda of the other Assembly Committees [e.g., BDP and F & S], nor to dictate the agenda of the Assembly (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, pp. 43, 44).
- e. The AC of the International Offices serves to bring such items of administrative and practical nature to the International Assembly for its approval. The AC will bring to the Assembly for its consideration all other matters (not under the jurisdiction of the other Assembly Committees). Decisions are reached through overwhelming consensus (*90th Assembly Minutes*, 1998, pp. 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 International Assemblies. The role of the AC will remain essentially one of reporting decisions taken between Assemblies and of clarifying existing working practices (*94th Assembly Minutes*, 2006).
- g. During the transition between General Overseers, by mutual consent of the incoming General Overseer and his predecessor, arrangements for proper office accommodations and remuneration is to be made by the AC. (*94th Assembly Minutes*, 2006).

The transitional growth of the administrative needs has by necessity required the Administrative Committee under the direction of the General Overseer to take on more responsibilities. Prior to the introduction of the

plurality system that resulted in the offices of the General Presbyters, there was need for this group to be the primary administrative assistants. With the transformation of plurality, the role of the AC was less-inclusive. It is clear that the role of this Committee by necessity has grown out of need to assist the General Overseer and General Presbyters who represent the Assembly when it is not in session. With this understanding, some flexibility must be given the AC to rightly serve in its role while also respecting the roles and duties of the General Presbyters and other Assembly-mandated Committees. From time to time, it may be advisable for this Committee to meet with the General Presbyters or other Assembly Committees to review the AC's responsibilities and to assure the Assembly that all the Committees will work harmoniously for the edifying of the Church.

Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee

The Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity (hereafter BDP):

- a. The Committee is appointed by the General Overseer to serve the Church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration.
- b. The Committee 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 Committee is to prepare a preliminary expositional report that should be distributed to the Church no later than 90 days prior to 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 move of the Spirit to give direction.
- c. Matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration should be directed to the BDP Committee. The General Moderator (General Overseer), 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, pp. 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, p. 89).

- f. In order 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, p. 333).
- g. The intent of the expositional process is to provide each Assembly with a report(s) for decision and distribution to facilitate study, prayer, and meditation until the next Assembly, when it would be presented for decision (*93rd Assembly Minutes*, 2004, p. 111).
- h. The BDP Committee has been requested by the General Presbyters to make a clarifying statement concerning our position on Church government. We recognize the delicate balance between our theological/ ecclesiastical make-up of the Church and the business structure that we must maintain for legal purposes (*94th Assembly Minutes*, 2006, pp. 176, 177).

In light of the above decisions regarding the role and duties of the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity, this body is to serve the Church by continually revisiting the Word of God to assure that we are walking in the light of truth. Henceforth, we further recommend that the BDP Committee 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 General Overseer and General Presbyters to provide counsel in areas of doctrine and polity. We further recommend they should assist in the editing of the *Assembly Minutes* and *Ministry Policy Manual* to ensure that decisions made by the Assembly pertaining to doctrine and polities are accurately recorded. Pertaining to what matters may be referred to the BDP, it has been the practice of this body that subjects brought for study or resolution to this Committee would come through the General Overseer, and General Presbyters, by an Assembly official decision, or because a matter has overwhelming importance and concern to the global Church.

Finance and Stewardship Committee

The Assembly Committee for Finance and Stewardship (hereafter F & S):

- a. The F & S Committee is appointed by the General Overseer 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 matters 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 move of the Spirit to give direction.
- d. Matters related to F & S for Assembly consideration should be directed to the Committee. The General Moderator, in consultation with the Assembly Counselors and the Committee, may introduce matters of an emergent nature not included on the Assembly Report.
- e. The General Overseer or International Assembly may utilize this Committee to assist in providing accountability and policy formulation in financial administrative processes (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, pp. 149–151).
- f. The F & S Committee to focus on practical matters, including promotional and fund-raising projects. Thus, when determining the Assembly's expression, the one-accord principle will be used for the BDP on doctrinal matters while the overwhelming consensus will determine all other matters and those presented by the F & S and the AC.
- g. It is the responsibility of the F & S Committee to review and establish the salary and benefits of all International Offices Appointees and to develop an investment policy for the International Offices funds (*87th Assembly Minutes*, 1992, p. 62).

Having reviewed all prior duties of this Committee, it is obvious that too much of the role of the Finance & Stewardship Committee was obscured during the transitional period of the last few years. We, therefore, recommend that all of the above stated duties of the F & S Committee be recognized so that they may serve this Church in providing better accountability of all Church finances. Furthermore, this would include the use of the F & S Committee to provide accountability in policy formulation in the financial administrative process and in setting salaries for the General Overseer and General Presbyters. It

is the responsibility of the F & S Committee to review and establish the salary and benefits of all International Offices Appointees and to develop an investment policy for the International Offices funds. Their counsel to the AC is essential to provide broader insight and external review of all our financial decisions. We also recommend that their expenses to attend meetings be reimbursed or provided as other Assembly Standing Committees.

We humbly recommend the above Report with special appreciation to all those who have served in the past and presently serve on our Assembly Committees. Their commitment to the mission of this Church and willingness to work without salary on their respective Committees is to be commended by this body (*95th Assembly Minutes*, 2008, p. 47, BDP Committee Report).

4. Official Representatives and Representation of Churches

When a business, procedural, policy, or doctrinal matter is to be presented at an Assembly, each nation would be given the report or document to be translated, copied, and distributed to each local church so they could come to an agreement on the matter. Their representation would be given to their respective pastor or a designate (designate meaning district/state/regional/national presbyter) selected by them who will represent them on the floor of that Assembly when the Moderator asks for a decision. Should a decision not be reached, further discussion would be necessary as determined by the Moderator and the Assembly Counselors. This could mean a special session of biblical dialog by all bishops present as may be called by the Moderator. Afterwards, a final decision would be made only by the “official representatives” present, in accordance with guidance from the elders and the leading of the Holy Spirit upon the Assembly (Acts 15:19, 28). Representation of members from the various regions could be done in the form of submitted proxies. Each local church would submit one proxy. A church may submit one additional proxy when they reach 100 members or multiples of 100 thereafter. Individual members in local churches, who cannot agree with the consensus of the local church, would be granted the privilege to abstain from the process should they so choose. It should be understood that abstention would be the removal of oneself from the process and the silencing of their voice. It is understandable that the one representing the proxies to the Assembly could be carrying expressions both for and against the report. It is essential that there be an understanding between the representative and the churches that the representative would be expected to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the Assembly Counselors, and the one-accord expression of the Assembly. This could mean an outcome different than originally anticipated by the proxies. Once a decision is reached, it would be understood that the

global Church community would ratify it. As noted in Acts 15, the decree that brought harmony among the churches was not viewed as being imposed or challenged; rather, it was accepted as ordained by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Recommendations

Regarding policies and procedures for the International General Assemblies, it seems imperative we make several practical alignments that would facilitate the incoming harvest from the many nations flowing into this body.

1. A policy of “official representative” to the Assembly to bring equality to our representation in business sessions.
2. A proxy system, as defined in the document, whereby absent members from every nation can be represented in the Assembly. As we move toward implementation of this new process, we must be sensitive to any adjustments that may be warranted.
3. The Assembly program evaluated and realigned to allow more time for business sessions and the necessary discussion of vital subjects brought by committees.
4. Allowing voices, both pro and con, concerning issues before the Assembly to have equal time and opportunity for biblically based questions, comments, and dialogue.
5. Emphasizing the importance and “biblical authority” of our elders (Moderator and Assembly Counselors) to determine when a proper agreement is present and to also discern when individuals do not have scriptural justification for their objections or demonstrate a spirit of strife and division.
6. Reaffirming our stand for biblical submission.
7. A more active role by the Moderator and Assembly Counselors in discerning spiritual manifestations to ensure they align with the Spirit and the Word. Those who would be deemed to be out of order would be dealt with decisively. This also would include those who express attitudes of disrespect and contempt for the Moderator, General Assembly, and its official committees. It could mean their voice being removed from the proceedings.
8. In order to bring 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.”
9. Logistics of Implementation—As stated earlier in the document, each church would be allowed one proxy. Additional proxies are permitted as

stated in the document. It would be up to the pastor and his local leaders to engage their congregation as to the method used to determine and record their proxy or proxies. Every local church should strive to come to an agreement on any given issue that is being considered. Should a local church have more than one proxy and should the proxies differ, the differing proxies would cancel each other. Prior to the Assembly, proxies could be registered either by mail, e-mail, fax, or in person with the General Overseer's Office. Or the proxies can be brought to the General Assembly by the pastor, overseer, or person designated by them. The proxies would need to be registered no later than 48 hours before a business session. Should it be determined that fraudulent methods have been used in registering and/or exercising proxies, said proxies would be automatically disqualified.

When expressions are requested on the Assembly floor, each representative would submit their proxies in proper order. Clerks located in various locations of the meeting area would tabulate these. Each "official representative" would be given an appropriate color-coded identification, signifying not only their name, but also the number of proxies and the church or area they represent.

The intent of this process would be that at each Assembly there would be a report(s) presented for decision and a document(s) prepared for distribution and study until the next Assembly, when it would be presented for decision.

Should more specific details be required, this would be left to the discretion of the General Overseer's Office.

This will be a learning experience. Based on its procedural working and input from our Church constituency, an evaluation would be done by the Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee to determine if adjustments are needed.

Highlights and Implementation Explanations

1. Decision-making be firmly established in the Word of God
2. Role of elders be observed and honored
3. Range of Agenda Items: business, procedural, policy, or doctrinal. Major issues on the agenda for discussion and decision to be published at or as quickly as possible after the previous Assembly.
4. Procedure:
 - a. Report or document to be translated, copied, and distributed to each local church so they can come to agreement or reach a consensus on the matter. An appropriate forum for such local church discussions could be

the standard Quarterly Business Conference, or a specially called meeting for the purpose.

b. The Church's agreement or decision to be given to its pastor or a designate (designate, for purposes of these procedures, means district, state, national, regional presbyter-overseer, or general presbyter) selected or named as a representative to the Assembly for this purpose.

c. If when the Moderator of the General Assembly calls for a decision on an agenda item no appropriate decision is reached, further discussion (in open Assembly) would be necessary as determined by the Moderator and the Assembly Counselors. This could mean a special session of biblical dialogue, by all bishops and elders present in the Assembly—those who labor in prayer and in the Word, as may be called for by the Moderator (Current *Ministry Policy Manual*, p. 8; see also *92nd Assembly Minutes*, 2002, p. 279).

d. After such discussion or dialogue, a final decision would be made by the "official representatives" of the churches in accordance with guidance from the elders (Assembly Counselors) and the further leading of the Holy Spirit upon the Assembly.

5. Representation and Participation

a. Representation of the members (churches) and their decision on an issue(s) could be done in the form of a submitted proxy or proxies. "Proxy" as used in the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity (ACBDP) document as passed by the Assembly, means "a document from a local church authorizing someone (a designated person as in (b) above) to exercise the Church's expression on a given issue(s) before the International General Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy, and, if necessary, change that expression in Assembly context under the further leading of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the Assembly counselors, and/or the one accord expression of the Assembly."

b. Individual members of local churches who cannot agree with the general consensus of their local church may abstain from the process. In doing so they would allow the process to go ahead without their voice but, of course, with their prayer support for God's guidance for the local church and for the General Assembly.

c. It is essential that there be an understanding between the representative and the churches that the representative would be expected (and empowered) to follow any further leading of the Holy Spirit (in Assembly context), the wisdom of the Assembly counselors, and the one-accord expression of the Assembly. This could mean an outcome different from that originally anticipated or hoped for. Once a decision is reached in the Assembly, it

would be understood that the global church community (all Church of God of Prophecy churches) would receive it based on the model of Acts 15. The decree, which brought harmony among the churches, was not viewed as being imposed nor was it challenged; rather, it was received as ordained by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

d. Based on the standard Assembly practice of having documents in final presentation form 90 days prior to the Assembly, Assembly Committees invite the usual dialogue, letters, and other input concerning any document, topic, or proposal under discussion. When issues and recommendations are published in final presentation form 90 days before the Assembly convenes, that would be the appropriate period in which churches would formulate and decide their proxy or proxies. In the prior period (that is, the period between Assemblies leading up to the 90 days before the Assembly actually convenes) pastors, district, state, national and regional overseers, General Presbyters, the General Overseer, international ministry directors, and other trans-local leaders are encouraged to review and discuss the Assembly's agenda (proposed documents, etc.) in regular church forums such as local church quarterly business conferences, national, regional, state conventions, leadership conferences, ministers meetings, and any other forums that may be appropriate for this purpose. Such reviews and discussions will help create consensus on the issues among and between the leadership, churches, and members in a given area.

These guidelines are for clarity and to aid, where necessary, in implementation. The Assembly has authorized the General Overseer's Office to provide these kinds of detailed explanations to help initiate this new process.

Recommendations as Official Rulings

Whenever the committees designated to do so present reports to the General Assembly, a recommendation and/or recommendations are given for the said Assembly's consideration. We would like this General Assembly to give the following statement consideration for our official records:

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

Dynamics of Theocratic and Hierarchical Government

The Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity has been requested by the General Presbyters to make a clarifying statement concerning our position on Church government. We recognize the delicate balance between our theological ecclesiastical make-up of the Church and the business structure that we must maintain for legal purposes.

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 (BDP Report, see *94th Assembly Minutes* 2006, p. 152).

II. INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY

The International Presbytery consists of the General Overseer, General Presbyters, all national/regional/state overseers under general appointment and all approved bishops serving on the staff of the International Offices. Those bishops serving at the International Offices in a translocal preaching/teaching ministry may be recommended by their Ministry Director to be included in the International Presbytery with the specific approval of the General Overseer. The International Presbytery functions in such a way that the three dimensions of general, area, and national/regional/state leadership are realized. The specific structure remains flexible for changes as time, growth, and necessity may warrant. Ministerial licensure and discipline rest in the hands of the International Presbytery.

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

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

Those who serve as overseers are responsible for the appointment of pastors. Overseers 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 overseer, 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. This knowledge will provide a basis on which to effectively do the four-year evaluation. 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.

III. GENERAL PRESBYTERS/PLURALITY OF LEADERSHIP

A move toward “plurality of leadership” was accepted in the 1994 General Assembly. This plurality of the General Overseer’s office is represented by the General Presbyters, one of whom is recognized as the General Overseer. The General Overseer is selected for recommendation by the General Presbytery (**now International Presbytery**) to the General Assembly for approval (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 154), whereas the remaining General Presbyters are selected and approved only by the International Presbytery (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 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 General Overseer to provide shared-leadership responsibility in carrying out the functions of the General Overseer 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 General Overseer and the General Presbyters (chosen by the International Presbytery) assigned to specific areas of the world. If the General Overseer 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 General Overseer 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 General Overseer 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 General Overseer), who may also moderate the Assembly's non-business sessions at the discretion of the General Overseer.

The General Overseer and the General Presbytery . . . are 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 General Overseer and the other General Presbyters as the need arises" (*The Governance of the Presbytery*, 2008, p. 4).

IV. INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

The mission of the Church's International Offices is "to encourage inspirational leadership and to deliver essential support services that would significantly increase the Church's Gospel witness and promote the unity of believers." The staff of the International Offices is also selected by the General Presbytery and works with them to carry out the worldwide mandate of ministry given by God to the Church. Some of the departments headed by these staff members are briefly described in a subsequent section.

Instead of being divided into many different departments with separate agendas, the work at the International Offices is carried out by four inter-related ministry divisions. These ministries work together across organizational lines to better serve the needs of the church at large. Each area is led by a 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 General Overseer and the General Presbyters.

The office of the General Overseer 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 General Overseer, 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:

1. Inspirational—Short-term and long-range planning
 - a. World outreach evangelism
 - b. Representation among others involved in the kingdom of God
 - c. Leadership development
 - d. Special events/meetings
 - 1) International Assembly
 - 2) Presbytery meetings
 - 3) Other
2. Administrative/Executive
 - a. Appointment of general and area leadership
 - b. Establishment of ordination and licensure requirements and procedures in conjunction with the International Presbytery
 - c. International Offices Committees—serve as ex-officio members
 - d. Stewardship—international budget and planning

- e. Representation for the International Assembly in legal matters
 - f. Development of plans for infrastructure to meet the changing needs of the body
 - g. Management and implementation of infrastructural changes
3. Oversight of the Ministry
 - a. Pastoral oversight
 - b. Discipline
 - c. Counseling
 - d. Education
 4. Communications
 - a. *White Wing Messenger*: (English, Spanish, French, etc.)
 - b. World Language Ministries
 - c. Free Literature (tracts, pamphlets, etc.)
 - d. Editorial and Art Services
 - e. Media Production
 - f. Proxy System Management
 - g. Public Relations
 5. Accountability for General Oversight and the Implementation of International Assembly Recommendations
 - a. To International Assembly through the Administrative Committee
 - b. To International Presbytery through spiritual recognition/confirmation

Note: For further details of General Overseer’s and General Presbyters’ duties as outlined in *The Governance of the Presbytery* document, see Appendix 2, pp. 195, 196 and 201–204 respectively.

B. Global Outreach Ministries

This ministry provides for the Church’s outreach efforts at the international level. Particular attention is given by this ministry to the call for the Church to enter wholeheartedly into the harvesting ministry that results from Christ’s Great Commission. World Missions and Evangelism are under this umbrella. The director is responsible to develop and coordinate the ministries that would efficiently and effectively deliver services in the following categories:

1. World Mission Funding, Budget Coordination, and Distribution
2. Helping Hands
3. Global Mission Perspectives, Promotion, and Outreach Strategies
4. Harvest Partners Ministry Coordination
5. Disaster Relief Coordination
6. One Child Fund (International Orphanages)
7. Missionary Recruiting, Training, and Placement
8. Evangelism Promotion and Funding

C. Leadership Development and Discipleship Ministries

This area is responsible for the continuing educational development of all levels of Church leadership and discipleship. Its tasks include equipping new leaders and workers and the encouragement of present ones. Its emphasis is on life-long learning. The discipleship section encompasses and develops resources for discipleship training. Discipleship focuses on meeting the spiritual growth needs of believers, in general, as well as targeting various groups such as youth, children, and women.

1. Leadership Development

Center for Biblical Leadership

- a. Foundations Course
- b. School of Practical and Advanced Studies (National/Regional/State)
- c. DVD/CD Practicums (for School of Practical and Advanced Studies)
- d. Gordon-Conwell/Church of God of Prophecy Consortium (ATS—Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada accredited)
- e. Christian Leadership Program (for Presiding Bishops)
- f. Records: BTI/Tomlinson College Transcripts

2. Tomlinson Center

- a. Leadership Development Institute
- b. Accredited (SACS—Southern Association of Colleges and Schools)
Online Courses (see TomlinsonCenter.com)
- c. Non-accredited Leadership Development Training Opportunities

3. Discipleship Ministries

- a. Children's Ministries
- b. Women's Ministries
- c. Youth Ministries

D. Finance and Publications Ministries

This area is responsible for management of financial, administrative, and publishing functions. It integrates Administrative Services and ministries in the following categories:

1. Finance and Publications Ministries

- a. Executive Director of Finance & Publications (CFO)
- b. Accounting & Budgeting Processes
- c. Fields of the Wood & Related Sites
- d. Financial Services
- e. General Properties
- f. Heritage Ministries
- g. Human Resources
- h. Information & Technology Services
- i. International Accounting
- j. International Assembly Task Force
- k. Mail Operations
- l. Maintenance
- m. Ministerial Services
- n. One Accord Curriculum
- o. Printing Presses
- p. Records
- q. Stewardship Ministries
- r. White Wing Bookstore
- s. White Wing Publishing House

National/Regional/State Ministry



I. TRANS-LOCAL 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 overseers 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 trans-local 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 trans-local work. Rotation of trans-local, 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 trans-local 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 as regarding their future role of ministry. Reviews for general appointees must be every four years, beginning with the General Assembly in the year 2002.

For those serving as national/regional/state overseers, a special committee shall perform the evaluation. The overseer shall select not more than 1/3 of the members of the committee. The licensed ministers in that nation/region/state shall select the other remaining members. The findings of the evaluation shall be submitted to the appropriate General Presbyter for consultation and discussion with the overseer. Vacancy of a general appointee's office could occur at any time by resignation, personal reasons, ill health, gross negligence, or immorality. Some offices may be changed due to structural or reorganizational reasons as determined from time to time by responsible church bodies and/or authorities. Due consideration needs to be given those individuals affected by these changes.

Note: This replaces the ruling of the General Assembly decision of 1990 concerning rotation (*85th Assembly Minutes*, 1990, p. 45); see (J) "Overseer Evaluation Process" under the following section.

II. THE ROLE OF OVERSEER

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

The Responsibility of Being an Overseer

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

The caring overseer 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 overseer should address every situation; rather, when possible, the various levels of leadership (pastor, district overseer, minister, etc.) should function so as to allow the body ministries to operate fully. The overseer 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 overseer commit priority time in prayer, biblical studies, planning, promoting, and evaluating of those ministries, which will serve the spiritual needs and potentialities of the churches. The overseer must feel a deep commitment to the New Testament principles, equipping the ministry and laity.

The overseer 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. The Center for Biblical Leadership (CBL) will assist the overseer in developing this educational program.

The office of overseer has a broad base of responsibility and authority within the nation/region/state assigned by appointment. The “servant-leader” (overseer) 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 overseer 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 overseer provides a challenge for development and growth of the churches. He can spark revival in his assigned area by giving himself to prayer and 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.

III. Church of God of Prophecy Overseer

A. Principal Function

The overseer 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.

B. Appointment

1. The General Presbyter initiates evaluations of the national/regional/state overseers in his specific area per Assembly recommendation (*The Governance of the Presbytery*, 2008, p. 14).
2. The national/regional/state overseer is appointed through the General Presbyter in consultation with the General Overseer.
3. He should reside in the nation/region/state over which he is made overseer (where possible).
4. As a normal rule, the overseer will be notified two or three months prior to the General Assembly if his ministry is to be changed. The overseer will be contacted by his General Presbyter through an official communication prior to this time.

C. Relationships

1. The overseer is directly responsible and accountable to the General Presbyter in the area where he serves.
2. The overseer must maintain a “servant” relationship, as he directly supervises the national/regional/state office staff, programs, and ministers.
3. The overseer 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 General Overseer, the General Presbyters, and staff members of the International Offices, are always available to the overseer for counsel and support.

D. Qualifications

(These are broad-based qualifications.)

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

(See competencies for National/Regional/State Overseers, etc., p. 66.)

E. Administrative Duties

(To be performed, in conjunction with the plurality of this 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 Presbyterian for record keeping and for forwarding to the General Overseer's Office.
3. To make monthly accountability reports to the appropriate offices on forms prepared for same.
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 General Overseer/General Presbyters as a presbytery member in counseling, disciplining, and/or revocation of ministerial credentials.
5. To decide the geographical boundaries of each district in his assigned area.
6. To discontinue or disband churches and report same to the General Presbyterian's Office on forms prepared for such reports; to transfer members from disbanded churches to a church most convenient for the member.
7. To implement resolutions and directives duly passed by the General Assembly.

F. Supervisory Duties

1. To supervise, with the Finance and Stewardship Committee, all funds received and disbursed by the national/regional/state treasurer.
2. To see that the reporting system of the Church functions promptly and accurately.
3. To evaluate all national/regional/state reports and surveys as a means of measuring job performance and projecting future goals.

4. To delegate responsibilities to others for more effective administration.
5. To approve the setting in order of new churches before organization is effected.
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 overseer.

G. 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 your function is great and encompasses a vast geographic area, it is necessary for you to find ways to mentor a small group of future leaders—those who could possibly replace you in the future.
2. Evangelism and missions (home and abroad) are key to the mandated challenge of the church. Therefore, the overseer 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 overseer, district activities. To also promote a national/regional/state convention or meeting at which the overseer will give general instructions relative to the growth and development of the ministry and churches.
4. To promote national/regional/state or district meetings to introduce and launch programs.
5. To promote all the departmental ministries of the Church. In most cases, the overseer will appoint national/regional/state leadership for the departmental ministries, but the overseer should feel responsible to always give promotional directions when the opportunity arises.
6. To promote the circulation of the *White Wing Messenger* as well as other church-published periodicals and publications.

H. Appointive Duties

1. To appoint pastors in consultation with the local church and minister.
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 overseers and any other personnel necessary to administrate the national/regional/state programs.

I. Cautionary Rule

1. Before launching large financial projects, the overseer should seek counsel from the General Presbyter. The overseer 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 overseer authority to make expenditures not to exceed a reasonable amount. No action or any disbursements of funds may be taken unilaterally by either the overseer or the Finance and Stewardship Committee.

J. Overseer Evaluation Process—2008

Purpose

From the outset of this endeavor to introduce a satisfactory means of evaluation and the subsequent implementation of this process, this committee has observed and others have injected into our work the need to readdress this subject. Evaluations were never intended to simply be used for the purpose of changing pastors or overseers; rather, it is time for us to have the grace and understanding to better train or qualify our leaders. We encourage our local churches and leadership across every level to take the initiative to provide evaluations that will foster better ministerial development and replace the removal mentality as simply the only resolution.

Evaluations are an integral part of everyday life and should be a means of self-improvement and accountability, providing opportunity for both commendation and admonition. Having them periodically and consistently builds confidence, gives assurance, and keeps the participants and those they serve well informed (*91st Assembly Minutes*, 2000, Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine & Polity, p. 104). Furthermore, its purpose is to help identify weaknesses so that they can be addressed, while enhancing strengths in ministry. Today, pastors are serving on a longer-term basis, and given the fact that there is a worldwide leadership crisis, we need well-equipped ministers. An evaluation is a valuable tool in trying to reach this purpose. It must be remembered that the ultimate goal of this process is to strengthen ministry. Any change or move in ministry would not necessarily be related to the

evaluations but could be performed at the discretion of the respective overseer or the General Presbyter at whatever time would be deemed necessary or appropriate. We know that the following stated guidelines may not always be applicable in every nation where available personnel or logistics may require some modifications to this procedure.

Process

Given the fact that national/state/regional overseers are evaluated every four years (e.g. 2008), the next evaluation is scheduled in 2012. Thereafter, evaluations will be performed every four years. This supersedes previous rulings. An Evaluation Task Force of not more than six licensed ministers in good standing shall be selected, one-third by the overseer and two-thirds by the ministry in the region, to see that the process is properly carried out. Those selected will serve for four years. For the purpose of impartiality, the overseer should not attend the meeting for selection of two-thirds of the Evaluation Task Force or the selection of the moderator for that meeting. The Evaluation Task Force shall select a chairperson and a secretary from among themselves. Their responsibilities would include consultation with the ministry of the region and with the General Presbyter, assimilating the information and providing a written report. The chairperson and secretary (or another selected Evaluation Task Force member) shall give a signed copy of the written report to the overseer being evaluated. If this overseer should so desire, he could request a meeting of the entire Evaluation Task Force. The overseer should be given commendation where he has excelled, encouraged to take objective actions for improvement in areas of weakness, and to further develop in areas he has demonstrated strength.

The evaluation report will be submitted to the General Presbyter who will deal with it as he deems appropriate (*95th Assembly Minutes*, 2008, p. 51).

Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008

I. Specific Areas of Focus

1. Personal Life

Example as a spiritual leader in lifestyle

Handling of personal finances (insurance, retirement portfolio, provision for family, financial counselor, continuing education, debt-free living)

Share examples of Spiritual Disciplines (study, meditation and solitude, prayer, fasting, service, simplicity, stewardship, confession, celebration.)

- Give us an overview of your family life (family time, achievements, vacations, future plans).
2. Ministry to the Local Church (Pastoral Role)
 - Visitation (Churches)
 - Visitation (pastor's home, office, restaurant)
 - Keeps any confidence
 - Is sensitive to local church needs
 - Demonstrates a warm and caring attitude
 - Relationship with ministers in the state
 - Relationship with local churches/members
 - Availability and sensitivity in problem situations
 3. Leadership (Administrative) (If I lead, do I follow those who lead me?)
 - Supports International/State Missions
 - Dealing with divisive ministers and/or churches
 - Providing leadership when ministry discipline is needed
 - Supports sound biblical doctrine
 - Uses good judgment in making decisions
 - Demonstrates competent problem solving skills
 - Shows consideration for differing opinions and ideas
 - Is flexible enough to change as the situation demands
 - Pursues tasks to completion
 - Establishes a constructive climate in all meetings
 - Ability as an administrator, planning and conducting state meetings
 - Promptness in answering letters, telephone calls, and e-mails
 - Overall image as a leader
 - Good working relationship with district overseers, committees and staff
 - Effective communication (calendars, e-mail, web)
 4. Financial Oversight
 - Monitoring/giving sound oversight to State Budget
 5. Vision and Goals for the Future. (Growth Process—Fulfilling the Great Commission)

Cooperates with others to promote church goals in the state
Efforts for evangelism and church planting

II. General Areas of Focus

Are there any weaknesses, problems, situations that need to be addressed?

(95th Assembly Minutes, 2008, p. 56).

National/Regional/State Overseer's Evaluation—2006

This evaluation is your opportunity to participate in assessing the ministry of your overseer. The only way this instrument can assist the overseer is for you to prayerfully and carefully answer each question. Individual responses will remain anonymous. A summary of the information will be shared with the overseer. If this is done at the time of a review, a summary will also be sent to the General Presbyter. Thank you for your prayer and contribution in this process.

