

THE CHURCH OF GOD (Cleveland, TN)

Bylaws

(53rd A., 1970, p. 27, 28; 67th A., 1998, p. 54; 68th A., 2000, pp. 83-86)

ARTICLE I

Name

The official name shall be Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1: 1).

ARTICLE II

Temporal Nature

The Church of God is incorporated in the state of Tennessee (U.S.A.) as a not-for-profit organization and is recognized as a 501 (c) (3) corporation under the Internal Revenue Code (U.S.A.) or the corresponding sections of any prior or future Internal Revenue Code (U.S.A.).

ARTICLE III

Governance

The current edition of the Minutes of the Church of God General Assembly contains a Journal of the most recent meeting of the International General Assembly and a Supplement that includes updated church polity statements, rules

of church order and discipline, and these bylaws.

ARTICLE IV

Mission Statement

The mission of the Church of God is to communicate the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20) in the Spirit and power of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 13-18)(71st A., 2006, p. 44).

ARTICLE V

Members

The membership of the Church of God shall be composed of Christians who have accepted the teachings, doctrines, and government of the Church of God, and who have been formally received into its fellowship pursuant to the guidelines established by the International General Assembly. Procedures for excluding members shall be set by the International General Assembly upon recommendation of the International General Council.

ARTICLE VI

Governing Bodies

1. International General Assembly

Members

The International General Assembly is composed of all members and ministers of the Church of God 16 years of age and above. Members and ministers of the

Church of God present and registered at the International General Assembly shall comprise its voting constituency (64th A., 1992, p. 73; 65th A., 1994, Item 1, p. 78).

Meeting

The International General Assembly shall meet biennially to consider all recommendations from the International General Council.

Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall serve as the official guide for the business of the International General Assembly in all matters to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of the International General Assembly.

Elections

The International General Assembly shall elect the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, the secretary general, the general Youth and Christian Education director, the assistant general Youth and Christian Education director, the Evangelism and Home Missions director, the assistant Evangelism and Home Missions director, the director of World Missions, and the assistant director of World Missions (58th A., 1980, pp. 29-32, (1-4).

Officers, Committees

The officers of the International General Assembly shall consist of the moderator and a secretary. The general overseer shall preside as moderator. He shall also appoint parliamentarians to serve during the International General Assembly meetings. He shall also appoint members of committees called for by the International General Assembly.

The secretary general shall serve the Assembly as secretary. He shall be responsible for recording actions by the Assembly and shall be the custodian of the

records of the Assembly.

Parliamentary Procedure

Debate on all motions shall be governed by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. Each member has the right to speak on every question. However, he cannot make a second speech on the same question as long as any member who has not spoken on the question desires the floor (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised). It is the prerogative of the moderator to recognize each speaker and to determine a balance of negative and affirmative speeches.

Debate may be limited by a proper motion (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised).

2. International General Council

Members

The International General Council is composed of all ordained bishops of the Church of God, who shall comprise its voting constituency.

Agenda

1. The International General Council shall meet biennially to consider all recommendations from the International Executive Council. The International General Council agenda shall be mailed to the ordained bishops at least thirty (30) days prior to the International General Council. (Minutes of the July 1966, International Executive Council, page 93)

2. The International General Council shall consider and prepare such recommendations as are Scriptural and proper in matters pertaining to the welfare of the church. Such recommendations are to be presented to the International General Assembly for final disposition.

3. The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall serve as the

official guide for the business of the International General Council in all matters to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of the International General Council. As a guide for the order of business, the agenda presented by the International Executive Council shall claim the attention of the Council first.

4. Any new business shall be presented to the chairman of the motions committee, which committee shall receive, classify, clarify, eliminate duplication, and dispatch for placement on the agenda following the completion of the printed agenda. Any new business presented to the motions committee shall be presented in typewritten form not later than 2 p.m. of the third day of the International General Council.

5. The International General Council shall nominate to the International General Assembly the general overseer, the assistant general overseers, the secretary general, the general Youth and Christian Education director, the assistant general Youth and Christian Education director, the Evangelism and Home Missions director, the assistant Evangelism and Home Missions director, the director of World Missions, and the assistant director of World Missions.

6. The International General Council shall elect the Council of Eighteen ([1972]; 58th A., 1980, pp. 29-32 (1-4)).

Officers and Committees

1. The officers of the International General Council shall consist of the moderator and a secretary. The general overseer shall preside as moderator. He shall also appoint parliamentarians to serve during the International General Council meetings. He shall also appoint members of committees called for by the International General Council.