Personal character/integrity

	Highest			Lowest	
How would you view your overseer's personal character?	5	4	3	2	1
How do the people in your church view his integrity?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you feel he is honest in his commitments to you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you add any observations or comments?					

Administrative skills

	Highest			Lowest	
Does the overseer provide clear and sufficient vision?	5	4	3	2	1
How does he handle the national/regional/state finances?	5	4	3	2	1
Is he prompt and attentive to administrative details?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Spirituality and Worship

	Highest			Lowest	
Is the overseer a good example of worship?	5	4	3	2	1
Is the overseer a good example of prayer?	5	4	3	2	1
Does his preaching/teaching inspire you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Evangelism and Outreach

	Highest			Lowest	
Do you believe he promotes evangelism in your region?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you think we have an effective outreach in this region?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Pastoral/Church Oversight

	Highest			Lowest	
Does the overseer take an interest in your local church?	5	4	3	2	1
As a minister, does he provide you with pastoral care?	5	4	3	2	1
In a crisis, does he support your ministerial position?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Teamwork and Morale

Highest Lowest

Does the overseer ask for your input in planning?	5	4	3	2	1
Does he work well as a team player with other leaders?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you feel the overseer is an encouragement to you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Problem-Solving and Conflict Management

Highest Lowest

How do you feel the overseer works through conflicts?	5	4	3	2	1
How does he treat others who disagree with him?	5	4	3	2	1
Does he accept advice or counsel from other ministers?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

Family Life and Personal Appearance

Highest Lowest

Does the overseer spend time nurturing his family?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you view his leadership in his family?	5	4	3	2	1
Does his appearance in public bring respect to his office?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?					

General Comments:

Please state in a few words how you feel about our overseer continuing in his present position as National/Regional/State Overseer.

Thank you for your responses, and they will be held in strictest confidence. Please mail this survey back to the following address:

(Ministry Policy Manual, 2006, p. 382)

Local Church Ministry



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 overseer.

A. Considerations That Should Be Included:

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 overseer's advice.

All of the above being favorable, the overseer 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.
6. If the overseer is not present, he should be notified of the new church immediately so that he may appoint a pastor.

C. Local Church Trustees

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

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, p. 125).

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 the September (see p. 363, *2004 Ministry Policy Manual*) 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, p. 83).

D. Deeds for Church Property

(Quoted from *89th Assembly Minutes*, 1996, pp. 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 overseer 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).

Notes:

1. Requests for Letters of Consent from the General Trustees must be sent through the Office of the State/National/Regional Overseer and not directly to the General Trustees.
2. The following Warranty Deed form has been prepared by the General Trustees and should be used where it is possible to do so. Blank forms may be secured from the General Trustees.

WARRANTY DEED

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, _____

_____ have this day bargained and sold and by these presents do hereby bargain, sell, transfer and convey unto _____

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

(Add description of real estate here.)

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, 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 of 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 _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

E. Incorporation

In connection with the matter of Local Church Incorporation, we have the following on record.

“In many cases, it simplifies business transactions for local churches and states to be incorporated. It has been brought to our attention that some local churches are incorporating without the knowledge of the state office, and are possibly becoming more independent in their local operations.” **Thus, the following resolution was adopted:** “Local churches must have the consent of the state overseer to incorporate. The state overseer 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, p. 45).

Rationale

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.

Recommendation

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

1. Local churches must have the written consent of the national/regional/state overseer 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 should be sent to the Trustees of the Church of God of Prophecy at the International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee.
2. The national/regional/state overseer should work with local churches in drafting the Charter/Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. In no case shall the incorporation documents violate current General 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 General Overseer/General Presbyterian assigned such responsibility.

The same provision for adherence to General Assembly rulings and guidelines shall apply, and a copy of the final draft and/or approved incorporation document shall be sent to the 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 General Assembly rulings. Legal counsel should be obtained to properly draft such documents in compliance with applicable laws.

4. We further recommend that the International Offices of the Church be 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, and that the Church of Prophecy Holding Association Incorporation be merged into the incorporation of the Church of God of Prophecy. A copy of this Incorporation Charter and the Articles of Merger of the Church of Prophecy Holding Association will be placed in the *Minutes of the 90th Assembly* (See also *91st Assembly Minutes*, 2000).

Charter and Articles of Incorporation International Offices

The Administrative Committee has been working to update the Articles of Incorporation to bring these documents in line with recent Assembly rulings. The amended charter has been filed with the Tennessee Secretary of State's office (*95th Assembly Minutes*, 2008, p. 46).

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 overseer. The national/regional/state overseer should have the consent of the General Overseer 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, p. 44).

III. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

We recommend the following 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 the basic need of every new believer. Therefore, as we minister to these people let us endeavor to give them this sense of belonging.

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, p. 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 teaching, government, and practices of the church. Stress should be placed on the following points:

1. The Teachings Made Prominent

They 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 General 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. Divine Healing

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

5. Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

Since there is so much controversy on this subject among Christians, it is important that the Bible teaching be explained. To this end, the 94th International General Assembly, 2006, considered, amended, and passed *The Biblical Institution of Marriage* Document (94th Assembly Minutes, 2006, p. 152; See *Ministry Policy Manual*, 2008, Appendix 3).

6. Tithing and Giving

The Bible 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.

7. 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 opportunity for church membership. When all are satisfied, the minister should invite any who desire membership to stand before the congregation. He/She will then ask 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 administers 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.

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 members into the church. The local church clerk should record the name and address of each new member immediately.

C. 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 only rule of government and discipline. Listed below are some basic Bible beliefs:

REPENTANCE—Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19.

JUSTIFICATION—Romans 5:19; Titus 3:7.

REGENERATION/BORN AGAIN—Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5; John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9.

SANCTIFICATION—subsequent to Justification; Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:12; 1 John 1:9.

HOLINESS—Luke 1:74, 75; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14.

BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT—subsequent to cleansing, the enduement of power for service; Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49–53; Acts 1:4–8.

SPEAKING IN OTHER TONGUES—as the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost; John 15:26; Acts 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11.

FULL RESTORATION OF THE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH—

1 Corinthians 12:1, 7–10, 28, 31; 14:1.

SIGNS FOLLOWING BELIEVERS—Mark 16:17–20; Romans 15:18, 19; Hebrews 2:4.

DIVINE HEALING—provided for all in the atonement; Psalm 103:3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; James 5:14–16; 1 Peter 2:24.

WATER BAPTISM—Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8–10; John 3:22, 23; Acts 8:36–38; 10:47, 48; 16:33; 19:3–5.

THE LORD’S SUPPER—Luke 22:17–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–33.

WASHING THE SAINTS’ FEET—John 13:4–17; 1 Timothy 5:10.

TITHING AND GIVING—Genesis 14:18–20; 28:20–22; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6–9; Hebrews 7:1–21.

RESTITUTION WHERE POSSIBLE—Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8, 9; Romans 13:8.

PRE-MILLENNIAL SECOND COMING OF JESUS—first, to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to meet Him in the air; Matthew 24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17—second, to reign on earth 1,000 years; Zechariah 14:4, 5; Luke 1:32; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11–21; 20:4–6.

RESURRECTION—Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:5, 6.

ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS—Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11–13.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED—no liberation nor annihilation; Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9; Revelation 20:10–15; 21:8.

ABSTINENCE FROM ALL LIQUOR OR STRONG DRINKS—

Proverbs 20:1; 23:29–32; Isaiah 28:7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21.

CONCERNING TOBACCO, OPIUM, MORPHINE, ETC.—Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:3–8; James 1:21.

CONCERNING FOOD AND DRINKS—Romans 14:2, 3, 17; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1–5.

ON THE SABBATH—Romans 14:5, 6; Colossians 2:16, 17.

ADORNMENT—the Christian’s use of adornment should be guided by the biblical principles of sobriety, modesty, submission, and self-discipline; Matthew 16:24; 1 Timothy 2:1–10; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 John 2:16. (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 155; Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity Report.) Scripture explicitly teaches the

use of adornment for occultic, lascivious, and idolatrous practices is prohibited (Acts 8:9; 13:6; 19:19; 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9; Galatians 5:19–21).

MEMBERSHIP IN LODGES/SECRET SOCIETIES—Matthew 5:34; John 18:20; 2 Corinthians 6:14–17; James 5:12.

WHOLESOME SPEECH OF THE BELIEVER—Matthew 5:34; James 5:12.

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE—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.

Note: For further information, see the revised and expanded *Biblical Principles, Beliefs, and Practices of the Church of God of Prophecy*, based on International Assembly changes; see *Ministry Policy Manual, 2010*, Appendix 1.

D. Affirmation—Bible Translations

“ . . . we recommend that this Assembly give voice of approval of the English King James Version of the Bible as being the authority for our Church doctrine and teaching” (56th Assembly Minutes, Section 4, September 18, 1961, pages 131, 132).

“ . . . we recommend that this Assembly give voice of approval of the Spanish Antigua Version de Casiodoro de Reina of the Bible up to 1909 A.D. as being the authority for our Church doctrine and teaching in the Spanish language” (66th Assembly Minutes, Section 9, September 13, 1971, page 143). **These citations are the historical rulings of the Church of God of Prophecy concerning Bible Translations.**

In recent years, there has been a tremendous advance in scholarly work concerning biblical translations that have utilized the increased knowledge of the original languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. Additionally, cultural understandings of the 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 mankind 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 the earlier translations referenced in the 1961 and 1971 Assembly rulings, 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 (ACBDP Report, 96th Assembly, 2010).

E. Affirmation—The Presence and Manifestations of the Holy Spirit

During the last three decades, the Holy Spirit has been poured out to such an extent that many believe we are continuing to live in the time of the fulfillment of Acts 2:15–18, when God said, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” Spirit-filled believers make up the largest and fastest-growing segment of Christianity in the world. The academic world is interested; governments are interested; books are being written; and studies are being done about this worldwide movement.

At the same time, Christianity in the Western world seems to be slowed or drifting from Spirit-filled influence. During the last decade, there has been external influence by misconceptions portrayed in the media as well as internal influence from Christian leaders to distract, suppress, and, in some cases, outright oppose any visible ministry or manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Some have advocated that the spiritual gifts or corporate ministries of the Holy Spirit do not have place in public worship today.

This persuasion has resulted in not only the rapid decline of spiritual manifestations in the church, but it has also subsequently discouraged believers from actively seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is this urgent matter that recently led the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America to entertain a discussion with the Pentecostal Society of Scholars as to how bishops and pastors can best respond to this imminent challenge. The conclusion among scholars and ecclesiastical leaders gathered in March 2009 was that Spirit-filled ministries must rise up with new inspiration to live and minister in the fullness of Pentecost, thereby demonstrating a more vibrant and effective approach to ministry than those who would water down the activity of the Spirit, seeking approval from seekers and more liberal elements in Christianity today. 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). A careful examination of the Greek verb translated "be filled" shows that it is a present tense, revealing that this blessing is one that we can experience now. The fact that the verb is used in the imperative mood does not leave the obedient disciple an option. Since the verb is also in the passive voice, it is not something we gain by human effort or achievement, but is done for him or her as they submit to God (Acts 2:38, 39).

Adding to this personal renewal in Jesus Christ, we must ask ourselves, "What happens when Holy Spirit-filled believers go to church?" Paul clearly answers this question when he writes to the Corinthian church. He expressly details the various gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given ". . . for the profit of all," namely word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gift of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). These phenomena need not only to occur in the congregation but should go beyond. As Paul unfolds the blessing of these manifestations, he also gives anointed instructions about abuses and how to handle such anomalies (14:6–33). But nowhere in the text does the apostle command or insinuate that these manifestations of the Holy Spirit should ever be rooted out from the experience of corporate worship by the believers. Instead, the apostle, when speaking even to a church rife with abuses, still encourages and gives imperative commands that these ministries are essential to edifying and empowering the church (1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:1–5, 39).

Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, speaking in tongues in the public arena was not seen as a detractor, but as a source of interest to unbelievers and as an enjoyment, even ministry, to believers. We see in multiple references both the attraction that speaking in tongues offered to those in the community and the encouragement for a bolder witness that it gave to the disciples (Acts 2:1–8; 4:31–33; 10:44–48; 19:1–6). In a world that has become increasingly attracted to the cults, the media, and techno gadgets, the Holy Spirit's presence is one key ingredient in our churches that can attract and fill the needs of people hungry for something beyond their daily life of drudgery. In fact, this actuates the blessing and need of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) to strengthen the believer in their normal life experience.

In the Church of God of Prophecy, our roots lie in the Holiness-Pentecostal historical tradition that was 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).

In this age, there is a spiritual thirst among people to experience God, and the Church of God of Prophecy must be prepared to offer them the Spirit that can quench this desire. 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 (ACBDP Report, 96th Assembly, 2010).

IV. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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

A. Objects 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 objects 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, it 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 the 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 principle 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 all 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, p. 110).

B. Types of Conferences

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

1. The regular quarterly conferences are advised for the first Monday night in June, September, December, and March (for quarters ending in May, August, November, and February). A quorum consists of all members present at the conferences after due announcement.

2. A called conference may be convened by the pastor or overseer at any time necessary—even at the beginning or close of a regular worship service.

However, it is advised that

- a. called meetings should be announced ahead of time, especially for other than 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; and
- d. only the business that necessitated the called conference should be acted upon.

Note: 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 objective, 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 overseer has authority to act or 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; and
- 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, and date disfellowshipped, etc.;
- 3) copies of incoming and outgoing reports; and
- 4) completed minutes of all meetings that are an official record of transactions of important events.

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.

a. The treasurer's duties include . . .

- 1) receiving and holding all funds as authorized by the church—tithes, general and special offerings, and ministry funds (Note: Once each month the treasurer of each ministry is to turn over to the local church treasurer all funds raised during the month.);
- 2) keeping proper account of all monies received and disbursed, including each individual's tithes and contributions for verification of non-taxable contributions;
- 3) the proper filing of all receipts, vouchers, and other papers relating to financial accounts;
- 4) the making of all necessary financial reports, both monthly and quarterly; and
- 5) making himself/herself fully acquainted with the general church's financial system.

E. Duties and Powers of the Conference

The local church in conference has certain duties, along with the power or authority to carry them out:

1. To select the local church trustees.
2. To direct the raising and spending of all monies not already designated by the General 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 overseer.
6. To receive an account of the business acts of the General 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.

Note: All actions are subject to review by the General Presbyters and National/Regional/State Overseers.

F. Order of Business

While not absolutely necessary to use the *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised*, it provides 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 _____ is now in business conference to transact any business which may properly come before it” (The statement 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 must include this statement in the minutes of each conference.)
 - b. Minutes should be read by the clerk of the last regular conference, and of any and all called conferences held since, with opportunity being given for corrections and acceptance.
 - c. The treasurer’s report, including an itemized statement of receipts, disbursements, and balances, 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.
 - e. Pastor’s report of the work done in the Pastoral Care Ministry.
 - f. Receiving and granting of membership transfers.
 - g. Reopening of any unfinished business from previous conferences.

- h. New and/or miscellaneous business.
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 explain (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” or “nay” or “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 Role of the Local Church’s Finance and Stewardship Committee Recommendation

We recommend that the former Finance and Appropriation Committee be re-named the “Finance and Stewardship Committee” (or an acceptable equivalent). 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. 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 General Assembly and the state, regional, and national conventions.

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 to give 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.

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 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.

In the same way that our overseers have found that the National/Regional/State Finance and Stewardship Committee added to the credibility of their office, we believe that the local church's Finance and Stewardship committee will similarly be a blessing to pastors.

This recommendation supersedes all former General Assembly recommendations in respect to the local church financial committee.

I. Engaging Our Youth and Children

Editor's Note: Refer to Stewardship Committee Report, 92nd Assembly, 2002.

Rationale

During the last several years we have implemented many changes in the financial structure of this Church. In so doing, we have failed two of the most energetic groups: the youth and children of the Church. We feel the time has come to release this dynamic resource for the betterment of the kingdom of God by encouraging the development of fund-raising efforts throughout the world.

We envision our youth and children being involved in projects such as helping

build medical facilities in developing countries, youth and children's conferences outside North America, youth and children's homes or schools in any part of the world. This may also include projects such as the printed Gospel, not only in tract form but Bibles as well, for nations and areas such as China, India, Central America, and Africa. This would include any other worthwhile project that may arise. When one project is completed, a new project should then be implemented. This is an opportunity for the youth and children of the Church to join in a ministry project that connects them to the harvest God is leading us to reach.

Recommendation

We therefore recommend a process be implemented that will connect the youth of our Church to specialized projects such as those stated in the rationale. This is meant to be an ongoing course of action made up of short-term projects.

We further recommend the director of the Leadership & Discipleship Department be the facilitator of this ministry opportunity.

J. Corporate Tithing Recommendation

Editor's Note: Refer to Assembly Committee on Biblical Doctrine and Polity Report, 92nd Assembly, 2002.

Although we should avoid legalistic demands, the very structure of the creation of God contains the principle of tithing and giving. In the New Testament, churches were taught the importance of sharing their resources to meet the needs of their brethren beyond their local churches. The apostle Paul directed Corinth to follow in the practice of the churches in Galatia by sharing their resources or gifts to help the mother church in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-3). He called upon them to come into loving submission to his authority and share their financial blessings with the greater body. Similarly, our Assembly has given directives to our churches today to practice the sharing of their tithe and offerings to bless the global Church. As local churches bear their gifts to this God-ordained authority, they too shall prosper from such obedience in love. In our 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 tithe from our local churches to the International Offices, and through mission giving, Harvest Partners, and Helping Hands as adopted by the General Assembly. This is a biblically sound practice, and we therefore recommend that our dedicated congregations continue in these faithful and charitable practices.

Ministry Policies



I. CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY MINISTRY POLICY MANUAL 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, and third, competencies for national/regional/state overseers, general presbyters, international office directors and trans-local personnel, as applicable and appropriate to their functions.

It is important to note that these competencies form developmental guidelines and not necessarily prescribed checklists. With the exception of 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. These can also serve, at all levels, as a basis for the criteria against which evaluations can be done.

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 the various methods of Bible study and be able to utilize these methods 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 in regard to 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 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 (e.g. Prayer, fasting, meditation, study of the Word, servant-hood, 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 overseer 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, taking into account 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.

C. Competencies for National/Regional/State Overseers, General Presbyters, International Ministry Directors, And Trans-Local Personnel

In addition to the general competencies for all ministers, those who serve as National/Regional/State Overseers, General Presbyters, International Ministry-Directors, and Trans-local 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, servant-hood, submission, simplicity, confession, etc.).
2. Carry out the biblical principles of shepherding and encouraging overseers, 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.

*Note: The term "lead" includes making adequate provision/s for, through effective delegation.

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 overseer 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 of 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/ ministerial education program in the nation/region/state and internationally as appropriate.

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 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 some fundamental requirements and qualifications before he is licensed or ordained. God's work does not operate in a vacuum, but in the real world where civil duties are required, as well as spiritual. 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 CHURCH 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 opportunity to observe and ascertain the candidate’s potential for the 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 Ghost 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 Ghost.

Since licensure is a formal endorsement, the church has the responsibility to require 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 Course before the candidate can apply for 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 overseer may assist the candidate in completion of the course when the circumstances demand.

C. The Official Recommendation

It is the local church in conference that does the recommending of those entering the ministry. If there is reason to believe that the applicant is still not ready for the ministry, for reasons of which the overseer may not be fully aware, two possibilities exist: 1) explanatory communication between the church and the overseer; or 2) an application and endorsement, clearly reflect the situation, so that the Presbytery can reach the proper decision.

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 Ghost, 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 overseer of the nation/region/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 overseer; and if in his judgment the candidate is worthy of receiving this certificate, it can be granted (*55th Assembly Minutes*, 1960, p. 134).

A. Procedure of Certification for Lay Ministry

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

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, 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 that application form. The completed form (both sections) will be sent to the overseer for his action.
3. The overseer will either approve or reject the application. If he rejects, he will notify the pastor and the candidate of his reason(s) and advise them what requirements remain to be fulfilled. If the application is approved, the overseer will issue the official *Lay Minister's Certificate* for the current calendar year and mail it to the pastor with instructions that it should be presented to the candidate in a public ceremony of installation and consecration. The overseer 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 on the form in back of the *Assembly Minutes*.

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, administer the Lord's Supper, conduct business meetings, or perform weddings.

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 Minutes*. This report must be made in duplicate. One copy will be sent to the overseer 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, it could make known its feelings to the overseer, who could make the recommendation, at his discretion, that

the candidate is to be set forth in regular conference (*78th Assembly Minutes*, 1983, p. 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 overseer and further action by the local church in "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 overseer.

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 overseer. 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, p. 83).

IV. LICENSED MINISTERS

All who are called of God into the preaching ministry shall be licensed with a minister's license following completion of the requirements as set forth by the General Overseer 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 and licensed by the national/regional/state and international offices. Pastoral responsibilities include the following:

1. The oversight of the local church (1 Peter 5:2).
2. Administration of 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. Administration of the ordinances (Matthew 28:19; John 13:15; 1 Corinthians 11:23–34).

Those men in this ministry who prove themselves worthy of being an elder could become ordained as a bishop.

B. Pastoral Tenure

1. Recommendations

Where possible, a pastoral candidate should serve an internship requirement under an experienced pastor or minister who will work in conjunction with the national/regional/state overseer. The national/regional/state overseer or a pastor who has proven pastoral ability and qualifications to teach may develop a pastoral training and educational program.

Each overseer, 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. This knowledge will provide a basis on which to effectively do the four-year evaluation/review. A pastor's tenure could be reviewed at any time where immorality, libelous behavior, incompetence, inability, disability, or improper conduct develops (Galatians 5:19–21). If at all possible, a mutual agreement should be reached between the overseer, pastor, and the local church about a pastoral appointment or change. While the overseer is to see that each church is supplied with a pastor, it is understood that all pastors and/or ministers under consideration must be in harmony with the principles of ministerial ethics articulated in this *Ministry Policy Manual (91st Assembly Minutes, 2000, p. 104)*.

2. Pastoral Evaluation Process

Given the fact that a pastoral evaluation was scheduled (e.g. 2007), the next pastoral evaluation is scheduled in 2011. Thereafter, evaluations will be performed every four years. This supersedes previous rulings. There shall be an Evaluation Task Force composed of not more than six leaders—elders in good standing from each local church: one-third selected by the pastor and two-thirds by the congregation, to see that the process is properly performed. The Evaluation Task Force shall select a chairperson and a secretary from among themselves. The pastor is not to participate in the selection of two-thirds of the Evaluation Task Force or of the chairperson and secretary. Their responsibilities would include consultation with the local church congregation and the overseer to acquire the necessary information. The chairperson and secretary (or another selected Evaluation Task Force member) shall give a written, signed copy of the report to the pastor being evaluated and to the overseer. If the pastor should so desire, he/she could request a meeting with the entire Pastoral Evaluation Task Force. The pastor should be given

commendation where he/she has excelled, encouraged to take objective actions for improvement in areas of weakness, and to further develop in areas where he/she has demonstrated strength. The overseer in consultation with his respective Administrative Counseling Board (composed of at least three pastors from that nation/region/state) would deal with the report as appropriate.

3. Church Ministry Evaluation

In remaining consistent with the pastoral evaluation, a process should be developed to evaluate the ministry, vision, and direction of the local church. This process shall be performed every four years. Outside ministry opinions could be invited to assist in a non-biased evaluation. This process would be under the direction of the Evaluation Task Force. It is to be understood that all evaluations are to be conducted in a timely and orderly fashion. We recommend that each local church develop a similar process to assess the leadership of their local churches, including their ministry directors.

4. Duties and Responsibilities of the Evaluation Task Forces

It is incumbent upon the members of the Evaluation Task Forces not to express their own feelings, but to report the actual findings resulting from the evaluation process. The following guidelines would help in giving direction to the Evaluation Task Forces, as well as providing a measurement of a person's qualifications and integrity to serve in this vital capacity:

- Attendance—Willingness to attend all Evaluation Task Force meetings
- Confidentiality—Lack of this would disqualify anyone from serving on this group
- Diligence—Willingness to actively participate in doing whatever work is needed
- Prayer—Commit themselves to quality group prayer sessions
- Love—Know to exhibit love for the person being evaluated
- Compassion—Show true concern and desire to help the person improve
- Objectivity—Possess ability to see all things without partiality
- Vision—Demonstrate knowledge and support for the individual's goals

5. The Evaluation Process—Educational/Training Needs

There has been much concern and confusion in the attempt to implement the evaluation process that was introduced to the Assembly in 2000. This process

seems to have inflicted much fear in the person being evaluated and sometimes justly so, as it has been used as a tool of unjust criticism. Perhaps, part of the fear is that the assessment has been made with nothing set in place to deal with the observations, both in terms of improving those being evaluated and educating the evaluators with objectivity. As a church body, it is incumbent upon us to deal with this dilemma appropriately and to implement procedures that will afford us the best instrument, evaluators, and ministry possible.

It is important that the ministers and members involved in the evaluation process be well-informed as to their function. This is not a time to simply find fault, but to objectively assess ministry for its enhancement. Those who participate in this work must familiarize themselves with the contents of this document prior to the beginning of the process. At the beginning of the meeting to select the Evaluation Task Force members, there shall be a reading of the duties and qualifications of those who would serve on the Evaluation Task Force as it appears in this document. Education includes sufficient prayer by the church.

When an evaluation has been completed, the strengths and weaknesses of the minister would have been noted. Steps should then be taken to address the areas of weakness and further compliment strengths. The church should take active steps to provide opportunity and finances to enhance his/her potential to overcome weaknesses. Subsequent evaluations would include an assessment as to whether the improvements deemed necessary are significant (The above steps should also apply to the evaluation of overseers.).

At times, a change of leadership may be necessary because of gifting, leadership styles, congregational needs, etc. However, simply reassigning leadership to another church/region does not necessarily address the need for improvement. If appropriate training/development does not take place, the problems only resurface. Our goal should be to develop and have the best ministers possible.

Short tenures in pastoral/overseer ministry undoubtedly hinder the work. As Dr. Rick Warren notably observes in his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, “A long-term pastorate does not guarantee a church will grow, but changing pastors every few years guarantees a church won’t grow” (Warren 1995:66). Until a few years ago, we averaged pastoral change every two years. As we move towards long-term pastorates/overseer leadership, we want to begin a process to objectively address the causes that have so often resulted in change of leadership and stymied church growth.

There is also a great need for churches to examine their own leadership and power structures to confront internal reasons for lack of church growth and

constant pastoral failures in their particular locale. Frequently, overseers and pastors have lamented the fact that some churches have developed a mentality that functions under their own mindset without regard to the vision and direction a minister feels inspired by God. In such cases, it may not be the pastoral leadership that requires change or adjustment, but the core thinking and power structure of that local church. We encourage during the evaluations that every Evaluation Task Force also examine the attitudes and underlying hindrances within their own congregation that impedes the effectiveness of any minister to properly shepherd their flock.

The following are some suggested courses of action that could be considered where needed for pastors. The same principle could be applied to an overseer or local church although the practical application may differ.

- a. The pastor could consult with the local church Evaluation Task Force and work together with them in addressing the needs for improvement. The Evaluation Task Force members should be qualified to objectively help the pastor where improvements are necessary. They should be willing to pursue any outside resources that could assist the process. Consideration could also be given to a pastor selecting a small group of individuals whom he/she can have confidence in and whom can be trusted. It also stands to reason that those chosen should be stable mature Christians who can objectively assess and address problems and seek out the necessary resources to bring resolution.
- b. If the pastor and local church cannot reach an amicable agreement on which approach will be used, then the overseer should be called in to assist in the educational/mentoring process.
- c. The pastor could further be encouraged to seek out a good educational institution in their region to further assist him/her. Should such an institution not be readily available, there is an abundance of correspondence and online courses available.
- d. Consideration could be given to selecting a group of pastors in an area (e.g., Europe/CIS/Middle East) who are qualified and feel the burden to train ministers and can assist local churches to become vibrant. It is evident that we have people among us called by God for this purpose, and it is also obvious that there is a great need for this type of ministry. This task would best be accomplished by those who have a burden for pastoral training and who are God-called shepherds.

e. Consideration could be given to establishing a Church school/college that would operate on a continual basis to especially train those who desire to enter the ministry. This of course would be open to all ministers; however, it stands to reason that all would not have the time or resources to do this. There may be the need to establish regional schools as an extension of this Church school/college to address the situation.

f. In light of this call for more emphasis on training and equipping of our ministers, there also must be an implementation of an appeal process for them. While the evaluation process may at times reveal and provide training to help alleviate weaknesses in a minister's qualifications or leadership style, there may also be situations that expose him/her to unjust criticism or unfair accusations that jeopardize his/her leadership appointment. Therefore, a process of ministerial appeal must be implemented to provide reasonable safeguards and accountability.

6. Ministerial Appeal Process

Over the last decade, as we moved toward developing stronger and vibrant local churches, it has also been revealed that there must be some kind of "ministerial appeal process" that would give our ministry a sense of protection from false accusations and/or abuse by those in authority over them or by a group of discontent individuals who simply want to control a minister. We need to always give proper love and respect to those called into the ministry. Therefore, we recommend that when there is not public knowledge of moral or ethical failure on the part of a minister serving in the position of pastor or overseer, that prior to his or her removal from their present office, they be given a "right of appeal" to a Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group. This is paramount if he/she believes the removal from their pastoral or administrative office was not justified. The Ministerial Appeal Process is not designed for the normal pastoral or overseer appointment decisions or tenure.

This Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group would be composed of three of their colleagues serving in the same ministerial office (pastors/overseers) and chosen by either their respective General Presbyter or the General Overseer who will review the offense(s) by the minister that is being presented by their local church, their overseer, or their General Presbyter as a basis for removal from office. If the minister is a pastor, his/her colleagues should come from pastors in the state or region. If an overseer, it shall be composed of his colleagues (overseers) within his General Presbyter's area.

The process of the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group shall be as follows: Any minister upon hearing of their impending removal from office shall have the “right of appeal” for a period of ten days after they are notified in writing (required) by their overseer or General Presbyter. This appeal should be sent by the minister in written form (emails are acceptable), both to the General Presbyter and General Overseer’s office, by the minister. At this point, the appropriate General Presbyter (in the case of a pastor) or the General Overseer (in the case of an overseer) shall immediately appoint a Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group of three of the minister’s colleagues. This is not a standing committee, but simply a group for this specific appeal. As godly arbitrators, this counseling group shall presume no prior guilt until they have carefully weighed all the information gleaned from a joint meeting of all parties involved. This group shall then arrange within two weeks to meet with the pastor and church, pastor and overseer, or the overseer and General Presbyter, whichever is appropriate to ascertain what the nature of the offense was and listen to each party’s explanation of their actions (teleconference calls are acceptable by the counseling group). After they have met, if the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group finds no evidence to nullify the action of the overseer or General Presbyter in removing a minister from his office, they will simply send all parties involved a letter (within five days) stating that the minister’s appeal has failed and the action taken against him/her was warranted.

After consultation by the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group, if an action against a pastor was found to be unwarranted, then a letter should be sent (within five days) to his/her General Presbyter advising him that they have found reason to question the validity of the charges against the minister and encourage his/her reinstatement to their pastoral position. A copy of their letter should be sent to the pastor also. The final decision will rest with the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group unless the General Presbyter/General Overseer, along with his counseling group, can produce substantiating evidence otherwise.

If the action against an overseer’s removal is found to be warranted, the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group shall send a letter (within five days) to the General Overseer (and the overseer who made the appeal) that the overseer’s appeal has failed and the action taken against him was justified. If the charges against an overseer are found to be unwarranted, the Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group shall send a letter (within five days) advising the General Overseer that they have found reason to question the validity of the

charges against the overseer and encourage his reinstatement to his overseer position. A copy of their letter should be sent to the General Presbyter also. The final decision will rest with the General Overseer, who will decide whether to support their findings by reinstating the overseer or to overrule their decision only after consultation with the two vice-chairmen of the General Presbytery.

Overturing the action of any overseer or General Presbyter is a serious matter and should be done only where there is no justifiable reason why the removal of a minister from his/her office was absolutely essential. The Ministerial Appeal Counseling Group should be composed of ministers who have displayed maturity and good character. Also, all matters that are given to them concerning the case should be kept extremely confidential, and their failure to do so would constitute their immediate removal from this counseling group.

7. Instruments for Evaluation

We are pleased to present the instruments for evaluation for the overseers, pastors, and church ministries. We trust this will move us toward a consistent process. As the instrument is used, we would welcome any suggestions for its improvement. We would like to commend those states/regions/nations that have already designed an instrument and implemented the evaluation process. We would also like to encourage them to continue to use the instruments, which have been proven to be successful for their state/region/nation. However, we do want to remind all states/regions/nations that the section dealing with ministerial appeal process applies to all areas of the world and all levels of ministerial leadership as defined in the document.

Additional Thoughts

We trust that these recommendations will be a blessing and help as we continue in the harvest. As we stated earlier, we know that these stated guidelines may not always be applicable in every nation where available personnel or logistics may require some modifications to this procedure. We have included with this Report a new instrument for your Evaluation Task Force to consider using in your evaluation process. Surveys are not mandated to be distributed to the members or ministry, but your Evaluation Task Force can adapt or modify the following or use another such as the instrument found in the *2006 Ministry Policy Manual*; “Church Ministries and Pastor’s Evaluation—2006,” pp. 80–84.

We humbly recommend this Report with special appreciation to all our dedicated pastors and overseers who serve so faithfully and diligently.

Overseers and Pastors Leadership Accountability and Growth Process—2008

I. Specific Areas of Focus

A. Personal Life:

- Example as a spiritual leader in lifestyle
- Handling of personal finances (insurance, retirement portfolio, provision for family, financial counselor, continuing education, debt-free living)
- Share examples of Spiritual Disciplines (study, meditation and solitude, prayer, fasting, service, simplicity, stewardship, confession, celebration).
- Give us an overview of your family life (family time, achievements, vacations, future plans).

B. Ministry to the Local Church (Pastoral Role):

- Visitation (Churches)
- Visitation (pastor's home, office, restaurant)
- Keeps any confidence
- Is sensitive to local church needs
- Demonstrates a warm and caring attitude
- Relationship with ministers in the state
- Relationship with local churches/members
- Availability and sensitivity in problem situations

C. Leadership (Administrative) (If I lead, do I follow those who lead me?):

- Supports International/State Missions
- Dealing with divisive ministers and/or churches
- Providing leadership when ministry discipline is needed
- Supports sound biblical doctrine
- Uses good judgment in making decisions
- Demonstrates competent problem-solving skills
- Shows consideration for differing opinions and ideas
- Is flexible enough to change as the situation demands
- Pursues tasks to completion
- Establishes a constructive climate in all meetings

- Ability as an administrator, planning and conducting state meetings
- Promptness in answering letters, telephone calls, and e-mails
- Overall image as a leader
- Good working relationship with district overseers, committees, and staff
- Effective communication (calendars, e-mail, web)

D. Financial Oversight

Monitoring/giving sound oversight to State Budget

E. Vision and Goals for the Future (Growth Process—Fulfilling the Great Commission)

- Cooperates with others to promote church goals in the state
- Efforts for evangelism and church-planting

II. General Areas of Focus

Are there any weaknesses, problems, situations that need to be addressed?

(95th Assembly Minutes, 2008, p. 52).

Church Ministries and Pastor’s Evaluation—2006

This evaluation is your opportunity to participate in assessing the areas of ministry in your local church. This instrument is divided into three sections: CHURCH MINISTRIES, PASTORAL MINISTRIES, AND GENERAL COMMENTS.

The only way this instrument can assist the pastor and the church to meet the needs of those whom we encounter as a body is to carefully and honestly answer each question. Individual responses will remain anonymous. A summary of the information will be shared with the pastor. If this is done at the time of a **Review**, the summary will also be sent to the state, regional, or national overseer. Thank you for your prayer and contribution in this process.

Part One: Local Church Ministries

Please evaluate the following church ministries, with five being the highest rating and one being the lowest.

Facilities/church building	5	4	3	2	1
Fellowship	5	4	3	2	1
The work of spiritual gifts	5	4	3	2	1
Outreach/evangelism	5	4	3	2	1
Teaching/preaching	5	4	3	2	1
Worship/music	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church make visitors feel welcome?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church always show a genuine love for all people—members/non-members, Christian/non-Christian?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church have leadership that works together as a team?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church have effective Youth Ministries?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church have effective Children’s Ministries?	5	4	3	2	1
Is the church committed to church growth?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church have a balance between praise & worship and preaching the Word of God?	5	4	3	2	1
Does the church meet your spiritual needs?	5	4	3	2	1
Is the church sound doctrinally?	5	4	3	2	1
Do the service schedules meet your needs?	5	4	3	2	1

Subjective Input

1. If you rated some areas as weakness, what are some ideas or programs that might strengthen these areas?

2. Are there any other concerns that need to be addressed?

No _____ Yes _____ Please be specific.

3. List several goals you feel should be achieved that would benefit your local church's needs and growth in the next five to ten years.

Part Two: Pastoral Ministries

Please evaluate the effectiveness of your pastor in fulfilling his/her calling and responsibilities (five being the highest, one being the lowest).

Personal Character/Integrity	Highest			Lowest	
How would you view your pastor's personal character?	5	4	3	2	1
How do the people in your church view his/her integrity?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you feel he/she is honest in his commitments to you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you add any observations or comments?	_____				

Administrative Skills	Highest			Lowest	
Does the pastor provide clear and sufficient vision?	5	4	3	2	1
How does he/she handle the national/regional/state finances?	5	4	3	2	1
Is he/she prompt and attentive to administrative details?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Spirituality and Worship

	Highest			Lowest	
Is the pastor a good example of worship?	5	4	3	2	1
Is the pastor a good example of prayer?	5	4	3	2	1
Does his/her preaching/teaching inspire you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Evangelism and Outreach

	Highest			Lowest	
Do you believe he/she promotes evangelism in your region?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you think we have an effective outreach in this church?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Pastoral/Church Oversight

	Highest			Lowest	
Does the pastor take an interest in your local church?	5	4	3	2	1
As a minister, does he/she provide you with pastoral care?	5	4	3	2	1
In a crisis, is he/she supportive of you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Teamwork and Morale

	Highest			Lowest	
Does the pastor ask for your input in planning?	5	4	3	2	1
Does he/she work well as a team player with other leaders?	5	4	3	2	1
Do you feel the pastor is an encouragement to you?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Problem-Solving and Conflict Management Highest Lowest

How do you feel the pastor works through conflicts?	5	4	3	2	1
How does he/she treat others who disagree with him?	5	4	3	2	1
Does he/she accept advice or counsel from other leaders?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

Family Life and Personal Appearance Highest Lowest

Does the pastor spend time nurturing his family?	5	4	3	2	1
How would you view his/her leadership in his family?	5	4	3	2	1
Does his/her appearance in public bring respect to his office?	5	4	3	2	1
Would you like to add any observations or comments?	_____				

General Comments:

Please state in a few words how you feel about our pastor continuing in his/her present position as Senior Pastor of this local church.

Thank you for your responses, and they will be held in strictest confidence. Please mail this survey back to the following address:

C. 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.

Those with an evangelistic ministry are to be acknowledged (set forth) by a local church and licensed through both national/regional/state and International Offices. They would receive a minister's license. Those men in this ministry who prove themselves worthy of being an elder could become ordained as a bishop. 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.

D. Women/Deaconesses

1. Women are to be acknowledged in the preaching ministries of the church. Those who feel a calling on their lives will be set forth by a local church and, after meeting the usual ministerial requirements within a specified time frame, be examined by the national/regional/state and International Offices for issuance of a minister's license. National/regional/state leadership may place temporary restraints relative to their ministerial functions based upon cultural consideration that would hinder the work of the Gospel 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, they could not be ordained as a bishop.

2. Deaconesses. The subject of "deaconesses" was first addressed in this church in the 3rd General Assembly as follows:

"It was decided that women who are qualified and feel the call to the work as given in Romans 16:2 in connection with Acts 6:3, which indicates that she is a female deacon and her work similar to a deacon, should be appointed by the church to minister. We further recommend her as the woman mentioned in Titus 2:3-5, which duty she should exercise as directed by the Spirit. She may also, along with the elder men, take her part of 1 Peter 5:1-4" (3rd Assembly Minutes, 1908, p. 28).

The 4th Assembly readdressed this subject in the following manner:

"It was decided that female ministers had their place in the Lord's vineyard in the days of the apostles and must be recognized in these days, but for lack of precept and example for ordination in the New Testament, the

Assembly advises for the present that the wives of deacons be considered deaconesses by virtue of the position and ordination of their husbands” (4th Assembly Minutes, 1909, p. 33).

Under further examination, we have found no evidence in Scripture of a woman being given a ministerial title based on her husband’s ministry.

Concerning the deacon, the 84th Assembly stated that *“He is to be a male and at least 30 years of age” (84th Assembly Minutes, 1989, p. 35).*

A careful examination of 1 Timothy 3:8–13 identifies three groups of people. In verses 8–10, it refers to male deacons, verse 11 refers to female deacons, and verse 12 mentions the wives of deacons. In verse 11, the phrase “even so must their wives” (KJV), in the Greek simply says “women.” In the context of the passage, verses 8–10 give us the qualifications of the male deacon. However, since the word for deacon in the Greek “diakonos” is the same for masculine and feminine gender, Paul is using the term “women” to refer to the female deaconess. This could not be a reference to the wife of a male deacon for the following reasons:

- a. If Paul deemed it necessary to give the qualifications of a male deacon’s wife, he would have also given the qualifications of a bishop’s wife in the proceeding verses.
- b. Even if Paul chose to give only the qualifications of a deacon’s wife, he would have done it after verse 12 where he specifically makes mention of a deacon’s wife.

In Romans 16:1, mention is made of Phoebe, who is referred to as “diakonos” in the Greek. In the King James, this is rendered as “servant.” Even though the word “diakonos” does carry the meaning of servant, the primary meaning is deacon, which could also mean deaconess. “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchrea” (The New Revised Standard, NLT).

Further research shows that the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia also renders the word “servant” in Romans 16:1 as “deaconess.” Barnes further states in his notes on the New Testament (Romans 16:1) that the phrase, “Which is a servant,” in the Greek is “*Who is a deaconess.*” He also states, “*It is clear from the New Testament that there was an order of women in the church known as deaconesses*” (Barnes Notes on the New Testament, Quick Verse 7, CD-Rom).

Philip Schaff acknowledges that there were deaconesses in the early church and especially in the Eastern churches, it continued until the end of the 12th Century (History of the Christian Church, Quick Verse 7, CD-Rom).

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, after careful and prayerful examination of the age limit currently placed on deacons to be “at least 30 years of age,” we find this has no scriptural support and is inconsistent with our present rulings that allow a licensed minister to be set forth at whatever age the local church and pastor determine is appropriate. Therefore, we recommend that the age of deacons and deaconesses be left to the discretion of the local church and pastor with consultation with their national/regional/state overseer. These candidates should be mature individuals who have proven themselves faithful. The Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity for the Church of God of Prophecy humbly submit this document with deep prayer for your review and consideration for the 94th General Assembly.

E. Procedures for Licensure

The following describes the process needed to license a person as a minister:

1. After the candidate for licensure has completed a minimum of one year of apprenticeship and has demonstrated competence as a minister, the pastor may recommend, with the overseer’s approval, 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’s Endorsement*. The clerk will forward it to the overseer for his action.
3. When the overseer has received and approved the *Church and Pastor’s Endorsement* form, he will ensure the candidate is enrolled in or has completed the *Foundations Course* which has been prepared by the Center for Biblical Leadership.

To complete the *Foundations Course*, the following steps are necessary:

- a. The ministerial candidate should purchase the four courses and the *Ministry Policy Manual* that constitute the *Foundations Course*. Each of the courses contains examinations at the end that are to be completed by the ministerial candidate. The *Foundations Course* may be taken by the candidate in either a group study or as an individual study (see the accompanying description of the *Foundations Course*).

1. The Bible—Sp., Fr.; Introduction to the Bible—Eng.
2. Spiritual Formation
3. History of Christianity
4. Church of God of Prophecy—*Concise History, Polity, Doctrine and Future*
5. *Ministry Policy Manual*
 - a. The candidate who takes the *Foundations Course* as a part of a group study should have the instructor forward the grades to their overseer.
 - b. Once the examinations are completed, they should be sent to the ministerial applicant's overseer for grading. After grading, the grade sheet should be sent to the appropriate General Presbyter's Office, who will issue the numbered *Foundations Course* certificate that is needed for the *Application for Ministerial License*.
 - c. After completing the *Foundations Course* and receiving the numbered certificate of completion, the candidate should complete the *Application for Ministerial License* and submit it to the national/regional/state overseer.
 - d. When the applicant has completed the application, the overseer will arrange for the candidate to appear before a review board of three or five able ministers, including the overseer, who will examine the candidate regarding his/her knowledge of the Scriptures, doctrine, church history, polity, personal and family devotional life, family life, personal business, financial situation, and personal standing with those outside the church.
 - e. The Review Board may desire a meeting prior to the official meeting to become acquainted with the applicant. The official meeting with the Review Board should open with prayer; after which, the moderating overseer will read an appropriate scripture and speak regarding the purpose of the meeting, the profound significance of the sacred calling to the ministry, and why adequate preparation is important. Following this, general questions may be asked by members of the Review Board in the areas named above. The applicant will be counseled as the situation requires and as the Spirit of the Lord directs.
 - f. When the Review Board 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 Review Board decide that the candidate is not ready to be licensed, it will make such recommendation, or the candidate may be given more time to prepare.

g. When more time is needed, a date will be set, with the candidate's consent, for a second meeting with the Review Board. If he/she is not approved after the third appearance before the Board, the Presbytery may conclude that he/she not be reconsidered for at least one full year, at which time the candidate would be required to start from the beginning.

h. The authority of licensure is limited to the presbytery, composed of the General Overseer/Presbyter and National/Regional/State Overseers. Review Boards serve in advisory roles. Upon approval by the Review Board, a recommendation letter will be written by the overseer to be placed in the candidate's file in the national/regional/state office, who will also forward a copy along with the Church and Pastor's Endorsement and the completed application to the General Overseer/Presbyter. Upon receipt of the recommendation letter and other specified forms, the General Overseer/Presbyter will, after his approval, issue a license or ordination certificate and mail it to the overseer for his signature.

i. The newly licensed minister should be encouraged to continue preparing for ministry with CBL's Certificate programs and/or a college of his/her choice.

F. Ministers Coming Into the Church From Other Organizations

When ministers 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 General Overseer/General Presbyter, some of the standard provisions for examining candidates may be waived.

G. Authorization

Licensed ministers are authorized to preach and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ, establish churches, baptize, administer the Lord's Supper, and the washing of the saints' feet. Those who pastor have the authority to conduct local business conferences and solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages. Ministers who are not currently pastoring a church may receive permission from their overseer to solemnize the rites of matrimony in legal marriages that are biblically valid according to the church's understanding. When the General Overseer's Office receives approval from the overseer's office, a special permit will be issued and mailed directly to the minister.

H. Ordination of [Licensed] Ministers

Editor's Note: Refer to Assembly Committee on Biblical Doctrine and Polity Report, 92nd Assembly, 2002.

Our ministers are often faced with the question (either in written or oral form), “Are you an ordained minister?” or “Have you been ordained?” For our ministers who are not bishops or deacons, their answer usually is, “No.” Henceforth, we have to recognize that in many circles of the Christian community this raises questions about their ministerial credentials. For many such civil or religious authorities, if ministers are not “ordained,” they have no authority in pastoral or other areas of ministry. Since a simple definition of ordination is “appointment or admission to the Christian ministry,” in a very real sense, all of our licensed ministers are ordained, especially when we consider that ordination is also understood as the “laying on of hands” with prayer. Thus, 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, we recommend that when persons receive their ministerial license this be accompanied by the “laying on of hands” with prayer. We also recommend that the ordaining of brethren as bishops or deacons remain 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 General Assembly. However, in matters relating to his/her ministry, the minister is under the supervision of the 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 ordained under the church's new procedures. Complaints may be lodged with the State/National/Regional Overseer's office, but any revocation of ministers' licenses must be initiated by the Overseer in the usual manner.

Overseer's Jurisdiction: Because of the licensing procedures of the Presbytery, the general practice has been that jurisdiction over a minister (minister's license) follows his current place of residence—where he actually lives—and not necessarily where his membership is registered unless, of course, these locations are one and the same. The Overseer of Jurisdiction is therefore the Overseer of the State/Nation/Region where the minister resides.

I. Change of Status

Regarding “Change of Status” (that is, from one type of license to another), this is no longer automatically done. Candidates applying to change their ministerial status must be set forth in the usual manner at the direction of the Overseer through the local church except that qualifying study requirements, already met, would not have to be repeated.

V. 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.

The study presented at the 89th General Assembly, 1996, affirmed the understandings of elders as passed in two previous Assemblies. In the 18th General Assembly, 1923, it was stated, “We recommend that the General Overseer’s recommendation, as to making all bishops and deacons elders, be accepted by the Assembly . . .” (*18th Assembly Minutes*, 1923, p. 24). The 78th Assembly of 1983 concluded: “We recommend that the minimum age for a bishop hereafter be set at age 30” (*78th Assembly Minutes*, 1983, p. 137).

A. Deacons/Deaconesses (as applicable)

Both biblical and historical records concerning the activities of deacons confirm they served alongside and in harmony with the bishop 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 . . .

1. complement the office of the bishop or pastor (Acts 6:1–7);
2. serve more in the temporal needs of God’s work, such as coordinating relief to the poor and needy (Acts 6:1–5);
3. conduct church business affairs and conferences when officially authorized by the pastor or overseer;

4. teach and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and
5. baptize, and administer the Lord's supper and the washing of the saints' feet.

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 overseer of their respective area for approval and licensure. Because their service and ministry is based more within a local area, there is no need for them to be licensed through the International Office.

Deacons/deaconesses are ordained at the local church or national/regional/state convention by the overseer, pastor (if a bishop), 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 overseer. Should discipline become necessary, the local church would work in conjunction with the national/regional/state office to address the situation. When moving to a new location, the eldership status of a deacon would continue but would need reaffirmation from the new congregation after an appropriate time. The deacon/deaconess should never attempt to transact business matters, etc. over the desire of the pastor or the local church, nor usurp the authority of the pastor or local church (*66th Assembly Minutes*, 1971, p. 44).

B. 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 overseer, district overseer, 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 oversight 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 Christ-like manner;
3. declaring the counsel of God;
4. protecting the flock against grievous wolves;
5. watching in spiritual matters; and
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.

New 2006: 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. (See BDP Report, *94th Assembly Minutes*, p. 152.)

Because of local and translocal functions, bishops are to be acknowledged (set forth) by a local church and licensed through both 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

The General Assembly instructed that 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 overseer (*55th Assembly Minutes*, 1960, p. 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 General Assembly. The bishop who is pastoring has the authority to conduct all local church business conferences.

3. Procedure for Ordination

The process to obtain the minister's license is also used for licensure of the bishop except that the overseer 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 the Assembly and those the Assembly invests with such authority. The overseers act as a Presbytery in cooperation with the General Overseer/Presbyters. It is also advised that the Presbytery fast before the laying on of hands in ordination (Acts 13:3; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; [*7th Assembly Minutes*, 1912, p. 63]; [*8th Assembly Minutes*, 1913, p. 120]).

When a bishop is to be ordained, it is required that either the General Overseer/Presbyter, or a bishop whom he authorizes to represent him, be present and participate in 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 General 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 an ordained bishop.

After ordination, the Presbytery shall continue to show constant and personal concern for the growth and enhancement of the minister and his work.

4. Ordination

Bishops are ordained by the laying on of hands by member(s) of the International Presbytery at the first opportunity following the issuance of the bishop's license.

Note: Ordination is usually done in the General Assembly. However, it is not always possible for the newly licensed bishop to attend the Assembly. The General Overseer/General Presbyters may authorize another (possibly an International Office Representative) to represent him as a member of the Presbytery and join the overseer in the act of ordination in a national/regional/state convention or other special services.

VI. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

A. Guidelines for Ministerial Expense

(Developed by the Executive Committee and approved by the 79th Assembly.)

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 and manner 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. Everybody has living expenses, consisting of food, clothing, shelter, etc. However, there are certain professional people, 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 his/her tithes; all these shall be paid out of the remaining nine-tenths (*13th Assembly Minutes*, 1917, pp. 294, 295; see also *Business Guide*, Section VII Minister's Support, Pastor's Expense, p. 111).

Since some ministers are provided 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 his/her 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 persons, automobile expense is not a problem when computing their income that is to be tithed.

Other ministers, especially in the USA, may prefer to keep a strict record of miles traveled in the ministry and take 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 traveled in the ministry for calculating their expense.

Regrettably, many ministers still must resort to secular jobs to supplement their income, and they use their automobiles in going to and from their jobs. Of course, this is not expense in the ministry, as neither would be other personal uses of these vehicles, such as shopping, visiting relatives, etc.

Consideration may also be given to ministerial long distance telephone calls. 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 General 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. In regard to calculating tithe, it seems that one who is capable of counseling others in separating professional from living expenses is also able to properly make such judgments in regard to his/her 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 by the Assembly. Every minister, in being examined for the ministry, stated that he/she 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 his/her ministry is terminated (*81st Assembly Minutes*, 1986, p. 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 overseer should be called to it. The individual should be admonished and cited by the overseer to the findings and rulings of the General 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, p. 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 Office and issued by the national/regional/state overseers as the need arises (*75th Assembly Minutes*, 1980, p. 165).

E. Secular Work

Overseers should discourage ministers from working at manual labor where the tithes are sufficient for their support (*48th Assembly Minutes*, 1953, p. 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, p. 134).

G. State-to-State/Nation-to-Nation/Region-to-Region Ministering

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 an overseer 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 particular 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 an overseer's objections are unjust, the matter may be brought to the General Overseer 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, p. 51).

H. Performing Marriages

The minister should thoroughly acquaint himself with the Church's teaching regarding Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (The Biblical Institution of Marriage and the Recommendations therewith) as presented, amended, and passed by the 94th International Assembly 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, pp. 152–177; See *Ministry Policy Manual*, 2008, Appendix 3).

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 of the couple 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 overseer.

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, p. 13). However, those who are new as pastors, or not capable of providing marriage counseling, should seek the permission of their overseer before performing marriages. A special permit to perform marriages may be granted by the General Overseer's Office upon the request of the national/regional/state overseer to licensed ministers who are not pastoring. All special permits are subject to the approval of the General Presbyter and may be recalled at any time by either the General Presbyter or the General Overseer. 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 performed.

VII. REPORTING SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY

Effective October 1, 1996, licensed ministers and pastors are to send the tithes of income from the ministry with their monthly reports to the national/regional/state office.

A. Bishops

1. Report monthly to the national/regional/state office.
2. Report quarterly to the International Offices.

Note: Report forms are in the back of current *Assembly Minutes* and on the *Policy Manual* CD.

B. Licensed Ministers

1. Report monthly to the national/regional/state office.
2. Report quarterly to the International Offices.

Note: Report forms are in the back of current *Assembly Minutes* and on the *Policy Manual* CD.

C. Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference and annually to the national/regional/state office.

Note: Report books may be obtained from the national/regional/state office; deacons do NOT report to the International Offices.

D. Trial Deacons/Deaconesses

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference in duplicate.

2. Duplicate report to be forwarded to the national/regional/state overseer by the church clerk.

Note: Report books may be obtained from the national/regional/state office; trial deacons do NOT report to the International Offices.

E. Lay Ministers

1. Report quarterly to the Local Church Conference in duplicate or, if pastors, monthly to national/regional/state office.

2. Duplicate report to be forwarded to the national/regional/state overseer by the church clerk.

Note: Lay ministers tithe to the local church unless they are an appointed pastor in which case they should tithe to the national/regional/state office as other pastors do. Lay ministers licenses should be renewed at the first of each calendar year at the national/regional/state office. Report forms are in the back of the *Assembly Minutes*.

F. Retired Ministers

1. Report monthly and pay tithes from the ministry to the national/regional/state office.

2. Report annually to the national/regional/state office if no tithes from ministry.

3. Report annually to the International Offices. (Those desiring to continue reporting monthly to the state office may do so.)

Note: Report forms are in the back of the current *Assembly Minutes* and on the *Policy Manual CD*.

G. Unable Ministers

Not required to report to state or International Offices. Should inform offices of a change of address.

Note: Those who receive a monthly allotment from Ministerial Services will continue to pay their tithes to the national/regional/state office.

VIII. 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 a 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 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 overseer since a local church is not authorized to discipline a licensed or ordained minister. In the event the offender is an overseer, the matter may be brought before the General Overseer/General Presbyter and pursued according to the general principles outlined below.

In most cases of private offenses, the overseer 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, p. 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 overseer sufficient evidence of wrong doing. 1 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 overseer. The accused should be present, if possible, to hear the charges as they are formally presented to the overseer. If the accused confesses, the overseer 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 thirty days from the time the charges are formally presented before the Ministerial Review Board.
6. Before the hearing begins, the General Overseer/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 overseer 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 board. 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 his/her ministry shall be dealt with as the Presbytery deems appropriate.

8. When the hearing is about to begin, the overseer/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, or a panel member who is absent without permission of the moderator or satisfactory reasons 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 Ministerial Review Board 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 Ministerial Review Board and make a determination of the minister's status. As early as possible thereafter, the overseer will give the decision of the Presbytery to the accused.

14. When a minister is found by the overseer or Ministerial Review Board to be innocent of any charges that have been made, the overseer should ensure that those who may have been aware of the charges are informed that the minister in question has been exonerated.

D. Termination of Ministerial Credentials

When a minister is found guilty of an offense which is considered by the Presbytery to be serious enough to require the termination of ministry—for instance, an offense of a base and shameful nature—the Presbytery may without delay revoke the ministry in question.

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. Decease

When the death of a minister is verified, his/her name will be removed from the roll of active ministers.

3. Change of Status

When the wife of a bishop falls into sin and there is no charge against the minister himself, the Presbytery shall not change the status of his ministry to that of a licensed minister unless circumstances so warrant. If so, 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. There is to be no change of status in the case of a bishop who is widowed (*82nd Assembly Minutes*, 1987, p. 57).

4. 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, his/her ministry shall be revoked. It is understood that prior to this action, the minister shall be duly informed of the decision.

5. Lapse

Any minister who has not reported to the national/regional/state or International 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 his/her ministry has lapsed.

6. 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 of ministry does not affect the minister's ministerial benefits, insurance, or pension. The extent to which he/she can minister shall be determined by the overseer.

E. 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 his/her 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 or ordination has been terminated due to falling into sin, the person may not be relicensed until after an extended time of help and counseling directed toward complete rehabilitation and until the confidence of the church is fully restored as in his/her readiness to be a minister in the Church of God of Prophecy.

In the case of a Bishop who resigned or was revoked because of moral (sexual) failure, he cannot be restored to the office of Bishop, but under a supervised restoration process by the Presbytery, may be re-licensed as a minister as said Presbytery may deem appropriate. (See Biblical Doctrine and Polity Report of the *94th Assembly Minutes*, p. 152.)

The primary help and counsel should come through the pastor and local church. However, where possible, it is highly recommended that the overseer 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 overseer. 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 his/her 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, overseer, 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 his/her 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.

At some point, 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 overseer feel the person is ready (See the exception regarding bishops, paragraph 2, p. 105).

IX. REVISED PROCESS AND PROCEDURE FOR SELECTION OF GENERAL OVERSEER AND GENERAL PRESBYTERS

A. SELECTION OF GENERAL OVERSEER

Process and Recognition of the Vacancy of the General Overseer's Office

The process of selection shall be done in the following steps:

1. The General Overseer will serve the Church as long as the Lord's hand is upon him. At least every six years (formerly set at seven) the General Presbytery and the International Presbytery will discern the manifestation of God's presence upon the individual. If they recognize a continued confirmation on the current General Overseer, they will reaffirm such. However, if they discern God's hand is lifted from the individual for this capacity, the General Assembly will be asked to evaluate their assessment and determine if the Lord desires to release the man. The office of the

General Overseer may become vacant in at least four ways: 1) personal/health reasons, 2) church body recognition, 3) death, 4) moral improprieties.

In the case where a General Overseer desires to no longer serve because of personal/health reasons, he will share his intent with the General Presbytery and maintain his position where possible so that arrangements can be made for a selection of a new General Overseer at the upcoming General Assembly.

With the above conditions, the individual may recognize the burden of the Lord for that particular work has ceased. If this occurs, he will share his conviction with the General Presbytery and maintain his position, so that arrangements can be made for selection of a new General Overseer at the upcoming Assembly. If the General Assembly agrees with the General Presbytery that the hand of God is lifted from the current General Overseer for that work, the office can then be filled in that Assembly through the approved process.

In the event of the General Overseer's death or incapacitation that leads to his inability to carry out his duties, the function of that office will continue to be handled by the plurality of leadership already in place. Arrangements should be made in conjunction with the General Presbytery and International Presbytery for the General Assembly to convene in a reasonable length of time to select a new General Overseer.

In the unfortunate event of moral failure by the General Overseer, the General Presbytery should be called together by the plurality of leadership to determine the worthiness of the individual to continue in the office (this would be contingent upon the advisement of legal counsel to define). If the General Presbytery deems it necessary to remove the General Overseer from his office, the plurality of leadership in conjunction with the General Presbytery will call for the General Assembly to convene in a reasonable length of time to select a new General Overseer.

2. Qualifying Criteria: Those who submit nominees for the selection of General Overseer must follow these guidelines. As a general rule, ministry activities include praying, evangelizing, equipping, defending, loving, laboring, modeling, leading, feeding, watching, warning, teaching, exhorting, encouraging, correcting, confronting, and rescuing (1 Thessalonians 1–5 with 2 Thessalonians 1–3 and other relevant scriptural passages). First Peter 5:1–3 gives us the qualities of humility and of shepherding. Paul instructed Timothy in five broad categories: 1) be faithful in his 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, and 5) be willing to suffer hardship and persecution in his service for the Lord. Acts 6:3–7 and

1 Timothy 3:1–7 provide us with qualities like “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,” “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 ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice, lest he be lifted up in pride, he must have a good report of them that are without.” The Book of Exodus says, “. . . able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness” (18:21). From these passages, we see integrity, faith, even-temperedness, soundness of judgment, teachable, peacemaking qualities, purity, cooperativeness, sensitivity to God’s Spirit, submissiveness, humility, leadership, good governance, unshakable commitment, Christ-centeredness, etc. Galatians 5:22 adds the personal compliment of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

3. International Presbyters who oversee ministers are to consult with the ministry under their jurisdiction, and submit to their General Presbyter two names. It is understood that no member of the International Presbytery shall cause his own name to be submitted.

4. Each General Presbyter would then convene a meeting of the Overseers in his area (or otherwise consult with them in an effective manner) and narrow the suggested names to two before formal submission to the Qualifying Group. All submissions are to be held in strictest confidence both during and after the process. It is to be clearly understood that the General Assembly alone makes the decision as to who is confirmed as General Overseer, and the steps outlined are for the purpose of helping the International Presbytery carry out its Assembly mandate to offer someone for consideration.

Therefore, confidentiality is vital, and much wisdom is needed in order to protect and show due respects to all whose names are in the process. The General Presbytery shall determine the time frame for all suggestions of nominations to be submitted and acted on, with a final recommendation by the International Presbytery not more than 120 days after the declared vacancy. Formal consent to have suggested names entered in the pre-nomination process must be promptly and confidentially obtained by the Qualifying Group from individuals suggested, so that the necessary background work can be done in advance. Such consent by an individual will be his agreement to the criminal (where applicable) and ministerial background review and also an indication of his willingness to serve. No attempt should be made to check his records before his consent is received.

Any nominee may remove his name from consideration by notifying the Qualifying Group in writing.

5. The Qualifying Group for the selection of General Overseer shall be composed of the General Overseer (unless his position is already vacated because of moral failure, incapacitation, or death), two designates selected by the International Presbyters, the International Offices Ministries Directors, and the General Presbyter when a nominee comes from his area. The Qualifying Group performs background and stewardship check and reports their findings to the General Presbyters. *Note: No one shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of General Overseer or General Presbyter. The chairman of this qualifying group shall be selected from among the seven designates.*

6. 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 are to be submitted. 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. After the final list of names has been qualified, the International Presbytery shall be notified of their names so the Church can begin praying for the nominees.

7. General Presbytery convenes a formal meeting of the International Presbytery with one of the Vice Chairman as Moderator (the present General Overseer cannot serve as Moderator). The first order of business shall be a time of prayer (to have been preceded by fasting as individuals) for God's guidance and direction. All should approach this process with humility and a keen awareness of our need for God's intervention.

8. The General Presbytery shall state the purpose of the meeting and the Qualifying Group shall present all nominees by calling them forward and reading their biographies. The biographical data shall be distributed to all Presbyters. In addition, the name of each nominee shall be placed on a separate sheet of paper with sufficient copies for all Presbyters, and rendered without order of preference of any kind, and free of markings, notations or other comments. Any whose name appears on the list may not participate in the presentation.

9. The General Presbytery shall call for the selection of a moderator and three (3) counselors with whom the moderator may consult 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 these offices. The General Presbytery 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. Afterwards, the Moderator will take over the Chair of the meeting, and the function of the General Presbytery shall cease. The moderator (which shall not be the present General Overseer) shall call immediately for a time of concert prayer, after which there shall be at least 30 minutes in session for private reflection, meditation, and personal prayer. During this time, there shall be no person-to-person, group discussions, or comparisons whatsoever.

10. When the time mentioned above has expired, the Moderator shall call the session to order to begin the process of selection. The actions of the General Presbytery to present the persons and to distribute their separate biographic summaries, constitutes the official nomination of those persons. The selection process will consist of a series of confidential expressions (ballots) with the requirement that, to remain in the process, an individual must obtain at least **one-third** of the expressions made each time. International Presbytery members would choose two names, until the number has been reduced to three or less. If any nominee does not receive ten percent of the expressions on the first ballot, their name would be removed from further consideration. The numbers cast shall be revealed, and an opportunity to reach the required one-third would be sought for again. The Moderator shall then call for a time of prayer. If three remain, the required number of expressions will be raised to **half** in order to automatically remain in the process. If no one receives the required half, the two receiving above one-third will remain under consideration. If one receives the required half, and both of the others fall below one-third, a separate expression shall be held with the requirement that the one to continue in the process receive at least **half** the expressions made. When only two persons remain in consideration, the moderator will again call for prayer and for the Presbytery to strive for a one-accord agreement with the next expression. At that point, each presbyter should select only one name. When the expressions indicate that at least **two-thirds** are in favor of one of the two, the Moderator shall consult with the counselors to see whether an opportunity should be given for the Presbyters to come into one-accord agreement. Failing such agreement, the Moderator would propose a time of reflection and prayer. During this time, it is imperative that we be especially sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He is sovereign! We must discern and be open to the possibility that He may lead in a completely different way. He knows best!

If a one-accord decision is not ultimately reached and it has been discerned that the Holy Spirit has not made a selection, the International Presbytery shall remain in session and resort to a time of further fasting and prayer until a decision can be reached that is pleasing to the Lord. If an impasse occurs, the International Presbytery will report the matter to the Assembly and ask for prayer and consideration. If the Assembly agrees, it shall set the time for reconsideration of the issue. The General Presbytery shall arrange to carry on the work until the time of reconsideration set by the Assembly.

11. Once a General Overseer is selected for recommendation to the Assembly, and presented to the International Presbytery in session, said Presbytery, shall carry its recommendation to the General Assembly in an orderly and dignified manner befitting the occasion.

B. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENERAL OVERSEER

The Assembly recognized and passed that the General Overseer “. . . 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.” With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we can never fully define duties and responsibilities. However, we believe that certain outlines can help facilitate orderliness in our work without infringing the Holy Spirit’s divine prerogative to lead us where He will. With this in mind, as well as the biblical practice of “shared leadership” (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 153), we propose the following:

It shall be the duty of the General Overseer, assisted by the other General Presbyters, to provide inspirational leadership to the Church by or through:

1. Overall, comprehensive, world outreach planning and strategies consistent with the Church’s renewed emphasis on the proper role of the local church and the practical roles of Area, Regional, and International Offices.
2. Encouragement of leadership development both with existing church leaders and by discovering and engaging leaders that God is now raising up (the biblical principle of servanthood and spiritual giftedness to be kept in mind here).
3. Effectively representing the Church of God of Prophecy among others in the kingdom of God by fostering good relations and promoting biblical unity.

4. Nurturing the ministry by taking oversight, counseling, and establishing with the International Presbytery, procedures and requirements for ministerial licensure, ordination, discipline, and restoration.
5. Arranging and convening special meetings or events such as General Assemblies, Presbytery Meetings, other leadership gatherings, and global promotions.
6. Recognizing, appointing, and commissioning International Offices leadership personnel or making effective arrangements therefore.
7. Developing plans for organizational infrastructure to meet changing administrative and relational needs of the Church with an eye to unity, fellowship, and effectiveness.
8. To take oversight of all budgetary finances to see that they are properly distributed within the framework of the Church's accounting procedures and to see that proper audits are done by independent accounting organizations and reported to the General Assemblies.
9. Initiate, interface, and participate in the selection and evaluation of the General Presbyters.

C. SELECTION OF GENERAL PRESBYTERS

Process and Recognition of the Vacancy of the General Presbyter's Office

1. The General Overseer shall initiate the process of selection of General Presbyters when necessary: 1) personal/health reasons, 2) church body recognition, 3) moral improprieties, 4) death. The procedure will begin with a meeting of the overseers of their particular area moderated by the General Overseer or his designate. Such meetings would be preceded by proper notification to the overseers 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 General Overseer will be observed with modifications, where necessary, to conform to area needs.
 - a. Call to prayer by the General Overseer 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 the particular area. Once candidates are nominated, each overseer along with his plurality group shall reduce the list of names to two that will be recommended from their area to the General Overseer or his designate.

- c. It would seem biblically sound and wise in light of the General Overseer's global knowledge and working relationship with all presbyters, that he also has the authority in consultation with the General Presbyters to submit one name to the final list of three (as noted in the next step).
 - d. The General Overseer or his designate would convene a meeting of the overseers in that area (or otherwise consult with them in an effective manner) and narrow the names to three before submitting them to the Qualifying Group.
 - e. The Qualifying Group performs background and stewardship check and reports their findings to the General Overseer. Note: The General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters must approve all nominees being presented to the International Presbytery.
 - f. The Qualifying Group presents the three names that have been qualified to the International Presbytery (more than one nominee shall be submitted to the International Presbyters). If only one nominee or possibly none are available, then this should be deferred to the General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters to help come up with three nominees.
 - g. The International Presbyters make the selection of the new General Presbyters based upon the "one-accord" principle (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 153). It would be expected that the new General Presbyter would be willing to relocate to wherever is necessary in order to best perform his duties.
2. The General Overseer, the Global Outreach Ministry Director, two designates 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 General Overseer when reviewing potential nominees and when presenting them to the International Presbytery for consideration.
 3. Where vacancies occur, the General Overseer with the respective plurality group from that area will decide how that work is to be carried on until a new selection is made.
 4. The Assembly has provided that the qualifications of General Presbyters are essentially the same as the General Overseer.
 5. Once the General Overseer calls for a session of the International Presbytery to select a General Presbyter, a secretary and three counselors should be chosen by the International Presbytery to serve for the selection process.

6. Persons chosen as General Presbyters would be announced and presented to the General 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.
7. All General Presbyters are selected by the International Presbytery and shall be evaluated every four years by the overseers 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 General Overseer feels a strong sense of a need for a change in a General Presbyter, he should first speak to the individual personally asking for him to consider rotating out; if they agree then the process of replacement would begin. If not, the General Overseer 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 General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters then may present this conviction to the International Presbyters for their consideration. It is imperative that we maintain anointed dynamic leadership at all levels.

Presbyterial Review Board

The Review Board shall meet prior to each Assembly to evaluate, when appropriate, the General Overseer or General Presbyters in accordance to the term of their selection. The General Overseer will initiate the evaluation of the General Presbyters by instructing the Review Board to begin their process of sending materials to the respective areas. In the case of the General Presbyters, this shall follow the evaluation by their overseers. The evaluation by the overseers in various areas of the world of their respective General Presbyter shall be implemented by this Review Board, who will prepare, distribute, receive, and retain the completed forms and report their findings to the International Presbyters. The Review Board shall be composed of six members who will serve for four years and be chosen by the following process:

- The General Overseer shall choose two members who are not directly under his appointment.
- Two members shall be chosen by the General Presbyters who are not members of the General Presbytery.
- Two members shall be chosen by the International Presbyters from among the constituency of the International Presbytery.

All members of this Review Board shall be bishops in good standing and be willing to accept this responsibility. Their selection should be done by the International Presbytery at the Pre-Assembly Meeting, and they shall begin the term of their office following that respective Assembly. This Review Board shall not be reimbursed for this particular function except for their expenses directly related to perform such duties.

The General Evaluation of the person serving as General Overseer is to be initiated by the other members of the General Presbytery in his sixth year, and their four-year evaluation initiated by him, but these are to be performed by the Review Board. The forms for evaluation shall be sent by the Review Board (a) in the case of the General Overseer, to the General Presbyters and the International Ministry Directors, and (b) in the case of the General Presbyters, to the General Overseer and the overseers in his specific area. These evaluations are to be done and completed at least three months before the end of the General Presbyters tenure (four years) and at least six months before the end of the General Overseer's tenure (six years). Those being evaluated are to be duly notified in a most appropriate and respectful manner and may include words of commendation, kind admonition, and advice. Such words should be received in the spirit of New Testament brotherliness and accountability. Those being evaluated may subsequently request an interview with the Review Board for purposes of sharing and clarification, that all may learn from one another in a spirit of humility, and mutually benefit from this process.

Since the General Assembly has provided for an evaluation of the person serving as General Overseer "at least every six years," we believe this process will help facilitate that requirement as well as apply its principles to other areas of ministry. Our Assemblies currently convene every two years so the most appropriate time for The General Evaluation of the General Overseer by the International Presbytery, would be just prior to the third Assembly, and every third Assembly thereafter. This would be adjusted only if there was a change of Assembly frequency or another pressing reason (such as a resignation by the General Overseer).

Definition of Process:

A review by nature includes evaluation on how an individual is meeting the prescribed goals, performing in administrative duties, attaining spiritual and professional development, demonstrating accountability to the constituency, providing inspirational leadership, and handling interpersonal relationships. This evaluation is shared in a spirit of helping the Presbyter by commending and affirming his strengths and revealing weaknesses that could hinder

his effectiveness. This should be offered as wise counsel to encourage him in improving his service to God and others. The evaluation and subsequent meeting with the Review Board should be bathed in much prayer and camaraderie to foster a spirit of loving counsel and support. This evaluation shall be the responsibility first of the Review Board who will handle the implementation of this process in specific areas where General Presbyters serve in that capacity. They will also meet with General Presbyters at a prescribed place and time agreed upon in advance to perform the evaluation. The findings and determinations of the Review Board should be shared with “the Presbyter being evaluated” to clarify issues and seek prayerful understanding before presenting their recommendation to the International Presbytery for their decision. Subsequently, the General Overseer and the entire International Presbytery shall have final authority to retain/replace General Presbyters. Since retaining or replacing the General Overseer or General Presbyters requires the approval of the International Presbytery, the “Ministerial Appeal Process” does not apply to their positions.

Qualifying Group

When the need arises for a new General Presbyter, the Qualifying Group shall perform their function in the same manner as they do for selection of the General Overseer (see p. 109, section A5). Their research and the information gleaned should be held in strict confidence and the qualified names submitted to the International Presbyters. The purpose of the Qualifying Group is to qualify nominees and present individuals to the International Presbyters who will make the final selection. The Qualifying Group is not a standing committee, but meets only for background and surveying of records for the selection process. When the need for activation of this group periodically arises, it shall be composed of the General Overseer, the International Ministry Directors, two designates selected every four years by the International Presbyters and the specific area General Presbyter who has nominees (unless the General Presbyters has disqualified himself by choice or actions that have removed him). No individual shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of General Presbyter.

In light of the ongoing development and maturing process of plurality and “shared leadership” among us, especially within the global leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy, adjustments within the structure and work of the review of Presbyters is essential. It seems imperative that the Qualifying Group should be separated from the Review Board to maintain integrity and harmony within the various ministry areas of our church.

D. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENERAL PRESBYTERS

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Global Leadership—To work with the General Overseer in providing shared leadership to the world-wide church in accomplishing its Christ-ordained mission (*88th Assembly Minutes*, 1994, p. 155).
2. Oversight—Oversee the work of the church in their area. This will, of course, be done in conjunction with the General Overseer, 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 overseers and overall ministry effectiveness in their area as a whole.
6. Discipline—Provide means for discipline of overseers or other ministers where there is no Presbyterian 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 General Overseer 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 overseers in their connection with Harvest-Partner churches.

16. Legal—Confirm and help safe-guard 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 overseers 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, and Spiritual Warfare, Evangelism/Missions, Youth, Children, and Family Ministry.
5. Pastoral—Provide pastoral leadership and ministry to the overseers 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 the Global Outreach Ministry 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 General Presbyters as the plurality of leadership to review, discuss, and give input on the global status of the Church.

2. Assembly—Work as General Presbyter in providing leadership to the General 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 Presbyter’s 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 General Overseer for consultation, decision, or dissemination. While they should be available for consultation to the General Overseer, at no time should the General Presbyters usurp the authority in a specific area assigned to the General Overseer, 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 out this through mutual respect and prayer. If the issue cannot be resolved, the General Overseer 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 General Overseer and the General Presbyters to their honored positions (*The Governance of the Presbytery*, 2008, pp. 6–16).

X. CHANGES TO THE PRESENT FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Changes to the Present Financial System as currently listed in the *Minutes of the 95th International General Assembly* (pp. 72–77).

Preamble:

Since our last Assembly, we have experienced unprecedented times (i.e., except for the Great Depression) through the course of events that occurred in the fall of

2008, resulting in a worldwide economic decline. Our Church members have not gone untouched by these developments. Indeed, several are enduring financial setbacks because of unemployment, the reduction of their working hours, the closing of businesses, etc. Nevertheless, many are discovering that these are the times to rededicate ourselves to the exercise of responsible stewardship, which includes tithing and giving. Notwithstanding a slight decline (i.e., just under four percent) in the total tithes received annually at the International Offices, there have been some record-breaking months during this period (i.e., April 2009 is one of the top five months on record for most tithes paid). Quoting our Stewardship Ministries Director, “Faithful stewards do not give less in tough economic times; they give more. Numerous pastors have shared with me that their churches are experiencing record tithing and giving. . . . The International Offices are currently receiving record amounts of tithes from the local churches. This blessing rises from pure hearts and clean hands of faithful stewards, who have learned that tithing and giving is the only confident way to journey through recessions, bailouts, and daily reports of financial ruin occurring all around us” (Jan Couch, “Tithing and Giving Brings Peace,” *White Wing Messenger*, Vol. 87, No. 12, July 2009, pp. 4, 5). The Finance and Stewardship Committee expresses our gratitude to all of our 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). Too, 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).

Overseer and Pastoral Compensation

Rationale: When an increase in an allotment is considered for an overseer or pastor, it is currently to be 1) studied and approved via a task force of ministers (i.e., chosen by tithe-paying ministers at the convention) or a task force of members (i.e.,

seated by the church conference) who are serving for a two-year period or 2) if recommended by the Finance and Stewardship Committee, any increase is to be approved in the national/regional/state convention (i.e., by tithe-paying ministers) or at the local church conference, respectively (pp. 72, 73 of the *95th Assembly Minutes*). Some conventions and conferences have found this procedure to be functional for them and continue to use it effectively; however, this additional layer of accountability has been shown for most to be inconvenient, impractical, and cumbersome. As a result, 75 percent of the National/Regional/State Offices surveyed (source: Finance and Stewardship Committee, Financial “Snapshot” Survey, November 2008) and many local churches have sought out more efficient methods. In fact, it has proven more feasible for them to instead empower their Finance and Stewardship Committee (or its equivalent) to authorize an appropriate compensation package for the overseer or pastor, correspondingly, independent of their convention or conference. Furthermore, they have demonstrated successfully that accountability may still be achieved using this or a similar alternative approach. With this in mind, perhaps it is now appropriate to officially give the intermediate offices and the local churches more flexibility when considering compensation packages for the overseer or pastor. Specifically, the convention and/or conference could imbue their Finance and Stewardship Committee (or its equivalent) to function as their fiduciary agent of accountability, as is already efficiently happening in many nations/regions/states and local churches. In this manner, such conventions and/or conferences may elect to facilitate this process while simultaneously meeting the accountability standards of the intermediate office or church being served.

Recommendation: On pages 72, 73, of the *95th Assembly Minutes*, in the section **Overseer and Pastoral Compensation**, delete the 4th sentence of the 3rd paragraph, as it is presently listed:

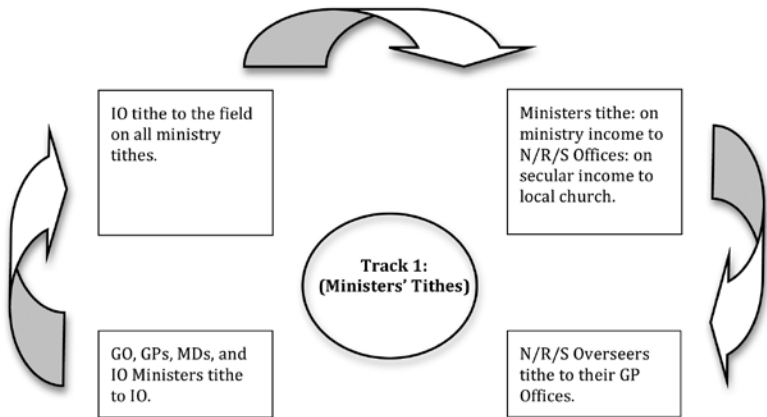
“ . . . If the Finance and Appropriations Committee (now Finance and Stewardship) for the nation, region, state, or local church is used to consider pastoral or overseer compensation, any increase in compensation, merit, or cost of living adjustment should be approved by the ministers paying tithes to that office (nation, region, or state) at their convention . . .” and insert the following sentences in its place: “. . . 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 overseer or pastoral compensation (i.e., 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 (i.e., 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 as explained above 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 overseer or pastoral compensation (i.e., 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. . . .”

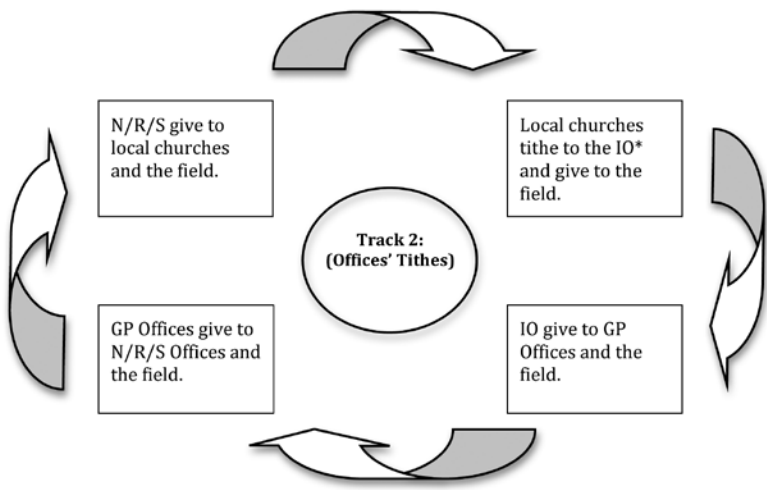
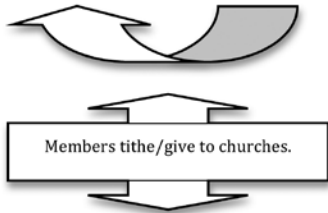
Flowchart/Diagram of Present Financial System

Rationale: The following Diagram of the Present Financial System is offered as an additional visual aid to the existing Flowchart of the Present Financial System. 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 Finance and Stewardship Committee as approved changes occur.

Recommendation: On page 77, of the *95th Assembly Minutes*, in the section **Flowchart/Diagram of Present Financial System**, place the new illustration (the following diagram) that will complement the current illustration (the existing flowchart) that is now located on page 77 of the *95th Assembly Minutes*.



IO=International Offices
 N/R/S=National/Regional/State
 GO=General Overseer
 GP=General Presbyter
 MD=Ministry Director
 *see Allocation of Tithes for Present Financial System



Study of the Present Financial System

Rationale (Reason for Study): The Finance and Stewardship Committee has been studying the Present Financial System during the last four years. This current system was adopted in 1994 and transitioned to full implementation over a seven-year period (1994–2000). This was an effort to restructure (i.e., streamline) the International Offices and concurrently decentralize more of the ministries and resources to local churches, who were to become more vibrant and equipped to discover and fulfill their unique mission in the community where they are situated. The result of this transition significantly redirected and/or reduced the percentages of tithes and key offerings away from the intermediate offices (i.e., National/Regional/State Offices) and International Offices and toward the local churches. Although not reflective of every change, the following summary includes the major changes that have occurred from 1994 to date:

Local Church

- Gain of ten percent in local church tithes (from 80 percent to 90 percent)
- Gain of 35 percent in local surplus tithes (from 65 percent to 100 percent)

National/Regional/State Offices

- Loss of all local church tithes within the region/state (from ten percent to zero percent in the US and Virgin Islands; however, most nations retained ten percent from their local churches in the interest of good stewardship (i.e., in that monetary restrictions are imposed by most nations on the amounts of funds that may be transferred internationally and/or due to costly monetary exchange rates between countries))
- Loss of all surplus tithes from local churches within the nation/region/state (from 25 percent to zero percent)
- Loss of a percent of Mission Offerings within the nation/region/state (from ten percent to zero percent)
- Gain of all ministry tithes from the ministers within their national/regional/state area
- Gain of all Harvest and Leadership Development Offerings

General Presbytery Offices

- Gain of all ministry tithes from the National/Regional/State Overseers in their respective General Presbytery Area

International Offices

- Loss of a percent of surplus tithes from all local churches (from ten percent to zero percent)
- Loss of all ministry tithes from the ministers serving the nation/region/state
- Loss of all ministry tithes from the National/Regional/State Overseers
- Loss of the Church Ministries Support Offerings
- Retained ten percent of tithes from all local churches
- Retained all tithes from ministers under general appointment (at International Offices and General Presbyters)
- Retained 100 percent of Heritage Ministry (formerly CPMA) Memberships
- Gain of 100 percent of Missions and Harvest Partner Offerings

Although the local churches and the International Offices have been successful in adapting to these changes, the intermediate offices (i.e., in particular, the North America National/Regional/State Offices) have been adversely impacted by them. Indeed, it is from North America that the Finance and Stewardship Committee continues to receive information and requests from overseers who express concerns about how the current system is negatively impacting them. Because of these raised concerns at these intermediate offices, the focus of our surveys has been directed at North America, as opposed to the Church at large. Notwithstanding, during the course of our study, we all experienced a global economic downturn in the fall of 2008, further exacerbating the situation.

Rationale (Reliability of Study): Since 2006, the Finance and Stewardship Committee has conducted four surveys to solicit input from the “field” about the Present Financial System and whether or not it is operating successfully. Primarily targeted have been the North America National/Regional/State Offices for input on the impact of the Present Financial System among these intermediate offices. Recently queried have also been the local pastors for input on the impact at the local level (i.e., the survey invited international participation but defaulted to a reflection of North America pastors by virtue of limited international responses). The names and reliability of these four surveys in our study are given below:

1. *Annual Financial Statements for 2006 From North America (February 2007)* has a confidence level of 90 percent with a +/- 11.1 percent margin of error.
2. *North America National/Regional/State Offices Input on Present Financial System (February 2007)* has a confidence level of 90 percent with a +/- 11.8 percent margin of error.
3. *North America National/Regional/State Offices Financial Snapshot Survey (November 2008)* has a confidence level of 90 percent with a +/- 13.5 percent margin of error.

4. *Pastors' Internet Survey (North America Pastors) (June 2009)* has a confidence level of 90 percent with a +/- 5.3 percent margin of error.