2. The secretary general shall serve the Council as secretary. He shall be responsible for recording actions by the Council and shall be the custodian of the

records of the Council.

Parliamentary Procedure and Authority

1. The names of all persons on the nomination ballots receiving twenty-five (25) or less votes for an elected office shall be posted in an appropriate designated place in lieu of reading those names to the International General Council.

2. Debate on all motions shall be governed by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. Each member has the right to speak on every question. However, he cannot make a second speech on the same question as long as any member who has not spoken on the question desires the floor (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised). It is the prerogative of the moderator to recognize each speaker and to determine a balance of negative and affirmative speeches.

3. Debate may be limited by a proper motion (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised).

3. International Executive Council

Authority

This council shall consider and act upon any and all matters pertaining to the general interest and welfare of the Church of God.

Members

The general overseer, his assistants, the secretary general, and eighteen councilors [the Council of Eighteen] elected by the International General Council shall constitute the International Executive Council of the church.

Meeting

At a time set by the general overseer, the International Executive Council shall meet and adopt recommendations to be brought before the International General

Council.

Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the International Executive Council shall be set by the International General Assembly upon recommendation by the International General Council.

ARTICLE VII

Executive Board

International Executive Committee—The executive officers of the Church of God shall be the general overseer, three assistant general overseers, and the secretary general. These shall constitute the International Executive Committee. Their tenure in office, manner of selection, duties and authorities, and procedure for filling vacancies shall be decided by the International General Assembly upon recommendation from the International General Council

ARTICLE VIII

Committees

Standing Boards and Committees—Standing boards and committees as called for by the International General Assembly or International General Council shall be appointed by the International Executive Committee. The general overseer shall be an ex officio member of all standing boards and committees.

ARTICLE IX

Parliamentary Authority

The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall serve as the official parliamentary guide for conducting the business of the church.

ARTICLE X

Amendment of Bylaws

Amendment

The power to alter, amend, or repeal these bylaws shall be vested in the International General Assembly and exercised only by a two-thirds vote of the International General Assembly upon recommendation of a two-thirds vote of the International General Council.

Previous Notice

In order to amend, alter or repeal these bylaws, previous notice will be considered fulfilled if the following guidelines to notify the constituency are observed:

(1) Mail to ministers whose addresses are on record at the Church of God International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., including national and territorial leaders, the notice and copies of the proposed change(s) to the Bylaws of the Church of God to be considered by the International General Council not later than 90 days prior to the opening of the International General Council. Pastors should make this notice available by public announcement and/or posting to their congregations.

(2) Include the notice and a copy of the proposed change(s) to the Bylaws of the Church of God to be considered by the International General Council in at least two issues of the Church of God Evangel preceding the opening of the International General Council.

(3) Post the notice and a copy of the proposed change(s) on the church's Internet web site.

(4) The proposed change(s) may be amended, but cannot be amended beyond the scope of the notice. Any change of the bylaws approved by the International General Assembly will go into effect immediately upon its adoption, unless the motion to adopt specifies another time for its becoming effective.

Church of God is...

The Church of God was founded in 1886 upon the principles of Christ as they are revealed in the Bible, the Word of God. It has its foundation of faith and practice in the Scriptures and the vital experience of its constituents is scripturally oriented.

CHRISTIAN

First and foremost, the Church of God is a determinedly Christian church. It is built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The doctrines and practices of the church are based upon His teachings.

PROTESTANT

The Church of God is founded upon the principles of Protestantism, although it is not a traditional follower of any specific leader of the Protestant Reformation. The denomination stands firmly for justification by faith, the priesthood of believers, the authority of the Bible, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. It stands against abuses and extravagance of ecclesiastical ritualism and dogmatism.

FOUNDATIONAL

The Church of God subscribes to the following five foundational Christian doctrines:

The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible.

The virgin birth and complete deity of Christ.

The atoning sacrifice of Christ's death for the sins of the world.

The literal resurrection of the body.

Christ's second coming in bodily form to earth.

EVANGELICAL

Evangelical is the term used to describe those who affirm the primary doctrines revealed in the Scriptures. These doctrines include the inspiration and authority of the Word of God; the Trinity; the deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ; salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ; His bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father; the ministry of the Holy Spirit; the second coming of Christ; and the spiritual unity of believers in Jesus Christ.