The confidence levels associated with these surveys are figured from the available population to participate as compared to the actual participants in the survey. These reliability statistics were generated from a sample-size calculator (i.e., www.custominsight.com/articles/random-sample-calculator.asp). The way to interpret this reliability is explained thusly: If there is a 90 percent confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 5.3 percent, then the same survey, conducted 100 times, would yield the same results, 90 times out of 100, within a +/- 5.3 percent margin of error. As evident from these confidence levels and margins of error, these surveys are reliable reflections of the actual situations now found at the local and intermediate offices in North America.

Rationale (Results From Study): The following major facts and comments were garnered from our study via these four surveys of the “field”:

Survey 1, Annual Financial Statements for 2006 From North America

(February 2007): The key revelations in this survey show that a significant number (to date, five of 28 offices or 18 percent have become insolvent) of intermediate offices in North America are in danger of financial collapse via insolvency. The data supports this dire projection:

1. Thirty percent of the North America National/Regional/State Offices reported that their annual deficit (i.e., expenses exceeding income) is depleting their reserves and that three or four would become insolvent within two to four years (i.e., 2008–2010), and five or six of them would become insolvent by 2016. (In 2008–2009, five of these offices became insolvent and required a “bailout” from the International Offices and the North America General Presbytery Offices.)
2. The only reason that many North America National/Regional/State Offices have survived the transition or paradigm shift to the Present Financial System without selling valuable properties is due to them having begun it with huge cash reserves.
3. Several (about 1/3) of the North America National/Regional/State Offices are now “mission status” or in need of financial support since the inception of the Present Financial System in 1994.

Survey 2, North America National/Regional/State Offices Input on Present Financial System (February 2007): Most intermediate offices believe that the Present Financial System is working against them, not for them. This survey reveals that a majority of overseers would like to see some changes to the current financial structure.

1. Nearly 2/3 (61 percent) of all North America National/Regional/State Offices reported that the Present Financial System is working poorly (or fair at best) for them and that something must be introduced by the 2008 Assembly and implemented immediately to prevent them from becoming insolvent.
2. The North America National/Regional/State Overseers recommended that their paying tithes to their respective General Presbytery Offices, in lieu of the International Offices, may generate some funds to help their fellow struggling North America National/Regional/State Offices.
3. The overseers underscore that ministers tithing to their National/Regional/State Offices are the principal source of funding at the intermediate level and those ministers taking excessive or questionable expenses should be challenged. Too, ministers not tithing to their National/Regional/State Offices should be persuaded to do so.
4. Several overseers shared ideas about how to reapportion the percentages of tithes from the local church. The following are the three most prominent suggestions:
 - a. Have churches send ten percent of tithes to National/Regional/State Offices; have National/Regional/State Offices send ten percent of tithes to International Offices. (Calculations project this option would increase the budget at the National/Regional/State Offices overwhelmingly by about 1,700 percent and reduce the current International Offices budget by about 90 percent. This option seems to be too extreme as it drastically diminishes the funds for the International Offices.)
 - b. Have churches send five percent of tithes to National/Regional/State Offices and send five percent of tithes to International Offices. (Calculations project this option would increase the budget at the National/Regional/State Offices by about 800 percent [except in cases where a supplementary percentage is now being received at the intermediate level, in which case the projected increase would be less] and reduce the current International Offices budget by about 50 percent. This option seems impractical as it would require massive restructuring and downsizing at the International Offices. Furthermore, it seems unfair in that the ministry tithes would all be sent to the intermediate offices. If a 50 percent-50 percent sharing of church tithes

would be equitable between the intermediate offices and the International Offices, then it would also seem in order to equally share the ministry tithes now sent to the intermediate offices with the International Offices, via 50 percent-50 percent).

- c. Have churches send 6.5 percent of their tithes to International Offices and 6.5 percent of their tithes to National/Regional/State Offices. (Calculations project this option would increase the budget at the National/Regional/State Offices by about 1,100 percent and reduce the current International Offices budget by about 35 percent. Too, it would have some impact at the local church, with an additional loss of three percent tithes. This option, or one similar to it, seems more equitable and realistic. However, the International Offices would be challenged to expand their restructuring and downsizing over a prescribed period of years to accommodate such a reapportioning of percentages.)
5. Redirect 100 percent of the Church Ministries Support Offering to each of the General Presbytery Offices for operations and outreach. (This offering was ultimately discontinued and replaced by the Harvest and Leadership Development Offering, which is sent 100 percent to the National/Regional/State Offices.)
6. Allow North America National/Regional/State Offices who are struggling financially to be viewed and designated as a mission and eligible as a Harvest Partner for other nations/regions/states to connect with and send them Level One (i.e., basic operational) funds, in addition to Level Two (i.e., special projects) funds that may now be sent. (This option was initially to be introduced to the 95th International Assembly, but, after much debate, it was removed from the Finance and Stewardship Report.)
7. Increase accountability of the use of financial resources at all levels.
8. The National/Regional/State Overseers participating in this survey are unanimous in their agreement that more funds need to flow to the North America General Presbytery Offices and to the National/Regional/State Offices. These overseers further suggest that the International Offices conduct a review of the current organizational structure (i.e., polity and finances) and the various ministries (i.e., mission and function) at all levels. The goal would be to identify which ministries would optimally operate at which level (i.e., local, intermediate, Presbytery, international). Too, such a review would possibly become a catalyst for some reformation or modification of our current organizational configuration along with a possible redefinition of the mission and scope of some of our operational ministries. Any ministries that might be in duplication with one another could be identified and either

redefined or reassigned to the level(s) at which they would function most efficiently and practically.

9. The overseers surveyed are divided equally (50 percent-50 percent) on their support of a pastor/overseer concept for smaller states. Those who have tried it in practice tend to oppose it as quite impractical while those who are embracing it in theory are open to giving it consideration. The overwhelming favorable comments of a pastor/overseer concept for a smaller state are these benefits: 1) the area retains its identity, destiny, mission, and uniqueness; and 2) there are some financial savings in that a strong church could provide the allotment for the pastor/overseer thereby freeing up other common area funds for operational or outreach use. The major objections for the pastor/overseer concept are these concerns: 1) the merging of the distinct roles, missions, and responsibilities of the local pastor with those of a trans-local overseer; 2) the frustrations, conflicts, and hindrances that arise from being both a pastor with a local focus mission and having a congregation with needs (e.g., a family in crisis needing urgent pastoral care) juxtaposed with the time necessary as an overseer to build relationships, open new fields, plant churches, and be available to scores of pastors within a broad geographical area who also have pressing needs (e.g., a church in crisis who needs a pastor).

Survey 3, North America National/Regional/State Offices Financial Snapshot Survey (November 2008): The main insights gained by this survey are the following:

1. A majority (75 percent) of intermediate offices have elected to use alternative accountable methods (other than current International Assembly rulings) when designating the compensation package for their National/Regional/State Overseer.
2. The intermediate offices continue to struggle financially and report concerns of becoming insolvent; this concern is largely due to their being supported almost exclusively from the ministry tithes via the ministers within their respective national/regional/state area.
3. Approximately 71 percent of the pastors reporting are tithing per International Assembly guidelines.
4. The intermediate offices receive the bulk (75 percent) of their support via ministry tithes.
5. Those intermediate offices that have convention-approved supplements have increased their monthly receipts by an average of 27 percent.

6. The Harvest and Leadership Development Offering, although 100 percent is sent to the National/Regional/State Offices, has not yet been taken advantage of fully.
7. Approximately 61 percent of North America pastors are bi-vocational and receive an allotment from their churches that is significantly less (on average, 52 percent less) than the current suggested base pay; however, the data also shows that the average bi-vocational pastor actually makes approximately 13 percent more (i.e., non-ministry income plus the ministry income) than the average pastor who is supported solely from the ministry.
8. The non-ministry tithes of the pastors, if redirected to the National/Regional/State Offices, would dramatically increase the receipts at these intermediate offices (i.e., an average increase of 95 percent in tithes, yielding an overall average increase of 73 percent in total receipts). Doing this would not adversely affect the International Offices, provided that the National/Regional/State Offices would then tithe on their tithes to the International Offices. However, the local church and the local pastor may be affected, depending on their financial situation. The bi-vocational pastor's current allotment would be reduced (i.e., by the loss of the 90 percent of the non-ministry tithes now returned to him/her). Therefore, redirecting the pastor's non-ministry tithes away from the church could present a significant loss for some of the pastors. Furthermore, it could have an effect on the local church, in the case where the bi-vocational pastor shoulders some, most, or all of the local church expenses (i.e., utilities, mortgage, insurance, etc.). If this modification were to be considered, then perhaps the National/Regional/State Overseers could exempt, on an annual basis, those pastors who demonstrate adverse circumstances in extenuation or mitigation for themselves or their church.

Survey 4, Pastors' Internet Survey (North America Pastors) (June 2009):

Principally, the following disclosures demonstrate the ethos and convictions of the pastors regarding tithing practices. Also, we see the enormous burdens carried by many local pastors in order to sustain the operations and maintain the facilities of the local church:

1. Sixty-six percent of pastors tithe on their gross income.
2. Thirty-four percent of pastors tithe on their net income.
3. Twenty-nine percent of pastors report no non-ministry income and are presumed to be solely supported from the ministry. (This number is ten percent less than the previous survey, presumably a result of the economic downturn.)

4. Seventy-one percent of pastors report non-ministry income and are presumed bi-vocational. (This number is ten percent more than the previous survey—again, presumably a result of the economic downturn.)
5. Ninety-seven percent of pastors with a non-ministry income tithe on the same to their local church per International Assembly guidelines.
6. Three percent of pastors with a non-ministry income voluntarily elect to tithe on the same to their National/Regional/State Office.
7. Forty-one percent of pastors personally pay **no expenses** of the local church.
8. Fifty-nine percent of pastors personally pay some, most, or all of the expenses of the local church:
 - a. Thirty-three percent of pastors pay **some** expenses of the local church.
 - b. Thirteen percent of pastors pay **most** expenses of the local church.
 - c. Thirteen percent of pastors pay **all** expenses of the local church.
9. The following statement was given to solicit the current beliefs of the pastors on the “field” regarding the current Assembly ruling, respecting non-ministry tithes:

“In my opinion, a pastor who tithes on his/her non-ministry income into his/her church and then receives 90 percent back in the form of compensation has biblically tithed.”

- a. Eighty-three percent of pastors agree with this statement.
- b. Seventeen percent of pastors disagree with this statement.

Rationale: (Resolutions From Study): The 95th International Assembly adopted resolutions to amend the Present Financial System in order to primarily assist the General Presbytery Offices, the intermediate offices, and the local pastors. The following is a brief summary of these resolutions:

- Tithes of National/Regional/State Overseers: Now, the National/Regional/State Overseers 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.
- Discontinuation of the Church Ministries Support Offering: This action has redirected funds away from the International Offices and toward the National/Regional/State Offices via the creation of the Harvest and Leadership Development Offering.

- Establishment and Implementation of a Harvest and Leadership Development Offering: Now, 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 and then 100 percent sent to the respective National/Regional/State Offices. This offering has a great potential to bless the intermediate offices.
- 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 (i.e., 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. As mentioned earlier, those intermediate offices who are receiving supplementary funds from their churches have increased their monthly receipts by an average of 27 percent.
- Fiscal Responsibility: An annual report of all Pastors, Overseers, 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.
- Retirement Planning: All ministers under appointment have been encouraged to participate in a retirement plan in conjunction with their local churches or National/Regional/State/Presbytery/International Offices, allotting a portion of their annual budget to include some amount to give to their respective Pastor, Overseer (National/Regional/State), General Presbyter, General Overseer, or International Offices' Ministry Director, as matching funds for retirement. Where no retirement plan currently exists, the National Overseers, 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, Overseers, or Presbyters within the existing laws of their sovereign nations.
- Parsonage Allowance: Each local church or National/Regional/State/Presbytery/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, Overseer (National/Regional/State), General Presbyter, General Overseer, 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, overseer, presbyter, ministry director, etc.

Rationale: (Responses With Study): The following is a brief summary of just some of the actions taken by various offices to help the economic situation on their respective levels:

- The International Offices: The International Offices has made significant adjustments through the elimination or consolidation of ministry positions, the reduction of their operating budgets, the closing of the White Wing Publishing House Press Operations, the transition of the Voice of Salvation ministry to the International Center of Spiritual Renewal, the financial rescue of struggling National/Regional/State Offices that were insolvent, etc.
- The General Presbytery Offices: The North America General Presbytery Offices has assisted the International Offices with financial supplements for National/Regional/State Offices that are insolvent or on the brink of insolvency. In North America, consolidating several states or nations into regions has become, by necessity, the default solution to bring illiquid offices into solvency. Since 2006, the North America Intermediate Offices have decreased by ten percent through the merging of regions/states (from a total of 31 to 28 offices).
- The National/Regional/State Offices: In retrospect, it appears that the cuts made in 1994 were too deep and drastic at the intermediate levels. It seems that National/Regional/State Offices would have fared better had they retained at least five percent of the tithes from the local church. The National/Regional/State Offices now primarily exist on the ministry tithes (within their respective area) that are received each month, which alone have proven insufficient. Many of these offices have reduced their ministry staffs and allotments, consolidated staff positions, sold valuable properties, depleted cash reserves, and still potentially face insolvency looming on the horizon. It should again be emphasized that those National/Regional/State Offices whose conventions have approved supplementary percentages from their local churches are realizing an increase (i.e., an average of 27 percent) in their budget.
- The Local Pastors: It appears that approximately 1/3 of our pastors and ministers on the "field" are able to live on the allotments provided by their local churches. However, there are approximately 2/3 of our pastors and

ministers who must supplement their church allotments with non-ministry income. The data shows that between 61–71 percent of the North America pastors are bi-vocational and receive from the church an average of only 48 percent of the current recommended monthly base pay. Often, these same pastors must operate and maintain their local churches by reinvesting in them a significant amount of the pastoral compensation that they receive (i.e., 59 percent of the North America pastors pay some, most, or all of the expenses at their local church). Nevertheless, in North America, there is a very high rate (71 percent) of tithing among the pastors/ministers, with 66 percent of these tithing on the gross amount.

- **The Local Churches:** A 2007 study, “Church Reporting Analysis,” by the Ministry Director of Finance and Publications, for the fiscal year 2006–2007 revealed that in North America, 57 percent of churches report and tithe faithfully, 20 percent of churches report and tithe inconsistently, and 23 percent of churches do not report or tithe to the International Offices. Therefore, just more than 3/4 (i.e., 77 percent) of our churches are tithing all or some of the time. Nevertheless, if the 43 percent of our churches that are either not tithing or doing so inconsistently would be faithful, then a projected 40 percent increase in the budget could be realized at the International Offices! However, it is also important to note that a small number of these churches included in this study are inactive and would not be able to contribute any significant amount of tithes.

Rationale (Review of Study): Our Present Financial System currently appears to be serving all levels of the Church sufficiently, with the one exception of the intermediate levels (i.e., National/Regional/State Offices). The transition to our existing financial system, in retrospect, redirected too much funding away from the intermediate offices. The challenge before us now is to determine how to correct this error without adversely impacting other levels within the system. As you can see by the previous surveys in our study of the Present Financial System, it appears that when consideration is given to adjusting percentages or redirecting the flow of tithes, what changes may benefit one level (i.e., local church, National/Regional/State Offices, General Presbytery Offices, International Offices) disadvantage the other one(s). Nevertheless, if nothing is done, then the National/Regional/State Offices are on a dangerous path toward insolvency!

Ideally, the collective action of all of our members, ministers, and churches faithfully tithing per International Assembly guidelines could potentially resolve these financial shortfalls at all levels with little or no need for any intervention or major change in the current financial system. Of key importance to recall, the Present Financial System, to which we all agreed (or submitted, or abstained) and to which

we transitioned between 1994 to 2000, has at its foundation the principle of faithful tithing. It is, for that reason, incumbent upon all members, ministers, and churches to tithe faithfully within the system to ensure the system operates efficiently and provides sufficient resources at all levels.

Obviously, any interim solution to the crisis at the intermediate offices must be initiated by the National/Regional/State Offices. Therefore, it may be prudent and beneficial if every National/Regional/State Overseer and their plurality of leadership would consider one or more of these strategies: 1) emphasizing the modeling and mentoring of sound financial stewardship principles (i.e., including tithing and giving within our financial system) in their respective areas; 2) appealing to pastors not tithing per International Assembly guidelines (i.e., about 29 percent in North America) to support the National/Regional/State Offices with their ministry tithes; 3) requesting supplementary percentages from the local churches via the National/Regional/State Conventions (i.e., an average budget increase of 27 percent has been realized at National/Regional/State Offices that are receiving supplements from their local churches); 4) promoting and targeting the Harvest and Leadership Development Offering to assist with operations and outreach (i.e., 100 percent of these funds remain at the National/Regional/State Offices); 5) minimizing expenses and deficits through the frugal budgeting of resources and the well-organized staffing of personnel; 6) having stronger churches to help weaker churches via the establishment of interchurch financial assistance programs (e.g., the Sharing and Caring program in Florida, the Hands Across Carolina in North Carolina, and the Assistance in Ministry (AIM), in the Mid-West); and 7) requesting stronger churches to support their National/Regional/State Offices with Harvest Partner Level 2 Funds.

Rationale (Conclusion): It is the decision of this Committee not to bring a recommendation of the section entitled “Study of the Present Financial System.” Therefore, this section is offered as an informational report. It is our intention to bring a recommendation to the next Assembly that will address the systemic problems of our present financial system. We invite the Assembly to join us in earnest prayer as we continue to seek a workable solution.

Fiscal Responsibility:

Rationale: The financial crisis at the intermediate office levels persists. The National/Regional/State Offices continue to experience overages in their budgets and shortfalls in their income. Many of these intermediate offices are presenting with a need of financial assistance; however, it is becoming apparent in some cases that there is also a need of additional training in stewardship. The International Offices (via the Office of the Ministry Director of Finance & Publishing and/or the Stewardship

Ministries Department) are available to assist any local or intermediate office with guidance on how to establish and operate within a sound budget. Furthermore, perhaps, a yearly objective glance by the appropriate supervisory office at the Presbytery level would be helpful in affirming that the intermediate office is 1) is equipped with the proper knowledge, skills, and training to establish a reasonable budget; and 2) is operating fiscally responsibly within those budget parameters. Each year, coinciding with the convention of the nation, region, or state, the intermediate office could submit its financial statement (i.e., budget, income and expense statement, and balance sheet) to its respective General Presbyter's Office. In this way, the Presbyter could have an idea of the financial situation and solvency at the supervised offices and, hopefully, quickly discern if a financial crisis is threatening. Too, the respective Presbyter could render or request both educational and/or financial assistance promptly and optimistically divert a financial crisis at any intermediate office level.

Recommendation: On page 75, of the *95th Assembly Minutes*, in the section **Fiscal Responsibility**, add the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph, as indicated:

“ . . . Furthermore, the National/Regional/State Offices will submit to their respective General Presbyter's Office a copy of their annual financial statement that is reported to their National/Regional/State Convention within 30 days following the said convention. This financial statement is to reflect at a minimum, the following information: 1) National/Regional/State Offices Budget for the previous and current convention years (with columns showing items budgeted, actual and variance); 2) an *income and expense statement*; and 3) a *balance sheet report* showing the total assets and liabilities.”

Local Church Ministries Responsibilities:

Rationale: Whereas there is no longer a Church Ministries Support Offering, we should update the language of our *Minutes* to reflect the same.

Recommendation: On page 73, of the *95th Assembly Minutes*, in the section **Local Church Ministries Responsibilities**, delete the following phrase, in the second sentence, of subparagraph four, as it is presently listed: “. . . Church ministry offering (formerly known as education and evangelism offerings) . . .” and insert in its place the following phrase: “. . . Harvest and Leadership Development offering. . .”

Postscript

We lamentably acknowledge the passing of Bishop L. J. Dotson (1943–2009), who was a member of the Finance and Stewardship Committee since 2000 and the

chairman from 2006–2009. His faithful service and visionary leadership will leave a lasting vestige on our Church (F & S Report, 96th Assembly, 2010).

XI. 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, 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.

MINISTRY POLICY MANUAL

Study Guide and Ministerial Examination

Note: As a Study Guide, the questions are designed to highlight, for the student, areas of emphasis. However, the entire Manual should be carefully studied, as all the information in it is valuable.

Ministry Policy Manual
Study Guide and Ministerial Examination

1. I have I have not completed reading the section entitled “Organizational Structure of the Church of God of Prophecy.”

2. Match the description with the appropriate level of leadership for the Church.

____ International	a. The framework within which the objectives of worship, evangelization, equipping believers, and preparing for Christ’s return is done.
____ National/ Regional/ State	b. Provides more focused leadership and support directly within the context of the states and nations where the where the Church is at work. ____ Local c. Functions on a worldwide basis and provides a global network of support and interaction for the Church’s ministries.

3. In order to give further clarification to our _____, we recommend that reports concerning policies, procedures, and finances presented by Assembly Standing Committees be accepted by overwhelming _____. All matters of a doctrinal nature must be accepted by _____.

4. Which of the following is the primary purpose of the General Assembly?
 - a. 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.
 - b. To decide on administrative actions the Church deems helpful in accomplishing the Great Commission.
 - c. A time for the General Overseer to reveal the burden of his heart and provide vision for the direction he believes God is leading the Church.

5. The General Moderator of the General Assembly is responsible to do all of the following except:
 - a. Convene a General Assembly as outlined by the General Assembly.
 - b. Moderate the General Assembly.

c. Appoint Assembly Committees.

d. Make final decisions for the General Assembly when there is confusion on an issue.

e. Facilitate the decision-making process in conjunction with the Assembly Counselors.

6. True False The Assembly Counselors are composed of the General Presbyters.

7. The _____ is to serve the Church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for General Assembly consideration.

8. The International Presbytery consists of the following:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

9. List the responsibilities of the Overseers serving in the International Presbytery:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

10. Mark as true (T) or false (F) the following statements about General Presbyters:

____ They are selected according to their gifting by God, to give direction to the worldwide Church in accomplishing its mission.

____ They are selected by the vote of the general membership.

____ They will work with the General Overseer to provide shared leadership responsibility in carrying out the functions of the General Overseer by developing vision, processes, and plans in accomplishing the Church's mission.

11. The mission of the Church's International Offices is "to _____ and to deliver essential _____ and promote the _____."

12. Match the following statements with the appropriate ministry at the International Offices:

a. Inspirational

b. Global Outreach

c. Leadership Development and Discipleship

d. Finance and Publishing

____ Accounting and budget process

____ Educational development

____ Evangelism

____ Publishing

____ General Assembly

____ Global perspectives, promotion, outreach strategies

____ Representation among others involved in the kingdom of God

____ Oversight of the ministry

____ Heritage Ministries and Fields of the Wood

13. I have I have not completed reading the section entitled "National/Regional/State Ministry."

14. None of the leadership challenges of the national/regional/state overseer surpasses one's total commitment to _____, _____, _____, and _____ the ministry.

15. Which of the following are a part of the responsibility of being an overseer?
- Be available for personal counsel.
 - Give special attention to the development of a ministerial educational program to better equip the ministry.
 - Be deeply committed to the New Testament principle of equipping the ministry and laity.
 - Use power and authority with restraint, and be very careful not to abuse either the authority or influence of his office.
 - All of the above.

16. True False The overseer 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, but not the supervising of the minister or personnel involved in their programs and ministries.

17. The overseer is evaluated every _____ years.

18. The overseer is responsible and accountable to one of the following:

- The local church.
- The pastor in the nation/region/state.
- The General Presbyter in the area where he serves.

19. Indicate whether the following is (a) an administrative duty (b) supervisory duty (c) or a promotional duty:

- _____ Approve the setting in order of new churches before organization is effected.
- _____ Report newly organized churches to the office of the General Overseer.
- _____ Decide the geographical boundaries of each district in his assigned area.
- _____ Circulation of the *White Wing Messenger* as well as other Church-published periodicals and publications.
- _____ Arrangement of assistance of a general evangelism campaign.
- _____ Evaluate national/regional/state reports and surveys.

20. The overseer is to appoint the following:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

21. I have I have not completed the reading section entitled “Local Church Ministry.”

22. List the considerations to be used in organizing a church:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

23. True False A church may be organized by the overseer or authorized minister—bishop or licensed minister.

24. True False The national/regional/state overseer should not be concerned about the consent of the General Overseer before disbanding a church.

25. True False The local church trustees are vested with the authority to buy, sell, convey, or encumber the local church 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.

26. True False Local churches must have written consent of the national/regional/state overseer to pursue incorporation.

27. What four teachings may have particular public implications in today's moral climate?

a.

b.

c.

d.

28. Write word for word the obligation for membership:

29. The objectives of discipline are:

a.

b.

c.

30. List and define the two types of offenses:

a.

b.

31. _____ members have a voice in all business matters; however, _____ should not speak until they reach the age of wisdom.

32. What are the two types of conferences that can be held?

a.

b.

33. List the three officers of the conference, and briefly define their role:

a.

b.

c.

34. List the powers of the conference:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

35. True False All decisions may be made by the local conference when an overwhelming consensus of the members present are in agreement, even setting someone forth in the ministry.

36. I have I have not completed the reading section entitled "Ministry Policies."

37. The welfare of the Church and its mandate to carry out the _____ requires that men and women entering the ministry be _____.

38. No person will be licensed or ordained without first having served a time of _____ with experience in _____ and _____.

39. The areas of proof of a candidate's potential for ministry that a local church will consider are the following:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

40. The International Presbytery has prescribed the completion of the _____ before a candidate can apply for license.

41. The Lay Minister's Certificate authorizes the lay minister to _____, _____, and _____ the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to conduct _____, and to hold _____.

42. The lay ministry period is a time when a ministerial candidate can prove himself/herself deserving of being recommended for the ministry by the _____, examined by the _____, and licensed by the _____.

43. The lay minister should report _____ to the _____ in duplicate.

44. True False The Lay Minister's Certificate should be renewed each calendar year by the overseer.

45. List the responsibilities of those who are in the pastoral ministry:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

46. Those with an evangelistic ministry are to be acknowledged (set forth) by a _____ and licensed through both _____ offices. They would receive a _____.

47. Which of the following would not be able to be set forth as a bishop?

- a. A male who is pastoring a church.
- b. A male who is evangelizing.
- c. A woman who is pastoring a church.

48. True False 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, they could not be ordained as a bishop.

49. Place in the proper sequence the following elements of the process of licensure: appearance before the Ministerial Review Board, period of apprenticeship, completion of the *Foundations Course*, set forth by the local church, completion of the Application for Ministerial License, approval by the General Overseer, and recommendation by the national/regional/state overseer.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.

50. Licensed ministers are authorized to _____ and _____ the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to _____ churches, _____, to _____ the Lord's supper, and the washing of the saints' feet. Those who pastor have the authority to _____ business conferences and _____ the rites of matrimony in legal marriages that are _____ valid according to the Church's understanding.

51. True False After licensing, the minister 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 General Assembly. However, in matters relating to his/her ministry, the minister is under the supervision of the Presbytery.

52. The two offices that are recognized as being elders are the _____ and _____.

53. True False Since deacons/deaconesses function in the local church, they are to be acknowledged (set forth) by the congregation and with the pastor's recommendation.

54. True False The bishop is one of the eldership offices that provides oversight leadership to the Church.

55. A bishop could function as a _____, _____, as a national/regional/state _____, as a district _____, an _____, or as a _____.

56. Who is responsible to ensure the quality of the ministry through periodic review?

- a. The local church
- b. The Ministerial Review Board
- c. The Presbytery

57. The bishop is authorized to _____, _____, and _____ the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to baptize, establish churches, administer the Lord's Supper, the washing of the saints' feet, assist in _____ elders by special appointment, and to _____ the rites of matrimony in legal marriage as outlined in the New Testament of the Holy Bible as interpreted by the General Assembly. The bishop who is pastoring has the authority to _____ all local church business conferences.

58. Identify the following as legitimate Ministerial Expense (yes/no) for the calculation of tithes:

_____ Food	_____ Basic telephone charges
_____ Clothing	_____ Travel to and from a secular job
_____ Shelter	_____ Ministerial training program
_____ Ministerial auto expenses	

59. A good rule of thumb measurement would be for a minister to tithe his income the way he would _____ to tithe theirs. Basically, expense in the ministry is the expense incurred in one's _____ duties that he would not otherwise have.

60. A minister who does not tithe his income should not be allowed to retain his _____.

61. True False A minister should not be allowed to preach anything that brings confusion and conflicts with the doctrine of the Church.

62. Mark as True (T) or False (F) the following statements about performing marriages:

- _____ a. Marriage ceremonies should be performed in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.
- _____ b. Bishops must receive a special permit to perform marriages.
- _____ c. New pastors or those not capable of providing marriage counseling should seek the permission of their overseer before performing marriages.
- _____ d. A minister must meet all the requirements of the nation/region/state in which he/she is performing the marriage.

63. Match the following reporting requirements with the appropriate rank of the ministry. (Note: Some may have more than one answer):

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| _____ Bishops | a. Annually to International Offices |
| _____ Licensed Minister | b. Annually to overseer |
| _____ Deacon/Deaconess | c. Quarterly to overseer |
| _____ Trial Deacon/Deaconess | d. Quarterly to Conference |
| _____ Lay Minister | e. Monthly to overseer |
| _____ Retired Minister | f. Quarterly to International Offices |
| _____ Disabled Minister | g. None required |

64. Discipline is the Church's exercise of _____ given by Christ through the Scriptures. The goals of discipline are that _____ may be honored, that those who fall into error may be brought to _____ and _____ and that _____, _____, and the general welfare of the Church may be maintained.

65. The purpose of discipline is for _____ and _____, not for destruction.

66. True False A public offense is defined as being something which the minister commits against one or a very few persons, and which violates the divine law and does wrong or injury to particular individuals.

67. List at least five examples of a public offense:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

68. Any accusation made against a minister must be verified by _____ or more witnesses.

69. The _____ 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.

70. In all investigations of offenders, it must be remembered that the admonition of _____ governs.

71. True False If the accused rejects the charge and desires a further hearing, a formal hearing of his case should occur within 30 days from the time the charges are formally presented before the Ministerial Review Board.

72. True False The local church shall review the findings of the Ministerial Review Board and make a determination as to the state of the minister's status.

73. Match the category of termination of a minister's license with the appropriate description:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| _____ Resignation | a. When the wife of a bishop or a preaching deacon falls into sin. |
| _____ Deceased | b. When a minister has elected to remove himself from the body of licensed or ordained ministers. |
| _____ Change of Status | c. When a minister is censured for an offense that the Presbytery does not deem to be serious enough to warrant revocation. |
| _____ Revoked | d. When the death of a minister is verified. |
| _____ Lapsed | e. Any minister who has not reported to the national/regional/state, or International Offices, or who is inactive for two consecutive years. |
| _____ Suspended | f. A minister who has been found guilty or has confessed to guilt of a serious violation of biblical principles. |

74. True False When a minister's license or ordination has been terminated due to his having fallen into sin, he may not be relicensed until he has undergone an extended time of help and counseling directed toward his being completely rehabilitated, and until the confidence of the Church is fully restored as to his readiness to be a minister in the Church of God of Prophecy.

75. True False When restoration is considered complete, the candidate may then be set forth for the ministry with the approval of the overseer.

76. Regardless of one's previous position, the _____ will normally be the primary person to initiate the restoration process.

77. True False After a former minister has been restored, he/she may be recommended for relicensing in the ministry without the normal process.

APPENDIX 1

**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES,
BELIEFS,
AND PRACTICES
OF THE
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY**

Preface

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.

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INTRODUCTION

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 below.

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 page). 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 Christ-likeness 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 marvellous 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 twelve 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 and in 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. 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" (verses 26–33). 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 SAINTS' FEET

Feet Washing 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, Feet Washing represents

our common unity (community) with each other as followers of Christ and partakers together with Him. 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 seventeen above, the twelve 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 servant-hood as their right relationship (verses 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” (verses 12–15; 17). The Church encourages that Feet Washing be observed in the same service as the Lord’s Supper 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 AND 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: "Jesus answered him, 'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing'" (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; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But 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: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29; see also 5:4).

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

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.

Marriage and Family

The Church of God of Prophecy affirms the biblical teaching that 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 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 State/Regional/National Presbytery, or the General Ministerial Presbytery (which includes the General Overseer and General Presbyters) as may be appropriate.¹

¹See “The Biblical Institution of Marriage” Final Document, Church of God of Prophecy, 94th International Assembly Minutes, 2006, pages 152–177. See also “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.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The Church of God of Prophecy holds the biblical principle of genuine repentance toward God (an individual's experience of salvation) as its qualification for Church membership in accordance with the early church's practice and God's own activity in adding to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). By genuine repentance is meant Godly sorrow for sin, confessing, turning from, denouncing and forsaking sin, and exercising faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10). Salvation is both instantaneous (new birth, regeneration) and the allinclusive work of redemption, beginning with regeneration and culminating with the glorified body (Hebrews 9:28). In terms of "being added to the church," the instantaneous aspect of salvation is evident, and a public commitment ("I will/I do") to the Church covenant as administered by an authorized Church of God of Prophecy minister, in an appropriate church setting, is necessary. The covenant reads:

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

Membership in the Church denotes acceptance, which is the basic need of every new believer. Ministry leadership and the Church must endeavor to give members this sense of belonging. The Church also advocates that new members be immediately placed in an effective, ongoing, discipleship process by the pastor and local church (Acts 2:42), a process that includes nurturing and discipline, to help them become mature (2 Peter 3:18), discover the spiritual gift or gifts, which will be exercised through them for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, 14), and to learn to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:19, 20). As we continue in the harvest, a program of extensive discipleship requiring great wisdom and loving care by leadership and people will help all our members mature in Christ.

APPENDIX 2

**THE
GOVERNANCE
OF THE
PRESBYTERY**

August 9, 2008

INTRODUCTION

For the sake of clarifying ambiguities and inconsistencies existing within the three documents we studied, it became increasingly apparent that we would have to compose and write new guidelines in several areas. It was also necessary to delete several items because they were no longer relevant. Furthermore, since misunderstandings can often arise through various interpretations of multiple documents, we have accepted the mandate of the International Presbytery with humility and seriousness to bring forth a document that would address our current needs and vision for the church, while preserving the principles embodied in the prior documents. Therefore, this document will supersede all prior documents and versions. We submit this document to the International Presbytery as a means to better clarity and not as an end (as if we had obtained a perfect understanding). In fact, it may be necessary to review this document every four years to keep it current and applicable to our changing dynamics. We realize fully that this harmonization may not be palatable to all, yet it is submitted with the greatest respect for what the IP have requested the BDP to perform. May it provide a tool for better servanthood!

PRESBYTERY WORKING GROUP: GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In an earlier report by the Presbytery Working Group there were several observations concerning the impact of plurality on the Church's existing structure and the possible effects of the practical implementation of this principle. Among these was the suggestion that a serious educational effort was needed to create a better understanding of the whole issue and its necessity. This view still remains that this needs to be done, although we believe that the Church's level of acceptance has improved greatly. We reiterate the call for the development and dissemination of appropriate lessons on the biblical basis of plurality and the practical side of its implementation.

Some of the structural changes needed to make plurality effective are being made and we wish to commend the General Overseer along with the General Presbytery and International Office Ministry Directors for their efforts. The Church is beginning to see how plurality is functioning and we believe it will become clearer as we learn from experience and as we make the educational efforts to communicate it and continue with the work of implementation.

As mentioned in the above report, the ongoing nature of the International Presbytery's responsibilities will require some better and more complete internal organization (of the International Presbytery itself), so that it can develop the mechanisms appropriate to carrying out its duties. This matter still needs on-going attention so that the various stages of the processes and procedures can be effectively initiated and concluded. We believe this will help smooth the way transitions are made when leadership changes become necessary. In addition, it will help the International Presbytery to better understand its role and function as one of those more permanent bodies within the Church's leadership structure.

With the Church's renewed emphasis on the local church and our historic desire as a people to align our operations as closely as possible to New Testament models, the principle of plurality will eventually resonate throughout the whole church. Indeed, we are already witnessing the beginnings of this, and hope to see it fully functional at all levels; therefore we need to undoubtedly facilitate and encourage the process even on the local level.

The anointing of God upon an individual and one's particular giftedness must play the primary role in placing those persons God may be calling to various offices and functions. Balancing this against the need for practical administration is one of those areas requiring prayer, careful thought, study and planning. The dynamic of the Holy Spirit must work in plural leadership so that we do not return again to a series of static offices. There has been some uneasiness about terms such as "discerning God's hand", "God's choice", and "divine selection." We believe that some objective criteria can be used while seeking after God's will. Accordingly, we believe that the criteria developed for the periodic evaluation of the General Overseer (appended to this report) can serve as a beginning point for most of the positions requiring some criteria for definition. In addition, we suggest that for purposes of instructing our people in making godly choices, we use only scriptural language such as "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," and "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6, See also Exodus 18:21).

One of the summaries in the said report, listed several potential effects of the implementation of plurality. Since some of these are already working out in practical terms, we wish to repeat them here for the International Presbytery's general attention:

a) The readjustment of working relationships at the national and international levels, including certain changes in each of the roles and functions of interrelated offices.

b) The enhancement and improvement of the handling of international affairs by the installation of General Presbyters who share leadership responsibility and decision-making with the General Overseer, better reflecting the true international nature of the church.

c) The encouragement of local churches towards truly functional, plural leadership, by providing for greater self-consciousness and continuity through wider involvement of local leadership. This will be especially helpful when local congregations are called upon to help in reviewing their pastors.

d) The International Presbytery is becoming a more self-conscious, practical, functional body.

e) The need for less centralization in record-keeping and information flow is being highlighted, contributing to more voluntary, dynamic working relationships, rather than the mere static control of a fixed, centralized system.

f) The need for the Church's International General Assembly to be a truly responsive and effective body, more reflective of the whole church (the development and implementation of the Assembly proxy system should address this need once it is fully understood and embraced).

We recognize that several important changes are taking place at the same time, but we see them all as affecting our ability to reap God's harvest in a positive way and as He may direct. It is for this reason that we feel that the Church must press ahead and we commend these revisions to you as part of that effort.

CLARIFICATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms, definitions, and job descriptions are to be understood as defined below:

General Overseer: While the General Overseer works in conjunction with the General Presbyters to provide leadership, inspiration, vision, and governance, yet he remains the leader among leaders. In so doing, all members of the General Presbytery and International Presbytery should show deference to his position in all relevant matters. Their attitude toward 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, NIV). In like manner, the General Overseer should respect their positions by duly recognizing their functions (such as, appointments, discipline, etc.). In so doing, he should embrace plurality as he pursues relational leadership in his work.

General Presbytery: The General Overseer and all General Presbyters chosen by the International Presbytery serve as this body. Together they perform the duties of general oversight for the church worldwide and for particular divisions or world regions of the church. In this context, the General Overseer 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 General Overseer, who may also moderate the Assembly non-business sessions at the discretion of the General Overseer.

The General Presbytery shall be composed of the General Overseer and the General Presbyters assigned to specific areas of the world. If the General Overseer 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 General Overseer and the General Presbytery perform the duties of general oversight for the church worldwide and for particular areas. They are 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 General Overseer and the other General Presbyters as the need arises.

International Presbytery: The General Overseer, General Presbyters, Regional/National/State Overseers, International Ministry Directors, and bishops who serve in trans-local ministries (as recommended by the International Ministry Directors) serve as the International Presbytery. This body meets regularly at the General Assembly and at other times as determined by the General Overseer or General Presbyters. It convenes for counsel, recommendations, and decisions on Church-wide matters that fall within its Assembly mandates.

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

Regional Presbytery: The Regional/National/State Overseers in their respective jurisdictions, in communication with their General Presbyter and the pastoral bishops in their respective region for purposes of recruitment, licensure, discipline and restoration of ministers with the participation of Ministerial Review Boards as recommended by the Assembly.

Local Church Presbytery: There is no single definition, but further study on this level should be developed in light of our emphasis on “vibrant local churches.” It is imperative that plurality of leadership functions at this level. Therefore, each church must fulfill this historic pattern. It is clearly seen from the New Testament example (Acts 6:1-7, 15:1-6, 20:16-20) that plurality of leadership includes local elders to assist in leading the congregation into vital and effective ministry in the community. Each local church should strive to establish a plurality group that will help the pastor in casting vision and implementing ministries that will enhance their effectiveness and unity. In addition, each of our churches should strive to seek out men and women of character who can be trained so they will further compliment their pastors giftedness and calling from the Lord. A local presbytery should never arise to overstep a pastor’s authority or as an egocentric group, but are servants to the local body.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND IMPACT OF PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

None of us were prepared for the rapid series of events that would unfold in the transition now taking place within the Church of God of Prophecy, a transition which began to come into clear focus with the Assembly’s acceptance of the Holy Ghost’s “Call to Repentance” in 1984. However, we are the participants on this stage of the Church’s history and it is our desire to do our part well by God’s grace and help.

The structural changes that plurality provides for the whole church cannot now be fully measured, but it is obvious that shared leadership cannot function in the same manner as a single leader whether at the General, National, Regional, or Local level. The

idea of a single leader from General Overseer to Pastor gained general acceptance among us as being biblical, or more specifically, “theocratic,” and we functioned, both in discipline and execution of our duties, under this premise.

The Assembly, by accepting the Questions and Subjects Committee Report in 1994, initiated a change of perspective concerning Church government, from singular to plural, which it now presents as more biblical than what we have previously practiced. We find that, while the report was duly passed, there is not common agreement and understanding about the biblical nature of this change among the leadership of the Church. The biblical nature of Plurality of Leadership needs to be fully accepted, and embraced by all leaders at every level. At the same time, this system must not be hindered with “leadership by committee,” which means both in biblical and practical sense that there must be plurality which demonstrates submission to “those over us in the Lord.”

In the brief introduction to this report, mention was made of the new functions of the International Presbytery as assigned by the General Assembly. It appears that the ongoing nature of the Presbytery’s responsibilities will require some better organization on the International Presbytery’s part. This matter was referred to the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity and may need revisiting periodically as the International Presbytery may determine necessary. In view of the restructuring and other reorganization ideas taking hold within the Church, the composition of the International Presbytery itself appears subject to change. This comment relates to things like regionalization of states, which to a limited degree, has begun in the United States, and the restructuring at our International Offices. In light of existing dynamics, the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity has already submitted a recommendation to address this need (89th Assembly Minutes, 1996). If further development of the composition, size, or function of the International Presbytery is necessary, it would seem for the purpose of objectivity and accountability, that the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity be assigned this responsibility in consultation with the General Presbyters (Minutes of the Joint General Presbyters and BDP Committee Meeting on April 25, 2002).

With our emphasis on the local church and our desire to align our operations as closely as possible to New Testament models, the

principle of plurality has already begun to resonate throughout the Church. This will no doubt raise the issue of local presbyters and this too will need more thought and study perhaps in future years, including “Who are the ‘elders/presbyters’ in the local church?” Note: I Timothy 5:17.

One matter that came up over and over again is the need, voiced by the former Questions and Subjects Committee (1994), to avoid simply creating positions or job descriptions and then looking for someone to fill them. The anointing of God upon an individual and his particular giftedness, along with the need for ministry, must play the primary role in placing those persons God has graced and gifted. Balancing this against the need for practical administration is one of those areas requiring careful thought and planning. The dynamics of the Holy Spirit must work in plural leadership so that we do not return again to another series of static offices, only this time in the plural sense instead of the singular.

The number of issues dealt within the Church in the last several years, the need for some calm and stability, the wisdom of introducing more changes, the potential that structural changes and other preoccupations may distract us from harvesting, all came to our attention in one form or another. In assessing it all however, we felt constrained to press on with the work before us. While we see the potential for some overlapping and for conflict of priorities, it is our considered belief that the biblical alignment of our organizational systems and governmental practices is itself a crucial priority. We recognize that several important changes are taking place simultaneously, but we see them all as affecting our ability to harvest in a positive way.

SELECTION OF GENERAL OVERSEER

Process and Recognition of the Vacancy of the General Overseer’s Office.

The process of selection shall be done in the following steps:

1) The General Overseer will serve the church as long as the Lord’s hand is upon him. At least every six years (formerly set at seven) the General Presbytery and the International Presbytery will discern the manifestation of God’s presence upon the individual. If they recognize a continued confirmation on the current General

Overseer, they will reaffirm such. However, if they discern God's hand is lifted from the individual for this capacity, the General Assembly will be asked to evaluate their assessment and determine if the Lord desires to release the man. The office of the General Overseer may become vacant in at least four ways: (1) personal/health reasons (2) church body recognition, (3) death, (4) moral improprieties.

In the case where a General Overseer desires to no longer serve because of personal/health reasons, he will share his intent with the General Presbytery and maintain his position where possible so that arrangements can be made for a selection of a new General Overseer at the upcoming General Assembly.

With the above conditions, the individual may recognize the burden of the Lord for that particular work has ceased. If this occurs, he will share his conviction with the General Presbytery and maintain his position, so that arrangements can be made for selection of a new General Overseer at the upcoming Assembly. If the General Assembly agrees with the General Presbytery that the hand of God is lifted from the current General Overseer for that work, the office can then be filled in that Assembly through the approved process.

In the event of the General Overseer's death or incapacitation that leads to his inability to carry out his duties, the function of that office will continue to be handled by the plurality of leadership already in place. Arrangements should be made in conjunction with the General Presbytery and International Presbytery for the General Assembly to convene in a reasonable length of time to select a new General Overseer.

In the unfortunate event of moral failure by the General Overseer, the General Presbytery should be called together by the plurality of leadership to determine the worthiness of the individual to continue in the office (this would be contingent upon the advisement of legal counsel to define). If the General Presbytery deems it necessary to remove the General Overseer from his office, the plurality of leadership in conjunction with the General Presbytery will call for the General Assembly to convene in a reasonable length of time to select a new General Overseer.

b) **Qualifying Criteria:** Those who submit nominees for the selection of General Overseer must follow these guidelines. As a general rule, ministry activities include: praying, evangelizing,

equipping, defending, loving, laboring, modeling, leading, feeding, watching, warning, teaching, exhorting, encouraging, correcting, confronting, and rescuing (I Thessalonians, Chapters 1-5 with II Thessalonians, Chapters 1-3 and other relevant scriptural passages). I Peter 5:1-3 gives us the qualities of humility and of shepherding. Paul instructed Timothy in five broad categories: 1) be faithful in his 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, and 5) be willing to suffer hardship and persecution in his service for the Lord. Acts 6:3-7 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7, provides us with qualities like “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”, “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 ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice, lest he be lifted up in pride, he must have a good report of them that are without.” The book of Exodus says, “...able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness” (18:21). From these passages we see integrity, faith, even-temperedness, soundness of judgment, teachable, peacemaking qualities, purity, cooperativeness, sensitivity to God’s Spirit, submissiveness, humility, leadership, good governance, unshakable commitment, Christ-centeredness, etc. Galatians 5:22 adds the personal compliment of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

c) International Presbyters who oversee ministers are to consult with the ministry under their jurisdiction, and submit to their General Presbyter two names. It is understood that no member of the International Presbytery shall cause his own name to be submitted.

d) Each General Presbyter would then convene a meeting of the Overseers in his area (or otherwise consult with them in an effective manner) and narrow the suggested names to two before formal submission to the Qualifying Group. All submissions are to be held in strictest confidence both during and after the process. It is to be clearly understood that the General Assembly alone makes the decision as to who is confirmed as General Overseer, and the steps outlined are for the purpose of helping the International Presbytery carry out its Assembly mandate to offer someone for

consideration. Therefore confidentiality is vital and much wisdom needed in order to protect and show due respects to all whose names are in the process. The General Presbytery shall determine the time frame for all suggestions of nominations to be submitted and acted on, with a final recommendation by the International Presbytery not more than 120 days after the declared vacancy. Formal consent to have suggested names entered in the pre-nomination process must be promptly and confidentially obtained by the Qualifying Group from individuals suggested, so that the necessary background work can be done in advance. Such consent by an individual will be his agreement to the criminal (where applicable) and ministerial background review and also an indication of his willingness to serve. No attempt should be made to check his records before his consent is received. Any nominee may remove his name from consideration by notifying the Qualifying Group in writing.

e) The Qualifying Group for the selection of General Overseer shall be composed of the General Overseer (unless his position is already vacated because of moral failure, incapacitation or death), two designates selected by the International Presbyters, the International Office Ministries Directors, and the General Presbyter when a nominee comes from his area. The Qualifying Group performs background and stewardship check and reports their findings to the General Presbyters. *Note: No one shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of General Overseer or General Presbyter. The chairman of this qualifying group shall be selected from among the seven designates.*

f) 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 are to be submitted. 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. After the final list of names has been qualified, the International Presbytery shall be notified of their names so the Church can begin pray for the nominees.

g) General Presbytery convenes a formal meeting of the International Presbytery with one of the Vice Chairman as moderator (the present General Overseer cannot serve as moderator). The first order of business shall be a time of prayer (to have been preceded by fasting as individuals) for God's guidance

and direction. All should approach this process with humility and a keen awareness of our need for God's intervention.

h) The General Presbytery shall state the purpose of the meeting and the Qualifying Group shall present all nominees by calling them forward and reading their biographies. The biographical data shall be distributed to all Presbyters. In addition, the name of each nominee shall be placed on a separate sheet of paper with sufficient copies for all Presbyters, and rendered without order of preference of any kind, and free of markings, notations or other comments. Any whose name appears on the list, may not participate in the presentation.

i) The General Presbytery shall call for the selection of a moderator and three (3) counselors with whom the moderator may consult 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 these offices. The General Presbytery 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. Afterwards, the moderator will take over the Chair of the meeting and the function of the General Presbytery shall cease. The Moderator (which shall not be the present General Overseer) 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, group discussions, or comparisons whatsoever.

j) When the time mentioned above has expired, the moderator shall call the session to order to begin the process of selection. The actions of the General Presbytery to present the persons and to distribute their separate biographic summaries, constitutes the official nomination of those persons. The selection process will consist of a series of confidential expressions (ballots) with the requirement that, to remain in the process, an individual must obtain at least **one-third** of the expressions made each time International Presbytery members would choose two names, until the number has been reduced to three or less. If any nominee does not receive ten percent of the expressions on the first ballot, their

name would be removed from further consideration. The numbers cast shall be revealed and an opportunity to reach the required one-third would be sought for again. The moderator shall then call for a time of prayer. If three remain, the required number of expressions will be raised to **half** in order to automatically remain in the process. If no one receives the required half, the two receiving above one-third will remain under consideration. If one receives the required half, and both of the others fall below one-third, a separate expression shall be held with the requirement that the one to continue in the process receive at least **half** the expressions made. When only two persons remain in consideration, the moderator will again call for prayer and for the Presbytery to strive for a one-accord agreement with the next expression. At that point, each presbyter should select only one name. When the expressions indicate that at least **two-thirds** are in favor of one of the two, the moderator shall consult with the counselors to see whether an opportunity should be given for the Presbyters to come into one-accord agreement. Failing such agreement, the moderator would propose a time of reflection and prayer. During this time, it is imperative that we be especially sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He is Sovereign! We must discern and be open to the possibility that He may lead in a completely different way. He knows best! If a one-accord decision is not ultimately reached and it has been discerned that the Holy Spirit has not made a selection, the International Presbytery shall remain in session and resort to a time of further fasting and prayer until a decision can be reached that is pleasing to the Lord. If an impasse occurs, the International Presbytery will report the matter to the Assembly and ask for prayer and consideration. If the Assembly agrees, it shall set the time for reconsideration of the issue. The General Presbytery shall arrange to carry on the work until the time of reconsideration set by the Assembly.

k) Once a General Overseer is selected for recommendation to the Assembly, and presented to the International Presbytery in session, said Presbytery, shall carry its recommendation to the General Assembly in an orderly and dignified manner befitting the occasion.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENERAL OVERSEER

The Assembly recognized and passed that the General Overseer “...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.” With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we can never fully define duties and responsibilities. However, we believe that certain outlines can help facilitate orderliness in our work without infringing the Holy Spirit’s divine prerogative to lead us where He will. With this in mind, as well as the biblical practice of “shared leadership” (1994 Assembly Minutes, page 153), we propose the following:

It shall be the duty of the General Overseer, assisted by the other General Presbyters, to provide inspirational leadership to the Church by or through:

- (A) Overall, comprehensive, world outreach planning and strategies consistent with the Church’s renewed emphasis on the proper role of the local church and the practical roles 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 now raising up (The biblical principle of servanthood and spiritual giftedness to be kept in mind here).
- (C) Effectively representing the Church of God of Prophecy among others in the kingdom of God by fostering good relations and promoting biblical unity.
- (D) Nurturing the ministry by taking oversight, counseling, and establishing with the International Presbytery, procedures and requirements for ministerial licensure, ordination, discipline and restoration.
- (E) Arranging and convening special meetings or events such as General Assemblies, Presbytery Meetings, other leadership gatherings and global promotions.
- (F) Recognizing, appointing and commissioning International Office leadership personnel or making effective arrangements therefore.

- (G) Developing plans for organizational infrastructure to meet changing administrative and relational needs of the Church with an eye to unity, fellowship and effectiveness.
- (H) To take oversight of all budgetary finances to see that they are properly distributed within the framework of the church's accounting procedures and to see that proper audits are done by independent accounting organizations and reported to the General Assemblies.
- (I) Initiate, interface and participate in the selection and evaluation of the General Presbyters.

SELECTION OF GENERAL PRESBYTERS

Process and Recognition of the Vacancy of the General Presbyter's Office.

- 1) The General Overseer shall initiate the process of selection of General Presbyters when necessary: (1) personal/health reasons (2) church body recognition, (3) moral improprieties (4) death. The procedure will begin with a meeting of the overseers of their particular area moderated by the General Overseer or his designate. Such meetings would be preceded by proper notification to the overseers 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 General Overseer will be observed with modifications where necessary, to conform to area needs.
 - a) Call to prayer by the General Overseer 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 the particular area. Once candidates are nominated, each overseer along with his plurality group shall reduce the list of names to two that will be recommended from their area to the General Overseer or his designate.
 - c) It would seem biblically sound and wise in light of the General Overseer's global knowledge and working

relationship with all presbyters, that he also has the authority in consultation with the GP's to submit one name to the final list of three (as noted in the next step).

- d) The General Overseer or his designate would convene a meeting of the overseers in that area (or otherwise consult with them in an effective manner) and narrow the names to three before submitting them to the Qualifying Group.
 - e) The Qualifying Group performs background and stewardship check and reports their findings to the General Overseer. Note: The General Overseer in consultation with the GP's must approve all nominees being presented to the International Presbytery.
 - f) The Qualifying Group presents the three names that have been qualified to the International Presbytery (**more than one nominee shall be submitted to the IP's**). If only one nominee or possibly none are available, then this should be deferred to the General Overseer in consultation with the GP's to help come up with three nominees.
 - g) The International Presbyters make the selection of the new General Presbyters based upon the "one-accord" principle (88th Assembly Minutes, Page 153). It would be expected that the new General Presbyter would be willing to relocate to wherever is necessary in order to best perform his duties.
- 2) The General Overseer, the Global Outreach Ministry Director, two designates 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 General Overseer when reviewing potential nominees and when presenting them to the International Presbytery for consideration.
 - 3) Where vacancies occur, the General Overseer with the respective plurality group from that area will decide how that work is to be carried on until a new selection is made.
 - 4) The Assembly has provided that the qualifications of General Presbyters are essentially the same as the General Overseer.

- 5) Once the General Overseers calls for a session of the International Presbytery to select a General Presbyter, a secretary and three counselors should be chosen by the International Presbytery to serve for the selection process.
- 6) Persons chosen as General Presbyters would be announced and presented to the General 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.
- 7) All General Presbyters are selected by the International Presbytery and shall be evaluated every four years by the overseers 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 General Overseer feels a strong sense of a need for a change in a General Presbyter, he should first speak to the individual personally asking for him to consider rotating out, if they agree then the process of replacement would begin. If not, the General Overseer 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 General Overseer in consultation with the GP's then may present this conviction to the IP for their consideration. It is imperative that we maintain anointed dynamic leadership at all levels.

Presbyterial Review Board

The Review Board shall meet prior to each Assembly to evaluate, when appropriate, the General Overseer or General Presbyters in accordance to the term of their selection. The General Overseer will initiate the evaluation of the General Presbyters by instructing the Review Board to begin their process of sending materials to the respective areas. In the case of the General Presbyters, this shall follow the evaluation by their overseers. The evaluation by the overseers in various areas of the world of their respective General Presbyter shall be implemented by this Review Board, who will prepare, distribute, receive, and retain the completed forms and report their findings to the International Presbyters. The Review Board shall be composed of six members who will serve for four years and be chosen by the following process:

- The General Overseer shall choose two members who are not directly under his appointment.
- Two members shall be chosen by the General Presbyters who are not members of the General Presbytery.
- Two members shall be chosen by the International Presbyters from among the constituency of the International Presbytery.

All members of this Review Board shall be bishops in good standing and be willing to accept this responsibility. Their selection should be done by the International Presbytery at the Pre-Assembly Meeting and they shall begin the term of their office following that respective Assembly. This Review Board shall not be reimbursed for this particular function except for their expenses directly related to perform such duties.

The General Evaluation of the person serving as General Overseer is to be initiated by the other members of the General Presbytery in his sixth year, and their four-year evaluation initiated by him, but these are to be performed by the Review Board. The forms for evaluation shall be sent by the Review Board (a) in the case of the General Overseer, to the GP's and the International Ministry Directors, and (b) in the case of the General Presbyters, to the General Overseer and the overseers in his specific area. These evaluations are to be done and completed at least three months before the end of the GP's tenure (four years) and at least six months before the end of the General Overseer's tenure (six years). Those being evaluated are to be duly notified in a most appropriate and respectful manner and may include words of commendation, kind admonition, and advice. Such words should be received in the spirit of New Testament brotherliness and accountability. Those being evaluated may subsequently request an interview with the Review Board for purposes of sharing and clarification, that all may learn from one another in a spirit of humility, and mutually benefit from this process.

Since the General Assembly has provided for an evaluation of the person serving as General Overseer "at least every six years," we believe this process will help facilitate that requirement as well as apply its principles to other areas of ministry. Our Assemblies currently convene every two years so the most appropriate time for **The General Evaluation** of the General Overseer by the

International Presbytery, would be just prior to the third Assembly, and every third Assembly thereafter. This would be adjusted only if there was a change of Assembly frequency or another pressing reason (such as a resignation by the General Overseer).