The Church of God has aligned itself with the basic statement of faith of NAE (National Association of Evangelicals) the largest association of Evangelicals in the USA. Members of NAE subscribe to a common statement of faith. The Church of God can be described as positioned in the mainstream of Evangelical Protestantism.

PENTECOSTAL

In 1896, many members of the Church of God experienced a spiritual outpouring they identified as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Because it was so similar to the experience of the early Christians on the day of Pentecost, it came to be called a Pentecostal experience, an enrichment of the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit that empowered believers to be effective witnesses of Christ. The principle distinctive of the Church of God as a Pentecostal organization is its belief in speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance and that this is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

CHARISMATIC

The charismata (Gk.) or gifts of the Spirit appeared early in the life and ministry of the Church of God. The gifts can be divided into three categories: the gifts of revelation, the gifts of power and the gifts of utterance or inspiration. The gifts of revelation are the gifts of the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits. The gifts of power are faith, miracles, and gifts of healing. The gifts of utterance and inspiration are prophecy, tongues and interpretation. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts and those who accept the validity of these gifts are called charismatic.

EVANGELISTIC

From its inception the Church of God has been a revival movement. Evangelism has been in the forefront of all its activities. The church has maintained an aggressive effort to take the message of Christ throughout the world by all means and methods. Every program of the church reflects an evangelistic attitude: revivalism, conferences, worship services, teaching, preaching and its missionary

efforts.

ORGANIZED

The magnitude of the Great Commission requires a united effort. This united endeavor is efficiently served by guidance, support, resources and leadership from a common center. The Church of God is centrally organized. Centralized church government is administration from the international, state or territorial and local levels. It helps facilitate the fulfillment of the mission of the church.

The control of the Church of God rests with the laity and ministers, who jointly form a governing body called the General Assembly which meets biennially. Benefits of centralized government include the following: uniformity of doctrine and practice; principles that bind together local churches in the same manner; membership commitments in all churches; expansion and extension of fellowship; accountability; cooperative decision-making; and united efforts in evangelism and world outreach.

MINISTERS AND LAITY

Ministers in the Church of God are ranked as ordained bishops, ordained ministers, exhorters, ministers of music and ministers of Christian education. They achieve these levels of ministry through a profession of faith, commitment to the church, training, internship and fulfillment of credential requirements. The Church of God emphasizes the doctrinal position of the priest-hood of all believers and encourages laity to assume a Biblical role in local church ministry.

EDUCATION

Emphasis upon education and training is a priority of the Church of God. Educational opportunities are provided from local congregations through institutions of higher learning at the international level of the church.

UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND SCHOOLS

Lee University, located in Cleveland, Tennessee, is the Church of God's oldest and largest educational institution at over 3,500 students. Founded in 1918, it offers graduate and under-graduate degrees in more than 55 areas of study. Other institutions include Lee University Charlotte Center (Charlotte, North Carolina), European Bible Seminary (Rudersburg, Germany), Han Young Theological University (Seoul, Korea), International Bible College (Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada), Puerto Rico Bible College, School of Ministry (Cleveland, Tennessee) and Western School of Christian Ministry (Fresno, California). In addition, World Missions maintains 80 Bible Schools around the world. Founded in 1975 and one of only six Pentecostal seminaries in the U.S., the Pentecostal Theological Seminary (Cleveland, Tennessee) is the denomination's largest graduate institution. It offers masters and doctoral programs. Lee University and Han Young Theological University also offer graduate studies.

A CARING CHURCH

From its beginnings, the Church of God has felt its responsibility to benevolence ministries. The church operates a number of specialized programs and institutions.

Homes For Children

The Church of God operates three homes for children in the United States. These include the Smoky Mountain Children's Home, Sevierville, Tennessee, North Carolina Home for Children, Kannapolis, N.C., and the South Carolina Home for

Children, Mauldin, S.C. There are also many children's homes and mission works around the world.

Widows / Retired Ministerial Couples / Widowers

The Iris B. Vest Widows Center recently changed its name to The Iris B. Vest SpiritCare Center so that widows, widowers, and retired ministerial couples can have a place for retirement living. Please view the website for an application or call Shane Smith 865.365.0225 to receive an application. The Center is located on the campus of the Smoky Mountain Children's Home, Sevierville, Tennessee.