Definition of Process:

A review by nature includes evaluation on how an individual is meeting the prescribed goals, performing in administrative duties, attaining spiritual and professional development, demonstrating accountability to the constituency, providing inspirational leadership, and handling interpersonal relationships. This evaluation is shared in a spirit of helping the Presbyter by commending and affirming his strengths and revealing weaknesses that could hinder his effectiveness. This should be offered as wise counsel to encourage him in improving his service to God and others. The evaluation and subsequent meeting with the Review Board should be bathed in much prayer and camaraderie to foster a spirit of loving counsel and support. This evaluation shall be the responsibility first of the Review Board who will handle the implementation of this process in specific areas where General Presbyters serve in that capacity. They will also meet with General Presbyters at a prescribed place and time agreed upon in advance to perform the evaluation. The findings and determinations of the Review Board should be shared with “the Presbyter being evaluated” to clarify issues and seek prayerful understanding before presenting their recommendation to the International Presbytery for their decision. Subsequently, the General Overseer and the entire International Presbytery shall have final authority to retain/replace General Presbyters. Since retaining or replacing the General Overseer or General Presbyters requires the approval of the International Presbytery, the “Ministerial Appeal Process” does not apply to their positions.

Qualifying Group

When the need arises for a new General Presbyter, the Qualifying Group shall perform their function in the same manner as they do for selection of the General Overseer (page 8, part e). Their research and the information gleaned should be held in strict confidence and the qualified names submitted to the International Presbyters. The purpose of the Qualifying Group is to qualify nominees and present individuals to the International Presbyters who will make the final selection. The Qualifying Group is not a

standing committee, but meets only for background and surveying of records for the selection process. When the need for activation of this group periodically arises, it shall be composed of the General Overseer, the International Ministry Directors, two designates selected every four years by the International Presbyters and the specific area General Presbyter who has nominees (unless the GP has disqualified himself by choice or actions that have removed him). No individual shall serve in qualifying themselves for the office of General Presbyter.

In light of the ongoing development and maturing process of plurality and “shared leadership” among us, especially within the global leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy, adjustments within the structure and work of the review of presbyters is essential. It seems imperative that the Qualifying Group should be separated from the Review Board to maintain integrity and harmony within the various ministry areas of our church.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENERAL PRESBYTERS

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Global Leadership—To work with the General Overseer in providing shared leadership to the world-wide church in accomplishing its Christ-ordained mission(88th Assembly Minutes, page 155).
2. Oversight—Oversee the work of the church in their area. This will of course be done in conjunction with the General Overseer, 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 overseers and overall ministry effectiveness in their area as a whole.
6. Discipline—Provide means for discipline of overseers or other ministers where there is no Presbyterian 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 General Overseer 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 overseers in their connection with Harvest-Partner churches.
16. Legal—Confirm and help safe-guard 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 overseers 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 Spir-

it. These certainly include Prayer, Praise/Worship, and Spiritual Warfare, Evangelism/Missions, Youth, Children, and Family Ministry.

5. Pastoral—Provide pastoral leadership and ministry to the overseers 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 the Global Outreach Ministry 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 General Presbyters as the plurality of leadership to review, discuss and give input on the global status of the church.
2. Assembly—Work as General Presbyter in providing leadership to the General 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 Presbyter’s 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 General Overseer for consultation, decision or dissemination. While they should be available for consultation to the General Overseer, at no time should the General Presbyters usurp the authority in a specific area assigned to the General Overseer, 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 out this through mutual respect and prayer. If the issue cannot be resolved, the General Overseer 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 General Overseer and the General Presbyters to their honored positions.

ADMONITION

During the process of adopting this Governance Document, the IP unanimously accepted to bring attention to future members of this body the need for the Counselors and the general body of the IP to conduct business in an orderly manner. The General Overseer, the General Presbyters, and Counselors must monitor the order and polices of the International Presbytery meetings to retain the integrity of our procedures. We also want to encourage the IP’s to hold accountable all presbyters including the General Overseer and General Presbyters that they operate in a manner and spirit of submission to the Governance Document

CONCLUSION

In concluding the task of reviewing, editing, and amending the documents given to us, we the Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity, realize that in the end, the International Presbytery themselves must discern whether what has been done is both pleasing to God and is applicable to the needs of the Church. Therefore, we came back to a statement that appears in most of the other prior documents on this subject that we were asked to examine. It states:

“The general composition of the Church and the ongoing nature of its work requires that the General Presbytery, and all who are involved with its administration at whatever level, work diligently to fine-tune the Church’s new organizational system, structure, and working relationships. Much of how we relate to each other and to the harvest, will yet have to be worked out as we experience God’s leading and the Church’s growth together. Part of the responsibility with which we are charged involves developing and implementing appropriate means for the execution of the Church’s work. We have at our disposal the divine inspiration and fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost, the infallible Word of God, the collective wisdom and instruction of two thousand years of Christian history, and over one hundred years of our own history and experience this side of the Dark Ages. We hope that our efforts will help smooth the way forward for the Church as she encounters the harvesting, organizational, and spiritual challenges of this new century. We submit these findings in the fear of God and with a real sense of having groped for His direction.”

Our dear presbyters, while we have studied and reworked this document over a space of six years, we submit this present revision in the same spirit of those who have labored on this project in the past years and thank you for entrusting us to serve you and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Assembly Committee on Biblical Doctrine and Polity

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APPENDIX

General Overseer and General Presbyters Evaluation/Review

I. Spiritual Qualities and Public Image

The General Overseer and General Presbyters are key in exhibiting within the Church, among its leadership, and to a lost world, the love of Christ and the true practice of Christianity in all areas of life.

How is the General Overseer/General Presbyter meeting these criteria?

- Very well
- Well
- Need Improvement

What are his major strengths/weaknesses in this area?

Strengths: 1.
 2.
 3.

Weaknesses: 1.
 2.
 3.

How can he improve? Please explain briefly.

II. Personal Enrichment and Spiritual Growth

The need to “...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) is a continual admonition to all servants of the Lord and especially to those chosen as leaders, While time, position, and responsibility may prohibit a rigid educational plan, life-long learning necessitates a structured strategy for

continued education and spiritual growth. Such a strategy must include a consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines.

How has the General Overseer/General Presbyter grown in knowledge, wisdom and stature since being selected to this function?

- Noticeably
- Somewhat
- Need Improvement

The General Overseer/General Presbyter has implemented a personal strategy for continued education either formally or informally.

- Yes
- No
- Working at it

How does he practice the spiritual disciplines (fasting, prayer, bible study, etc.)?

- Very well
- Adequately
- Needs improvement

How could he do better in this area? Explain.

III. Vision, Mission, and Strategies

The General Overseer and General Presbyter role has both strategic and operational components. Work between the General Presbytery and the General Overseer must ensure that there is a shared vision for the future of the Church, build understanding around its current mission, and develop appropriate goals and strategies to advance that mission.

How, in your opinion, has the General Overseer or General
Presbyter worked with each other to develop a clear vision for
the Church?

- Well
- Very well
- Needs improvement

How does he understand his leadership role?

- Well
- Very well
- Needs improvement

The General Overseer, working with the General Presbytery,
translates the Church's mission into realistic goals and objectives.
Has this been done by this individual?

- Effectively
- Ineffectively
- Needs improvement

With input from the General Presbytery and International
Ministry Directors, the General Overseer/General Presbyter
has put into place an effective process for long-range, strategic
planting for the Church. How is the General Overseer/General
Presbyter progressing in this goal?

- Still in Process
- Accomplished
- Needs attention

The General Overseer/General Presbyter has a sense of what must (should) change and what must (could) remain the same in order to accomplish the Church's mission and realize its vision.

- A good sense
- A fair sense
- Needs improvement

Major strengths and/or suggestions for improvement in this area:

IV. Accomplishment of Church Objectives

Working together, the General Presbytery and the General Overseer establishes overall operational objectives and appoints and empowers personnel for the achievement of those objectives.

Have effective ministry directors been selected, empowered, and installed?

- Yes
- No
- Needs attention

Does the General Overseer/General Presbyter model and encourage effective behavior and morale-building skills among the directors and staff?

- Yes
- No
- Needs improvement

The General Overseer/General Presbyter has made progress in accomplishing the operational objectives of the Church:

- In all areas
- In some areas
- No progress (needs improvement)

Other Observations:

Major strengths in this area—

What can be done to improve?

V. Fiscal Management

Ensuring that the Church's resources are properly managed and effectively used is important to the spiritual health, integrity, and membership confidence of the Church. The General Overseer, with the General Presbytery, is responsible to see that overall guidelines and policies are in place to accurately monitor, assess, manage, and assure the financial health of the Church. The General Overseer/General Presbyter has secured appropriate and effective leadership on these issues both at the Committee level and the director's under their appointment.

- Yes
- No
- Needs improvement

He is knowledgeable and informed in an overall sense regarding the finances of the Church, and understands the need to encourage and develop adequate resources to accomplish the Church's mission.

- Very knowledgeable
- Knowledgeable and informed
- Needs improvement

What are the General Overseer/General Presbyter's major strengths in this area?

How can the General Overseer/General Presbyter improve in this area?

VI. The General Overseer/General Presbytery Partnership

The General Overseer and the General Presbytery must work together in a plural setting. The same is true of General Presbyters in their respective areas with their overseers and leaders. Each leader draws upon his unique God-given strengths, abilities, and spiritual gifts. The General Overseer and the General Presbytery have joint responsibility for developing and maintaining strong working relationships and systems for sharing information. The General Overseer/General Presbyter is clear about his role:

- Very clear
- Clear
- Needs improvement

The General Overseer/General Presbyter is regarded as a “Leader among leaders” by those who share leadership with him:

- Regarded highly as a leader
- Regarded as leader
- Not regarded or respected

The General Overseer/General Presbyter has the recognized ability necessary to inspire the church effectively:

- Has the ability
- Does not have the ability
- Needs Improvement

The General Overseer/General Presbyter raises issues and questions and provides adequate information to inform other leaders through discussions on a regular basis:

- Yes
- No
- Needs Improvement

What are the major strengths of the General Overseer/General Presbyter in this area?

How can the General Overseer/General Presbyter do better in this area?

VII. The General Presbytery/Ministry Directors’ Relationships

To be effectively addressed, many church issues require a partnership of the General Presbytery and Ministry Directors.

The General Overseer/General Presbyters should work to create opportunities for Ministry Directors to interact regularly with them and to ensure that there are good working relationships.

The General Overseer/General Presbyter has established appropriate systems for dialogue and communication between the General Presbytery and Ministry Directors to ensure that their offices maintain a good knowledge of the International Office's ministries and vice-versa.

- Yes
- No
- Inadequate

The General Overseer/General Presbyter encourages Ministry Directors to build effective working relationships with them.

- Yes
- No
- Needs Improvement

The working relationships among the General Overseer, General Presbytery and Ministry Directors reflect the fruit of the Spirit.

- Sufficiently
- Insufficiently
- Needs Improvement

What are the major strengths of the General Overseer/General Presbyter in this area?

How can the General Overseer/General Presbyter do better in this area?

VIII. General Perceptions of the International Presbytery

As one reviews the performance of the General Overseer/General Presbyter, he should also gauge the perceptions of the overall operations and quality of the International Offices in the areas listed below. The response to these questions may help to focus the General Overseer and General Presbytery’s attention on specific areas of spiritual and organizational strength and limitations and will help to guide future development efforts.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest), how would you rate the following:

ITEM	Rating
Inspirational Leadership	_____
International Presbytery Spirituality and Morale	_____
General Ministry Spirituality and Morale	_____
Church Membership Spirituality and Morale	_____
Harvesting, Outreach, Growth	_____
Resources to local churches	_____
Resources to Overseer’s Offices	_____
Recruitment, Development, and Placement of new leadership	_____
Administrative Operations	_____
Development and Delivery of Effective Programs	_____

Fiscal Responsibility	_____
General Public Relations	_____
Church/Kingdom/Para-church relations	_____
Vision Casting, Long-range and Strategic planning	_____
Other _____	_____

Comments and Observations:

IX. Open-Ended Questions

1. What are the three major strengths of your General Overseer/
General Presbyter?

1.

2.

3.

2. What are some limitations in the General Overseer/General
Presbyter's performance?

3. What have been the most significant achievements of the
General Overseer/General Presbyter over the last two years?

8. Additional comments and observations:

9. The General Overseer/General Presbyter receives a two-year evaluation and periodic review in a timely and thoughtful way that articulates specific strengths and areas for improvement:

- Yes
- No
- Needs Improvement

APPENDIX 3

The Biblical Institution of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage Final Document

Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity of the Church of God of Prophecy to the 94th International General Assembly

Introduction

Section I

A. The Divine Design of Marriage

- 1. The Creative Purpose of Marriage*
- 2. Family: The Foundation of Society*

B. The Consequences of the Fall

- 1. Depravity*
- 2. Polygamy*

C. The Tragedy of a Broken Marriage

- 1. Divorce and Remarriage*
- 2. The Cost of Divorce and Remarriage*
- 3. Divorce in the New Testament*
- 3. The Early Church Fathers*
- 4. The Reformation*
- 5. The Church of God*

B. Four Current Views on Divorce and Remarriage

- 1. No Divorce and No Remarriage*
- 2. Divorce but No Remarriage*
- 3. Divorce and Remarriage for
Adultery or Desertion*
- 4. Divorce and Remarriage Under
a Variety of Circumstances*

C. What Constitutes a Lawful/Legal Marriage?

- 1. Tension Between Church and
State*
- 2. The Elements of Lawful Marriage*
- 3. Basic Principles of Marriage*
- 4. Types of Marriages*

D. Recommendations

- 1. Unlawful Unions*
- 2. Celibacy*

D. Recommendations

- 1. Marriage Affirmation*
- 2. Family Affirmation*
- 3. Priorities*
- 4. Reconciliation and Healing*
- 5. Forgiveness and Restitution*
- 6. Christian Counseling*
- 7. Educational Resources*

Section II

A. The Historical Perspective

- 1. Divorce in the Old Testament*

B. Important New

Testament Principles

- 1. Repentance (Forgiveness)*
- 2. Restitution*
- 3. Restoration (Healing the Past)*
- 4. Receiving (Acceptance)*
- 5. Perfect and Permitting
Will of God*

C. Turning to the Harvest

- 1. Focusing on the Harvest*
- 2. Fulfilling the Great Commission
and Great Commandment*
- 3. The New Testament Practice*

D. Ministerial Ethics Regarding Sexuality

- 1. The Pastor/Minister's Lifestyle*
- 2. Performing Matrimony and
Pre-Marital Counseling*
- 3. Divorce and Remarriage as
Pertains to a Minister*
- 4. Sexual Sin: Discipline and
Restoration*

Section III

A. The New Testament Perspective

- 1. The Relevant Passages*
- 2. Celibacy*

E. Recommendations

- 1. Annulment*
- 2. God's Sovereignty*
- 3. Forgiveness*
- 4. Ministerial Ethics*
- 5. Fornication*

The Biblical Institution of Marriage

Introduction

The history of Christianity contains divergent views and interpretations regarding the subject of marriage and divorce. Many sincere theologians, counselors, and ministers have agonized laboriously over this subject, yet have been unable to come to a common understanding. Value systems constantly seem to change, and divorce runs rampant, even in the church.

The scripture is clear as to God's original design for marriage: i.e. that a man and a woman be united in a monogamous, lifelong relationship. While we recognize that the very foundation of this divine institution has been attacked and marred since man's fall in the Garden of Eden, it is still incumbent on us to strive for and uphold God's original design. However, we also recognize that we are working from a fallen state trying to achieve God's purpose. We are commissioned to minister to all without prejudice. As such then, the church must continue to uphold this principle, yet accept the challenge of ministering God's grace in a fallen world.

Preparation for marriage continues to be one of our weakest areas of training and expertise. And, perhaps, preserving of marriages ranks behind this. Therefore, we must aggressively pursue training that will help our ministers better prepare people for marriage and will assist in saving a marriage already in trouble. In the same manner as Jesus, we must be prepared to accept and minister love to those who have suffered the trauma and rejection of a broken marriage. While we understand that this is a very complex issue, we also understand that God is sovereign and that He is the final judge. We will have to leave some things to His sovereignty. We must also be prepared to expand our understanding of God, as we watch Him work in the lives of people, just as the early church did.

Section I—The Divine Design of Marriage

From the beginning of creation, marriage was in the mind of our Creator who purposed by His own design that “aloneness” was not good for the relational creature He called “mankind” (Genesis 2:18; 1:27–31). Contrary to modern thinking, marriage is not a human expediency. God designed marriage as the foundational element for all human interaction and for society as a community, including churches, schools, and governments. Marriage is God’s platform for creation, maintenance, and development of family. Genesis 2:24 declares, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” God in the Garden of Eden initiated the institution of marriage. Therefore, it may be defined as the mystical union between one man and one woman as indicated by the above Scripture passage. It involves leaving and cleaving, both actions that necessitate decision and commitment.

Marriage was instituted in the context of creation, making it an ordinance of faith. God’s purpose in giving marriage to all mankind was (1) to compensate the weakness a man or woman has in being alone; (2) to establish a faithful, monogamous relation, which is essential for the successful survival of society; and (3) to create the one-flesh relationship. The biblical standard for marriage is a relationship in which a man and a woman share a lifetime commitment to each other, second only to their commitment to God (Mark 10:5–9; Matthew 19:4–9). God affirmed this as the principle of marriage inherent in His creation. Paul cited this key principle to show the sinfulness of sexual relations outside marriage (1 Corinthians 6:12–20) and to emphasize the importance of self-giving love in marriage (Ephesians 5:28). Genesis 2:24 emphasizes the oneness of the marriage and the priority of the bond over all others, including the relationship of the couple to their parents. Marriage is also for companionship (vv. 18–23). Paul described the kind of mutual submission that should characterize the marriage relationship (Ephesians 5:21–33). Although the husband is head of the home, his role is modeled after the role of Christ as Head of the church, who “loved the church and gave Himself for it” (v. 25).

Biblical marriage involves three elements:

- The consent of the partners and of the parents (Genesis 21:21; 34:4–6; Judges 14:2, 3; Joshua 15:16; Ephesians 6:1–3;

1 Corinthians 7:37, 38). It should be understood that there may be circumstances in which parental consent may be impossible.

- The public avowal (*declaration*), which should include a marriage covenant/contract, as well as legal and social customs (Genesis 29:25; 34:12). The legal/contractual aspect was important and made the period of betrothal binding.

- The physical consummation of the union, which normally follows. However, sexual intercourse alone does not constitute a marriage (Genesis 22:24; Judges 8:30, 31; 2 Samuel 3:7; 5:13; 1 Kings 11:3; Deuteronomy 22:28, 29; Exodus 22:16, 17).

As we can see from the Scripture (Genesis 2:18–24), marriage was instituted (established) when man was in innocence and in an environment of peaceful or heavenly bliss, often referred to as “paradise.” In its original state, marriage was designed to be a monogamous relationship involving a committed partnership between a man and a woman and thereby completing God’s creative work, which was concluded as being perfect/commendable/good (Ecclesiastes 7:27–29).

Marriage is a foundational institution; it is more than mating. Marriage has a four-fold purpose:

- The Maturation of Personality
- Sexual Fulfillment
- Reproduction and Nurturing
- The Spiritual Enrichment of the Soul

The reason for marriage was to solve the dilemma of “aloneness” (Genesis 2:18–25). Companionship, therefore, is the essence of marriage in the simplest sense. Scriptures like Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14 are reminders by God that marriage was a “covenant of companionship.” Therefore, companionship is a union whereby one man and one woman enter into a close relationship and intimacy, united in thoughts, goals, efforts, and body.

Family: The Foundation of Society

The family is clearly God’s creative design. In Genesis 2:21–25, it is obvious that God had a distinct plan of how the family would be structured. This unit would include a husband and wife; it would also be shaped by the procreation of a father and mother.

The family structure consists of lifetime marriages, parents (male and female), and children that may be birthed to this holy unity (Genesis 4:1, 2; 5:1, 2). As redeemed people committed to the creative purposes of God, this divine design must be guarded to preserve the sanctity and purpose of family life. As God's people, we are mandated by Scripture to be a pillar of this divine plan for the family.

As opposed to emerging new cultural beliefs and deviant values based on relativism, monogamous marriage is central to the biblical concept of family. In the existential environment of education and spirit of relativism in secular courts of justice, these Judeo-Christian principles concerning lifetime, monogamous marriages are being replaced, once again, by the pagan beliefs that thrive on "whatever feels good." Broken families, divorced parents, and remarried couples need our prayer, love, acceptance, and help in recovering and healing their lives. Most of all, they need our help in restoring their relationship to God without us placing judgmental or unattainable demands upon them that can often lead them back into sinful lifestyles. But, while we must embrace, love, support, and pray for people who have made mistakes and now courageously seek to build their families, we must never set them up as the normal or healthy role model of God's original creative design for the family. Furthermore, it should be noted that homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality are sinful practices clearly prohibited in Scripture as violations of God's design (Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:13–16; Romans 1:25–32). To base any family on a condition that God classifies as an abomination is an affront to His creative pattern. The biblical text also clearly indicates that polygamy deviates from God's principle of a monogamous, lifetime marriage. Throughout the writings of the prophets, the monogamous marriage is represented as symbolic of the union of God with Israel (Hosea 2:19), Christ and His Bride (i.e. Matthew 9:15), and that polygamy was a counterpart to idolatry (Genesis 4:23) that originated with the descendants of Cain. In fact, the backslidings and calamities of David and Solomon were directly compounded by their polygamous departure from God's original design (2 Samuel 5:13; 1 Kings 11:1–3).

In Psalm 127:3, the psalmist reminds us that children are a heritage of the Lord. This infinite affection and priority of God

toward children is clearly revealed in the importance and value given to them by Jesus Christ during His earthly life and ministry (Matthew 18:2; 19:14; Mark 10:14). This emphasis focuses great importance upon the role and place of children in the family. The family is enriched, multiplied, and completed through the conception, birth, and nurturing of children. They add character and meaning to the wholeness of family. Understanding the significance of children within a family, we can now see that any harm or voluntary rejection of them from a proper and healthy assimilation into the family brings disfavor with the Master Designer. Societal departures that justify violent acts such as abortion, incest (Leviticus 18:6), sexual or physical abuse are contradictions to the created order and purpose of the family.

Tragically, the wide acceptance of abortion as a legitimate option has done enormous damage to the worth and value of children today. Families were considered cursed by God in ancient times when they did not conceive and bear children (Genesis 16:2; 30:1–6; 1 Samuel 1:5, 6). Although this was never a true reflection of God's thinking, it demonstrates the past value placed on children. Sadly, many societies today consider them a burden, a curse, or an unwanted inconvenience. God sees children who have been conceived as eternal souls and infinitely valuable to His purpose in the world. The description by David sums up God's high value placed on a child from the time of conception (Psalm 139:11–18).

The blessing of the extended family has also been undermined by the trends and pressures of many societies today. Because the agrarian economy has been eradicated or severely reduced in many nations, the masses have had to immigrate to cities to find jobs or places to live for their families. In addition to this development over the last century, the media and popular culture have attacked or ridiculed the importance of extended families. In fact, even the role of parents is presently under constant derision, and children are quickly being viewed as wards of the State or government. Especially, the role or position of fathers has been both attacked and maligned by the modern media. But we must never allow these current trends or cultural ideologies to shape what God designed for us. His plan foresaw the wonderful blessing of the extended family to their health and strength. The church must, once again, emphasize and renew the value of the family as a

whole in the lives of children. This renewal is critical in nations where fathers and mothers both work to be able to provide for their families. Young couples need to consider this when building their families, and we must as a church help restore the role of the family unit as critically important.

The loving and disciplined home does not need to be a relic of past generations. Many families today are finding the right components to building a good family environment. This Church must continue to aid and guide families into providing a safe and secure home where children and parents feel acceptance and love. Beginning with our ministers, unbelievers must see a desire among us to model for them a family and home where these qualities are held up as priorities (Colossians 3:17–21). Broken and blended families are a reality of our present culture. While we must hold up the model that was intended by God, we cannot ignore, condemn, or ostracize these families. Jesus came to minister to fallen humanity and demonstrated that in His life. Many families today have been lost from our churches or sent back out into the darkness of this world because they were not accepted and ministered to. While these families certainly do not reflect the creative design of God, we must help nurture a generation of children who will seek and model a biblical marriage. The application of this forgiving principle, as well as the teaching and modeling of God's creative design, will make a more powerful impact upon the harvest.

The Consequences of the Fall

The Bible leaves no doubt that the corruption of sin extends to every area of a person's life, including his intellect, emotions, will, and relationships. People, in and of themselves, have nothing that would make them worthy of God. The fall was an historical event that affected real people who were tempted to disobey God and committed sin because of their disobedience. Their sin involved listening to the wrong voice, doubting what they had been told by God, looking and desiring the thing that was forbidden by God, and then following through to eat the fruit. Adam and Eve sinned because they made the choice to disobey God. Ever since that time, people sin by nature and by choice.

As a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, there were curses placed on man, woman, and the serpent. The man was sentenced

to hard labor for his livelihood. Woman was told that she would have pain in childbirth and would struggle in the relationship with her husband. The serpent was condemned to crawl on his belly. There were also lost privileges because of their disobedience. Adam and Eve were cast from their home in the Garden of Eden. Where there had been only life in the beginning, spiritual and physical death was pronounced on mankind. Where there had been only peace, there would be a spiritual battle to fight. Where there had been serenity and open communion, mankind felt guilt and loss of fellowship with God. From that moment on, mankind would be born spiritually dead and doomed to eternal separation from God unless a cure was found for this condition.

Just as the Flood affected the whole world, sin affected all of mankind. Also, just as there were aftershocks and movements that still continued to bring long-lasting effects to the world, sin corrupted the created order of mankind to the point that many marriages end up in divorce, multiple marriages, polygamy, rape, teen pregnancies, abuse, abandonment, and racism. We only need to look at the current statistics of these social ills to see the profound impact that sin has on the family. But, in the beginning, marriage was created to give honor and glory to God, who also instituted this wonderful union for the completeness of mankind. This not only affects those outside Christendom, but includes our church homes and families.

The Tragedy of a Broken Marriage

The tragedy of divorce must be approached with much prayer and fear of Almighty God, who is merciful and just. We must confess that the stigma we have placed on this sin has been enormous. In many quarters, the ever-increasing numbers of divorced people are often shown little mercy, quick judgment, and staunch condemnation. We should give careful attention to our Lord's response in Matthew 19:3–12 when He met with those who wanted to start an argument on the subject. His answer drew their attention back to God's original plan, and rebuffed those who wanted to hold up Moses as an excuse for their own sin.

Therefore, the truth of the biblical design must never be compromised and always held up by the church as God's standard, but this must be balanced with compassion for the human tragedy.

Therefore, the church must deal with the reality of a fallen world, where sin brings destruction on the human family and exacts a great cost. The tragedy of a broken marriage can be seen from at least six distinctive perspectives:

- Societal Cost
- Emotional Cost
- Physical Cost
- Familial Cost
- Financial Cost
- Spiritual Cost

Therefore, no one wins in the case of a divorce, and all parties suffer the awful consequences of the breakdown of the home. Its effects are seen throughout the culture and society at large, where it not only touches the immediate family members, but many generations to come.

At the root of the breakdown lies a spiritual need for both personal reconciliation with the Creator and interpersonal forgiveness by both marriage partners. No true peace of heart, emotional healing, and harmony in the home can be achieved without these two key and overlooked elements. While the parties may ultimately separate and divorce, both the spiritual and emotional tragedy, reinforced by an unforgiving heart, will continue to plague them. Too often, this condition is continued even in a second marriage, which itself may end in divorce, with the statistics for this second group being higher than in the first.

The physical and financial toll of divorce can be seen in escalating domestic violence, neglect, as well as the costly burden it places on the educational, legal, and civil systems of the nation. But the most tragic aspects of divorce are seen in its effects on the children. The most vulnerable members of our society, the children, find it most difficult to deal with the breakdown in their families. The results are seen in the escalating numbers of runaways and school dropouts, as well as the spiraling drug addiction and suicide rates among teenagers.

Society views divorce as an unfortunate situation, and is only capable of rendering limited therapeutic care to the parties involved. It offers divorce as a remedy to a marriage deemed unhappy. On the other hand, in the religious community, divorce is viewed as a taboo that requires strict adherence to a quarantined break in fellowship. Neither one of these seem to be appropriate because they ignore the

basic hurt, pain, and the lifetime damage of the severing of the “one flesh” union.

Section I: Biblical Institution of Marriage Recommendations

1. **The Created Gift of Marriage:** We believe in lifetime, monogamous marriages (one man-one woman covenant relationships) that exhibit the created order of the Lord. Such marriages strengthen homes, churches, communities, and nations. This blessing afforded us through understanding God’s Word should provoke us to avoid the pitfalls of today’s culture that is rampant with premarital sex, adultery, divorce, and remarriage. Marriage is the foundation of families and the cornerstone of promoting good morals that preserve the high value of children, the elderly, and the disabled (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).
2. **Family Affirmation:** We recognize the created order of God includes families that were designed as a father and mother who procreate children. We also endorse the value of the extended family as defined by the Bible. The family was designed as a home guided by love, discipline, and other nurturing aspects that would include all members under the pattern of God’s Word. Strong marriages and loving families serve as a buffer to prevent societal maladies such as abortion, incest, abuse, euthanasia, adultery, polygamy, or homosexuality/ lesbianism. These are destructive to the unity, health, and prosperity of families and must be diligently taught as contrary to God’s original design.
3. When a marriage is in trouble, the priority should be that of seeking forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing between the injured parties for the sake of restoring the marriage and family at all cost.
4. Where marriages have ended in divorce, separated couples should be encouraged to maintain an open door for reconciliation and healing so that the Lord may intervene to restore the broken marriage.
5. Where marriages have ended in divorce with no clear possibility of reconciliation or restitution, it is still incumbent on the injured parties to seek and offer forgiveness of one another for the sake of healing. “Restitution where possible” has been one of our prominent teachings and should be sought for in every condition where sin has occurred.