Youth and Unwed Mothers

Heart of Florida Youth Ranch, Citra, Florida, and New River Ranch, Fayetteville, West Virginia, offer help and counseling for troubled boys and teens.

Operation Compassion

Several benevolence ministries including Helping Hands (providing medical assistance), Children of the World (children's needs worldwide) and Caravan of Compassion (inner city ministry) operate under the umbrella of Church of God Operation Compassion.

Chaplaincy Ministries

Hundreds of Church of God chaplains serve a worldwide ministry in full-time and voluntary positions. They are chaplains and counselors in hospitals, jails, prisons and countless other agencies and institutions.

MINISTRY TO THE MILITARY

Due to the vast number of U.S. servicemen and women worldwide, the Church of God maintains ministry centers around the world. Listed below are the two areas

that are involved in our ministry to the military.

Servicemen's Centers

There are more than two dozen Church of God sponsored servicemen's centers operating in twelve countries around the globe. These centers offer fellowship, counseling and worship opportunities for servicemen and women on the field.

Military Chaplaincy

The Chaplains Commission is vitally active in ministering to military personnel and their families. Ordained military Chaplains now serve in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard as well as the National Guard and Reserves. More than 100 Church of God ministers are active as military, reserve, institutional, correctional/law enforcement or specialized chaplains.

RESOURCES

Publishing House

Through the Church of God Publishing House and Pathway Press located in Cleveland, Tennessee, individuals can have access to a variety of printed materials including Sunday School literature, music and a variety of inspirational and religious books. The Publishing House produces denominational publications, such as the Evangel magazine, and offers an avenue for churches and ministries to obtain resources.

Pathway Bookstore

Pathway Bookstore offers a full line of inspirational materials and resources for the local church.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

The Church of God states its position on many issues of importance and global events through resolutions adopted at the biennial General Assembly. More than 40 resolutions adopted since 1968 are available for viewing on the Web site under the "Beliefs" tab and clicking "Resolutions."

WORLD MISSIONS

The heart of World Missions ministry is the implementation of a global strategy of evangelism, church planting and training. Its scriptural purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ; share Christ's love for the world; minister to the totality of human need; bring men and women to the knowledge of God and His redeeming grace; and obey Christ by confessing Him to the world. Today, Church of God missions is carried out in 157 countries organized in eight geographical regions.

Missionaries

World Missions provides missionary services through the following: teaching or administering in educational institutions and programs; serving in medical ministries; planting new churches; working in relief and development efforts; and many other areas. Men and Women of Action exists as a humanitarian program. It organizes relief efforts following natural disasters and assists in church building projects around the globe. Volunteers in Medical Missions (VIMM) provides medical care and supplies to needy areas around the world. The Church of God provides avenues of outreach for the organization and supplies are provided through private donations.

Declaration of Faith

The Church of God believes the whole Bible to be completely and equally inspired and that it is the written Word of God. The Church of God has adopted the following Declaration of Faith as its standard and official expression of its doctrine.

We Believe:

In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.

That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.

That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.

Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.

In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.

In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.

In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.

In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.

In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

Doctrinal Commitments

The following Doctrinal Commitments represent the core beliefs of the denomination as outlined in Scripture.

Repentance. Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19.

Justification. Romans 5:1; Titus 3:7.

Regeneration. Titus 3:5.

New birth. 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.

Holiness. Luke 1:75; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14.

Water baptism. Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9, 10; John 3:22, 23; Acts 8:36, 38.

Baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to cleansing; the enduement of power for service. Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49, 53; Acts 1:4-8.

The speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost. John 15:26; Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-7.

The Church. Exodus 19:5, 6; Psalm 22:22; Matthew 16:13-19; 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; 7:38; 20:28; Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 12:12-31; 2 Corinthians 6:6-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:9, 21; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 2:12; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:6, 7; Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17.

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

Signs following believers. Mark 16:17-20; Romans 15:18, 19; Hebrews 2:4.

Fruit of the Spirit. Romans 6:22; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11.

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.

The Lord's Supper. Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11 : 23 - 26.

Washing the saints' feet. John 13:4-17; 1 Timothy 5:9, 10.

Tithing and giving. Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22; Malachi 3:10; 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.

Premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years. Zechariah 14:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21; 20:4-6.

Resurrection. 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 25:41-46; Mark 3:29; 2 Thessalonians 1: 8, 9; Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8.

Mission and Vision

At the 2004 General Assembly, a set of seven commitments was adopted which reflects the Church of God's core values in regard to fulfilling its mission and vision.