6. When a case arises where a pastor feels he/she cannot provide necessary counseling, other credible Christian counseling should be sought for the sake of saving a failing marriage.

7. Educational resources should be made available, and the Church should embark on an aggressive program of training our ministers in both pre-marital and marriage counseling being sensitive to comply with national/state laws governing marriage counselors where applicable.

Section II—The History of Marriage

The Historical Perspective

Divorce in the Old Testament

The entire purpose of the Mosaic Law was to reveal the sinful state of humanity and to help them return to a right relationship with God. He knew that people needed guidance for their daily lives, but they also needed the mercy and grace only He could provide. This would allow for the process of returning to Him without forcing them to adhere to the Laws through some radical, arbitrary method. The more gracious, gentle method was to show mankind a higher level of good and let the seed have time to grow, even though this seems to be a slower process.

Divorce did not begin with the children of Israel. When Moses presented the laws for governing divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1–4, God did not permit him to do so in order to give approval for divorce. These laws were simply given to regulate a practice that already existed and was a familiar custom throughout the known world. The Deuteronomy passage tried to dispel this confusion.

In the case of divorce, several things must be kept in mind when studying the Old Testament Scriptures. First of all, God sees the marriage bond as being holy. Second, because of God's declaration, the marriage bond is to be a lifetime commitment. It must be viewed as a permanent commitment and not as a temporary arrangement. However, because of the "hardness of the heart," Moses provided a way to protect those who were victimized by the sinfulness of another person's heart. We must focus on the sacredness of the marriage bond instead of dwelling so much on divorce. Divorce should never be elevated as being more sinful than other acts of disobedience to God's Word. On the other hand, it should never be excused as simply a

regretful necessity. Scripture clearly condemns divorce as violating the expressed design of the Creator. It must be kept in mind that when divorce takes place, either one or both parties have allowed “hardness of the heart” (Matthew 19:8) to guide their actions in breaking the marriage bond.

The truth is that nowhere in the Old Testament is divorce recommended or approved, even though it was allowed in specific situations. It is equally true that God hates divorce just as much as he hates sin in any form. God did make provision for man to be forgiven of sin. This includes forgiveness for the choice of divorce. God gave His laws (rules), told us of the rewards we would receive if we followed them, and explained the consequences if we disobey. He then stepped back and allowed us to choose which path to walk in. Whatever choices one makes, there will be consequences or rewards. Even when we suffer the consequences, God never stops caring, loving, nor disowns us. He forgives and forgets. We will never be able to fathom the extent of God’s grace and love evident in the fruit grace produces. We must pursue God’s standard.

Divorce in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus stressed the seriousness and permanence of the marriage relationship. He reaffirmed the standard for those who wanted to find true fellowship with God. In the Old Testament, there were written rules and consequences that were to be followed. In the New Testament, Jesus made it plain that God was not interested in people following rules so much as He was interested in their hearts being right. He knew that a person could follow rules and still not be in communion with God.

Divorce and remarriage certainly existed even among God’s people, both under the law and under grace. There is no question that these actions were not the chosen design of God. Paul recognized God’s perfect will when it comes to marriage. He said a divorced person should be reconciled or remain unmarried.

Finally, when Jesus addressed the subject of marriage, He did so as a preventive measure to encourage the Jews to take their marriages more seriously. The Jews understood the high value God placed on this first and great institution, marriage. Neither the Old nor New Testaments provide divine sanction for divorce.

They simply recognized that divorce was practiced among the Israelites and even the early Christians. God never intended for divorce to happen. However, He did recognize that some measures had to be put into place to protect the innocent and provide for their care. It is apparent that miracles of restoration are more likely to happen in an atmosphere of spiritual power and acceptance than in isolation that could drive sincere people away from their Creator God.

The Early Church Fathers

The church fathers of any age do not have the same authority that the biblical writers have nor are they part of the canon of Scripture. What they say is not binding on the Christian. The final authority is the Word of God. However, it is wise to consider their findings when we are trying to determine doctrinal positions.

It should be noted that there have been differences of opinion throughout all history of Christian teaching. These differences have existed within the church and include the practical application of Jesus' teaching concerning adultery, divorce, and remarriage. While some of the church fathers believed that the "exception clause" permitted remarriage, the majority believed that there was no allowance made for divorce or remarriage. So there was debate even among the early church fathers.

The Reformers

Nearly all the reformers of the 16th century rejected the idea of the monks concerning celibacy. They also rejected the idea that marriage is a sacrament and indissoluble except for death. They all agreed that divorce should be granted for adultery and that the innocent party was free to remarry. Most of them regarded desertion as a second legitimate reason for divorce. However, controversy continued concerning what grounds would be allowable, and changes in opinion happened frequently. The one area where there was universal acceptance of divorce was where there was adultery on the part of the wife.

The Church of God

The question of the divorce and remarriage issue began early on in our fellowship at the General Assembly in 1908. Questions

continued to be raised on the subject through the Assembly in 1922 when the General Overseer addressed the subject of divorce and remarriage at length and offered his well-known John Jenson and Sallie Pratt illustration as a way of trying to open the way for some type of biblical study on the subject so a decision could be reached. He never intended for this illustration to become the final answer, only a compromise at that time. He wanted this compromise to be an invitation to truly study the Scriptures on the subject and seek God for His divine intervention. However, the study never took place in an official manner. Then at the Assembly in 1928, the General Overseer asked the Assembly about adding a teaching concerning divorce and remarriage to the teachings made prominent. The subject had not been discussed for a few years. The Assembly gave orders to have this added to the list of teachings made prominent. Even though the teaching was added, questions were still raised in various Assemblies.

Since this subject has come up so many times in our own history and throughout the history of Christianity, it would seem that even though the issue was settled in the minds of some, it has not been settled to the point that “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and us.” This is evident by a revisit and a broadening of the definition of the term “fornication” in the Assembly of 1986 (*81st Assembly Minutes*, p. 41) under the leadership of M. A. Tomlinson. For this body to move more confidently into the harvest, we must continue this study of Scripture exegetically and without the prejudice of our past opinion, so the Holy Spirit can reveal to us more light.

Four Current Views on Divorce and Remarriage

Presently, there are four major positions on divorce and remarriage. Each of these views represents an effort by various parties to bring some clarity to the questions and confusion that surrounds this very sensitive subject.

The first view is: *No Divorce and No Remarriage.*

J. Carl Laney, in his book *The Divorce Myth*, espouses the view that the Bible indicates marriages are always intended to be permanent, that there is never a need for divorce, and that remarriage is never permissible after divorce. On the basis of his survey of the major, scriptural passages on marriage, divorce,

and remarriage, he concluded that when a divorce does occur, the only two scriptural options for the divorced person are reconciliation or the single life.

The second view is: *Divorce but No Remarriage.*

William Heath contends that while there are legitimate, biblical grounds for divorce, there are no legitimate grounds for remarriage after divorce. Thus, one is to remain unmarried or else be reconciled (1 Corinthians 7:11). Separated or divorced Christians should avoid any thought or action that would hinder the possibility of restoration. But if reconciliation is impossible, primarily because one's spouse has already remarried, then the path of God's highest blessing must lie in the direction of pursuing a single life.

The third view is: *Divorce and Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion.*

Thomas Edgar defends the position that allows for divorce and remarriage in cases of adultery or desertion. Jesus states that there is only one valid reason for which a person may properly divorce the other and subsequently marry someone else—adultery on the part of the spouse. Paul further indicates that desertion by the unbelieving spouse is just cause for remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:15).

The fourth view is: *Divorce and Remarriage Under a Variety of Circumstances.*

Larry Richards holds that Scripture, while decrying divorce and the pain it causes, points to a God of grace who will not condemn those who divorce and remarry. Because human beings are marred by sin, it will not always be possible for a marriage to achieve this ideal. Persons who have divorced and are remarried have the right to be fully involved in the life of the local church, without prejudice. Their spiritual gifts are to be recognized and affirmed, and they are to be encouraged to find the place of service for which their gifts equip them.

What Constitutes a Lawful/Legal Marriage?

This question is paramount to every proposed engagement or marriage (Genesis 24). The failure of parents, pastors, churches, and societies to properly apply the principles raised from this question has contributed to the “unequally yoked” problem (2 Corinthians 6:14) existing in many matrimonial situations.

Tension Between Church and State

Many Christian churches refuse to recognize the authority of secular institutions (courts) to annul existing marriages, yet embrace the rights of the same institution in determining “What is a lawful marriage?” This is a biblical contradiction! A *legal* marriage may not in fact be a *lawful* marriage (i.e. same-sex union, incestuous marriages, and polygamy). Why then would anyone invalidate the “authority of parents” given to them by Scripture; especially, to biblically oppose a marriage of their child to an unbeliever or someone they feel would endanger the life of their child (Romans 1:25–32; Numbers 30)?

If this body is to address the foundational subject of marriage and not just the problem of divorce, we must explore this question on “lawful marriages.” In the case of the well-known command by Jesus, “. . .

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6), we must be careful not to be too focused on the latter portion of this statement while overlooking the implication of the first phrase. Only God under the governance of His biblical principles can determine if a marriage vow is legitimately done in His eyes, since no pagan court or institution was ever given sole authority to solemnize holy matrimony. We must exercise caution in this regard; simply because two people are of age does not mean that they meet all biblical qualifications of a *lawful* marriage. The state can afford to be arbitrary on the requirements for marriage, but the church cannot!

The Elements of Lawful Marriage

In all societies, two people are married when their relationship is legally recognized; but from a biblical perspective, there is much more involved than mere legal registration. According to God’s created order and design in marriage for two biblically eligible people (male and female) there must be the following: *Mutual Consent* (Genesis 21:21; 1 Corinthians 7:37, 38), *Permanence* (binding covenant), *Public Witness* (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1), *Consummation of the Physical Union* (1 Corinthians 7:1–6), and *Honest Testimony* (Jeremiah 22:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6). This will also involve the following key principles that must not be ignored for a healthy marriage: *Parental Blessing*

(Numbers 30; Colossians 3:20), *Holy Vows*, and being *Equally Yoked* (1 Corinthians 7:10–16).

Types of Marriages

Almost all known societies operate a complex system, which involves the co-existence of different legal realms within the same national legal system, such as customary law and common law. In various parts of the world, it is common to find the indigenously based customary law existing side by side with the received law, based on that of the former colonial power. Under Roman law, there were two types of marriages: *manus marriage*, which meant the wife was in “the hands” of her husband (in his legal control); a *free marriage*, where the wife was not subject to that control; the wife was legally independent (husband not holding legal power over her). The Christian church recognizes these many variations of marriage, with the exception of polygamy, free (common law) marriages, same-sex marriages, or where other elements of biblically lawful marriages have been violated.

Marriage Alternative

A biblical teaching that has been either ignored or misunderstood in our western culture is that of singleness or celibacy.

In 1 Corinthians 7:7–9 and 9:5, Paul makes it very clear that he was unmarried. In the above passages, Paul does not leave any room for anyone to think that celibacy is an inferior state of being or a hindrance to ministry. Paul was an apostle, and part of his ministry was to ordain bishops or elders.

Jesus indicated in Matthew 19:12 that celibacy may indeed be His calling on some for the sake of the kingdom. This option should not be overlooked as God’s will after a broken marriage or before a marriage.

Recommendations

1. Due to the departure of societies from Judeo-Christian values, the Church renounces biblically unlawful unions, such as same sex, incestuous, or polygamous marriages, even if they are legal in the eyes of local, state, or national governments.

2. 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.

Section III—The New Testament and Marriage

The New Testament Perspectives

This section is a study of the New Testament passages that are relevant to the issues of divorce and remarriage.

Mark 10:2–12 and Luke 16:18:

Jesus' response in the Mark passage takes us back to God's original, creative design for marriage, i.e. that marriage was for life and what God had joined together man was not to put asunder. Neither Mark nor Luke alluded to or implied Matthew's "exception clause." In both passages, adultery was the result of remarriage. An element that is unique to Mark among the Gospels is that it forbids not only the man to divorce and remarry but the wife as well. This is probably so because Mark had the Roman culture in mind.

1 Corinthians 7:10–15:

Even though verses 10 and 11 do not approve of separation, allowance is made for it because a marital bond involves two people, which creates the possibility of the one leaving without the other being able to do anything about it. However, remarriage is not an option. Verse 15 has been understood by some to permit remarriage for the "deserted" believer. However, there are several reasons to show that this is a serious misunderstanding of the passage:

1) Marriage is a creation ordinance and is binding on all humanity—irrespective of one's faith or lack thereof (Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Hebrews 13:4).

2) In verse 15, Paul uses the same verb *chorizo* (depart) that he does in verse 11 where remarriage is not an option. Interestingly, the only other place where this verb is used is in Matthew 19:6 in the phrase, "*let not man put asunder.*"

3) There is an obvious connection between verse 11a (“or be reconciled”) and the hopeful outlook of conversion in verse 16, which would lead to reconciliation.

4) The verbs *deo* (bound) and *douloo* (under bondage/slavery) are etymologically completely unrelated. Nowhere in the Scriptures is marriage likened to bondage or slavery. On the contrary, it is likened to the relationship between Christ and the church. Therefore, we should observe marriage as a love relationship rather than “bondage” or “slavery.”

5) According to A. Robertson and A. Plummer: All that *ou dedoulotai* (not under bondage) clearly means he or she need not feel so bound to Christ’s prohibition of divorce as to be afraid to let the heathen partner go if he or she insists on separation. Many have supposed that this means that they would be at liberty to marry again when the unbelieving wife or husband had gone away, as stated by Calvin, Grotius, Rosenmüller, etc. But this is contrary to the line of the argument used by the apostle. The sense of the expression, “is not bound,” means, if the one forcibly departs, the one that is left is not bound by the marriage tie to be responsible for the one that departed.

Romans 7:1–3 and 1 Corinthians 7:39:

Both of these passages clearly confirm that marriage can be dissolved only by physical death. The argument that Romans 7:1–3 refers to the Law as it was given at Mount Sinai has no real foundation because the term “law” in the Scriptures is used with various meanings. The meaning here warranted by the context is in the general sense of the “law of the Lord” often found in the Old Testament, which includes the Creation account in Genesis that contains the foundational Scriptures for marriage (Genesis 2:24). This was quoted by Jesus, to which He (as the Lawgiver) added, “what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). We need to remember that Paul uses almost the same wording in 1 Corinthians 7:39 when he was addressing the case of a widow in the church, who was definitely not under the Mosaic Law.

Matthew 19:3–12 and 5:31, 32:

In the context of Matthew 19:3–12, the Pharisees are asking Jesus for His interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, 2. The Jewish leaders were divided into two camps regarding the issue of divorce. Some sided with the more conservative Shammai, who believed that divorce was legitimate only for “moral uncleanness,” and some sided with the more liberal Hillel who allowed divorce for almost any reason. Jesus, however, did not align Himself with any of these, but He referred his inquirers back to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, thus restoring God’s design for marriage.

In any discussion of the above two passages from Matthew’s Gospel, the most difficult part is what is known as the “exception clause.” Matthew 5:32 states as follows: “saving for the cause of fornication.” Before arriving at an understanding of what this phrase means, it is important to identify the meaning of the word *fornication* (Greek *porneia*). It is used in a broad sense for sexual immorality. Arndt and Gingrich, in their Greek Lexicon, define it as “prostitution, unchastity, every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” Most lexical sources agree with this. Depending on the context, it can also take on more specific meanings such as “incestuous relationship or unlawful marriage” (as in 1 Corinthians 5:1; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25, based on the Levitical decrees in Leviticus 18:1–17). The most widely held view is that in these two Matthean passages it should be understood in its broader meaning.

Needless to say, a great variety of interpretations have been offered regarding the “exception clause.” Since the time of the Reformation, the “innocent party” view has become very popular, according to which the innocent party has the right to secure a divorce and remarry. Very similar to this view is the one according to which the marital infidelity of one of the spouses justifies a divorce, which in this case, would mean the complete dissolution of the marriage.

The difficulty with the preceding views becomes obvious when we look at the statements that come at the end of both passages. In Matthew 5:32, we read, “. . . and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery,” and in 19:9, we read, “. . . and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” In light of the passages in question, the wife could be put away (or divorced) in two ways: first, for the reason of fornication (unchastity, sexual immorality), or for some other reason (as it was the custom

of many Jews at the time of Jesus). According to the “innocent party” view, the guilty wife should not remarry. If she did, she would be involved in adultery. But what if she was not guilty, and yet her husband put her away? According to the closing statement in both passages, if she remarried she would again be involved in adultery. In the case of divorce for the cause of fornication, this would bring about complete dissolution of the marriage. If this is true, why is it adultery if someone marries one of the two divorced spouses? This leads to an impasse. In the light of the above, we are led to conclude that “divorce” and “putting away” do not mean divorce with the right to remarry, but only separation.

Some scholars, even though they are willing to go along with the above interpretation, use Matthew 19:11: “All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given,” to introduce the idea that this not for all of His disciples but only for those “to whom it is given.” However, a comparison with Matthew 13:11, Mark 4:11, and John 6:65, to John 8:43, leads us to understand that those who do not accept Jesus’ teaching are the unbelievers. The comparison is not between one group of believers and another, but between believers and unbelievers. We also need to keep in mind Jesus’ command to all of His disciples: “be ye perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.”

Celibacy/Singleness

In our Western, contemporary society, there is an abhorrence of singleness. Generally speaking, “only life as a couple is really acceptable.” With this view of singleness, it is not surprising that any *block* put in the way of remarriage is perceived as cruel because singleness is seen as such.

Matthew 19:12 constitutes by far the most important teaching of Jesus on the subject of singleness. He uses the image of a eunuch to speak to those who are not able or willing to get married. He distinguishes between three types of people for whom marriage is not a possibility and to whom singleness is what has been “given.” These include: those who are congenitally unable to contemplate full marriage, those who have been rendered incapable of full marriage by castration or other psychological or emotional factors, and those who have chosen the single life and decided not to marry “because of the kingdom of heaven.” In this context, the third

group is clearly Jesus' principal concern. These are the only ones who have taken the decision themselves. There are those who, out of obedience to God their King, have determined to remain single after their divorce.

New Testament Principles

There is no greater model for ministry than that expressed by Jesus in the New Testament. It is undeniable that the early church embraced and lived by these principles. Some are listed as follows:

- Repentance
- Restitution Where Possible
- Acceptance and Love
- Forgiveness for All Sin
- Restoration
- Understanding God's Perfect and Permitting Will

While it is true that Jesus is the exalted Son of God, there was something about His earthly ministry that attracted the poor, blind, bruised, broken, and captives (Luke 4:18). What was the difference? It is undeniably the love and acceptance He expressed to the needy. He offered forgiveness and restoration to the destitute and fallen. He did not require conditions of people that were beyond their ability to fulfill. Jesus required restitution, yet did not make it a condition if it were not possible.

We see these same principles applied in the early church. The acceptance of the uncircumcised in the early church (Acts 15) was based on a realignment of the church's understanding of the Scripture based on what God was doing in the life of these people.

While we must never compromise God's creative order of marriage, we must also discern the heart of the Father and His requirements for those lives that have been devastated by the brokenness of marriage and family. Discerning the Father's heart greatly assists in understanding the application of His universal, divine, and absolute principles. We must always be willing to adjust our understanding of Scripture because we still do see through a "glass darkly." The church in Acts 15 was able to discern the workings of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those that some would not accept. They were cautious so as not to require "burdens," which the new believers could not fulfill or bear. They recognized there is no difference between "us" and "those" whose hearts have been purified by faith. While we may struggle in

knowing how to apply or discern the heart of the Father, we must submit to the fact that He is sovereign. Only He perfectly understands and applies these principles without violating His absoluteness. He is perfect and knows best. The awesomeness of His grace knows no bounds. We do our best in our human limitations to discern and understand this.

The brokenness of home and family is a “result,” not a “cause.” We often focus on the results of the cross, rather than the cross itself. When we focus on the cross and the purpose of Christ’s suffering, it better helps us understand God’s redemptive plan for all humanity.

Turning to the Harvest

During this past decade, we have seen a shift in emphasis in the Church of God of Prophecy relative to the harvest, the result of which has led to a substantial increase of the Church’s membership. In 1994, there was a directive from our former General Overseer to “*Turn to the Harvest.*” Our present General Overseer has continued with that vision by “*Focusing on the Harvest*” with a “*Passion for People.*”

The reality of the harvest field is not always attractive. Speaking concerning His mission on earth, Jesus declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). The bruising and brokenness of individuals and families is evident all around us, and Jesus is very clear that this was a segment of society that He was anointed to reach. If Jesus proclaimed this to be the foundation of His ministry on earth, should not this be the main objective of His body, the church?

We note in Acts, chapter 10, Peter’s objection to partaking of the common and unclean animals because of his traditional mindset. God countered his objection by saying, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” God has called us into an imperfect, unclean world with a life-changing gospel. All sorts of problems devastate people’s lives. Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost and to call all people to repentance. This includes

those lives that have been shattered by divorce and remarriage. Jesus was not selective in who He ministered to, neither should His church be.

The responsibility for fulfilling the great commission is still upon us. Our former General Overseer repeatedly emphasized the fulfilling of the Great Commission through the motivation of the Great Commandment (our love relationship with God and our fellow man). The ultimate expression of that love is stated in Romans 5:8: “But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” In the story of the prodigal son, it was love that propelled the father to offer the same grace to both of his sons despite their offences, attitudes, and conditions. In the Church, there must also be an atmosphere of openness and welcome, which reflects the heart of the Father. Our Lord associated and ate frequently with sinners in the harvest through acceptance and ministry. Then in His own gentle way, He would admonish them to “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11) without laying upon them greater burdens than they could bear (Matthew 23:4). The Church of God of Prophecy, at all levels, must develop and cultivate this openness if we want to retain the fruits of our Lord’s harvest. The teaching of Jesus, His public example, and His methods reveal that we must love the lost and accept them as He did as they come in the evangelistic sense, affording them the protection of the house like newborn babes. Every barrier that would hinder the reaping of the Lord’s harvest must be eliminated.

Ministerial Ethics Regarding Sexuality

The high calling in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14) refers to the calling we have received from Christ to be His disciples. Yet it is a phrase in the modern church that has been aptly applied to ministers or pastors who have received “the call” to be bearers of the Gospel through their preaching, teaching, and shepherding the flock of God. It was to this noble calling that the apostle Paul addressed two young pastors (Timothy and Titus) with specific instructions regarding their positions. The similar vein of these two admonitions bears testimony to the importance of these instructions to the integrity of ministers. To Timothy he writes, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless,

the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, 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 ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:1–7).

When we examine the biblical institution of marriage, we must not only educate ourselves thoroughly with God’s design for marriage, but also His design for those who would shepherd His flock. Just as Jesus was a faithful and morally upright rabbi that the disciples desired to follow, we pastors, overseers, and leaders of His flock must take oversight of His work with the same gravity (Acts 20:28). Indeed, ministers must be anointed by the Holy Spirit and be examples of holiness that will inspire others to follow Jesus. This truth must not only be told, but modeled by those who preach and teach His design to others.

A shepherd’s conduct can bring disgrace and dishonor on his “high calling”; therefore, we should be specific concerning his moral and ethical behavior. Some ministers have simply been victims of a spouse that chose not to live by the standards of the Cross and left his or her ministerial companion to suffer humiliation without opportunity to ever seek restitution or reconciliation. In these cases, the church must be prepared to offer compassion and grace toward their ministry when there has been no stain on their part. On the other hand, we must be careful to point out that immoral conduct by a minister can be of such a nature that returning to leadership might require two or more years of proving themselves and, in some cases, exclude him or her from ever serving in pastoral or oversight leadership again. In any case where a minister has lost the confidence of people, a bad reputation tarnishes their witness and causes people to lose respect for their ministry. The pastoral letters from Paul make it clear that he did not feel that such ministers should be placed in any position of present leadership. Should this divinely inspired counsel be ignored, it would do harm to the reputation of Jesus Christ!

Important consideration also needs to be given to the scriptures from 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, where it reads “the husband of one wife.” The scripture, if interpreted within its original setting and culture, would read perfectly understandable to us. In the context of the same epistle (1 Timothy 5:9), the obvious meaning is that the bishop should have been married only once. There is ample evidence that bishops should not remarry after divorce because of its serious injury to the very institution they want to encourage and foster among the followers of Christ. There is no doubt that Paul is encouraging single-heartedness in a leader, both in heart and in body. He speaks to this cause by using “*the husband of one wife*” expression. Being “the husband of one wife” refers to the singularity of a man’s faithfulness to the woman who is his wife and implies inner as well as outward sexual purity. It is quite possible, and all too common, for a husband to be married to only one woman yet not be a one-woman man because he has sexual desires for other women besides his wife or engages in impure behavior with another woman. Jesus made clear that “everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). A lustful husband, whether or not he ever commits physical adultery, commits moral adultery if he harbors sexual desire for women other than his wife. He is not a one-woman man. When his unfaithfulness becomes known, he is disqualified both in the church body and in the community around him. This applies equally to female ministers.

When speaking of ministerial ethics and the institution of marriage, we must develop a renewed sense of balance between teaching and modeling godly relationships. With ministers, there must be a corporate consciousness by every church body that tolerance is insufficient to restrain the sweeping tide toward increased divorces and the rising flood of remarriages among ministers. Counseling ministers who have had indiscretions is inadequate unless there is a corresponding belief among the shepherds of Christ’s sheep (1 Peter 5:2–4) that we must be diligent and forthright to deal with our leaders when they have failed to build and maintain their own marital relationships. While we must guard against harshness, insensitivity, and legalism, we must also maintain a proper balance in our approach toward ministers who have committed ethical or moral sins. Therefore, the International Presbytery must develop a disciplinary and

restoration program that will evidence strong belief in biblically sound marriages, yet provide a way whereby such ministers can be lovingly restored as children of God and corporately reaccepted by the body without again placing them in the role of a bishop. A bishop must be held to a higher standard (Titus 1:6–9) than other members of the body because of the biblical mandate and because of their high profile influence on other believers who may be struggling with society’s concept for marriage and family. There is no question that Jesus was preparing His Twelve for a role they would play in the body that would, one day, be the foundational stones for the early church leadership.

We need to teach all our ministers, especially pastors and overseers, that some of the past epidemic of divorce has occurred because little or no premarital counseling was done before they performed wedding ceremonies. While the honor of being chosen by a family or couple to perform their wedding ceremony is exciting and complimentary, it remains his or her sacred duty as a minister of the Gospel to provide and insist on the couple receiving extensive premarital counseling. Many divorces have resulted when ceremonies were held without the couple ever receiving even one extensive session concerning marriage. We have the greatest opportunity to help prepare men and women for the most important relationship they will ever build with another human. Since a lifetime, monogamous marriage is God’s design, we must diligently pursue training to prepare young men and women for their new family. Furthermore, it is imperative that we do not “give in” to parental pressure and to the couple to be lax or negligent in insisting on their completing this kind of counsel. When a minister cannot perform this kind of necessary premarital counseling, he or she should be willing to help the couple find someone who is qualified to guide them. Ministers who violate this trust and responsibility should be reprovved and disciplined by having their privileges to perform weddings suspended if necessary.

Section III: The New Testament and Marriage Recommendations

1. The church recognizes many variations in the establishing of legal marriages or wedding ceremonial customs throughout the world, with the exception of polygamy, free (common law) marriages,

same-sex marriages, or where other elements of biblically lawful marriages have been violated. Where unlawful marriages have taken place, annulments may be required to invalidate these violations of biblical standards in consultation with their pastor and the presbyter/overseer.

2. While we recognize that with God all things are possible, we also recognize that some things are beyond human ability to repair or reconcile. This dilemma can best be approached based on the principle in Acts 15:8–11, which states, “And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Caution must be exercised so as not to require of people something that they are unable to do, lest we put a yoke of bondage around their neck (Matthew 23:4). This means the situation must be left to God’s sovereignty. We must also be careful to acknowledge and embrace the sovereignty of God in these situations.

3. We accept the biblical principle of forgiveness of all sins by the grace of God through the shed blood of Christ and that in every nation all those who come to God are acceptable without respect of persons (Acts 10:34, 35). Ongoing discipleship by the pastor and local church is very important for all members (Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 4:11–16). This will require great wisdom and loving care by our leadership and people as we continue in the harvest. Therefore, we further recommend that the International Offices develop a program of extensive discipleship to help all our members mature in Christ Jesus.

4. An ordained minister must be held to a higher standard (Titus 1:6–9) than other members of the body because of the biblical mandate and because of their high-profile influence on other believers who may be struggling with society’s concept for marriage and the family. Therefore, we recommend that the International Presbytery use discretion in ordaining ministers to insure that biblical standards are maintained.

5. The word *fornication*, as used in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, is used in the broad sense of the definition of this word. Based

on our commitment to walk in the light, our historical pursuit to better understand and align with Scripture, and in light of our present definition of this term (Assembly Minutes, 81st Assembly, 1986, p. 41), we believe it important to let the Word shine light on our existing definition of fornication to include incest, homosexuality, bestiality, and sexual immorality.

The Assembly Committee for Biblical Doctrine and Polity for the Church of God of Prophecy humbly submit this document with deep prayer for your review and consideration for 94th General Assembly.