Commitments to Our Mission and Vision

1. PRAYER

We commit ourselves to making prayer the highest priority of the church demonstrated by:

Every local church becoming a house of prayer for all nations.

Emphasizing communication with God as the highest privilege and greatest responsibility of every member.

Modeling by all church leadership of an active and effective prayer life.

Uniting with other believers in corporate and intercessory prayer.

(Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17; Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 14:14, 15; I Thess. 5:17; I Tim. 2:1-4, 8; James 5:14, 15)

2. PENTECOSTAL WORSHIP

We commit ourselves to gather regularly as the local expression of the Body of Christ to participate in Pentecostal worship that exalts God, engages the heart, mind and soul, and challenges to deeper commitment and discipleship. This commitment will be demonstrated by:

Assisting local churches in planning and preparing for meaningful, anointed worship.

Equipping pastors and other worship leaders to lead authentically expressed, spiritually alive worship.

Modeling varying styles and forms of worship that glorify God and encouraging outreach and service.

Emphasizing the importance of Biblical stewardship and the centrality of God's Word as elements of worship.

(John 4:24; Psalm 29:2; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Isa. 58; Mat. 25:31-46)

3. WORLD EVANGELIZATION

We commit ourselves to intentionally reaching the unconverted, baptizing them in water, and leading them to unite with the church. This commitment will be demonstrated by:

Viewing all the nations of the world as our mission field.

Encouraging our local churches to adopt and intercede for an unreached people group. Resource materials will be provided by the World Missions Department.

Asking all national churches of the Church of God international to adopt and implement measurable steps to evangelize and disciple unreached people groups inside and outside of their own regions (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 15:19-24; Revelation 5:9).

Encouraging every local church to increase a minimum of 10% per year through conversion growth.

Cultivating a genuine passion for the lost that will compel members to personally communicate the gospel of Jesus and demonstrate His love to those outside the faith.

Discipling new believers and passing on our faith to the next generation.

Practicing life-style evangelism.

(Mat. 9:37-38; Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:13-15)

4. CHURCH PLANTING

We commit ourselves to identifying, training and resourcing God-called church planters and to intentionally planting new life-giving churches. This commitment will be demonstrated by:

Focusing designated resources of the local church, state/regional offices, and the international offices for planting new churches.

Starting the number of church plants equal to a minimum of 3% of the total number of churches in a state/region/nation annually.

Developing a certified training program in our Evangelism and Home Missions Department and educational institutions for church planters and home missions.

Emphasizing the health and viability of new church plants as well as the number of churches planted.

Affirming the different models of church planting for different situations.

Recognizing church planting as an apostolic ministry for our day.

(Mat. 16:18; John 4:35; Acts 2:47; 14:23; Eph. 5:25-28)

5. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We commit ourselves to identifying and developing individuals whom God has called and given leadership gifts and challenging them to become servant-leaders. We will demonstrate our commitment by:

Creating an environment in which men and women with ministry gifts are developed to serve as servant-leaders.

Equipping, empowering and releasing lay leaders to serve as ministry partners both inside and outside the local church.

Providing relevant resources and training opportunities for both clergy and laity.

Encouraging pastors to lead through vision, to communicate the vision to the congregation and to organize the body and each of its ministry groups so the vision can be realized.

(Mark 3:13-15; 2 Tim. 2:2; 2:15; 3:14-17; Eph. 4:11-13)

6. CARE

We commit ourselves to the challenge of being a church that genuinely cares for one another and for those who are lost, hurting and needy. We will demonstrate our commitment by:

Building loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the communities we serve.

Obedying the Care Commission of Christ in Matthew 25.

Cultivating compassion and showing mercy to the unloved, the undesirable and the unreached of our society.

Establishing in each local church some type of outreach ministry that demonstrates our genuine concern and love for the disadvantaged or oppressed.

(Psa. 86:15; Mat. 25; Luke 6:36; Acts 20:28)

7. INTERDEPENDENCE

We commit ourselves to the principle of interdependence, acknowledging our interconnectedness and dependence on all the members of the Body of Christ. We will demonstrate our commitment by:

Reaching out to others in the Body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing and learning opportunities.

Encouraging local churches to build relationships with like-minded and like-hearted churches in their communities to work together to reach the lost.

Involving clergy in the processes of mentoring, coaching and consulting on the local, state, regional, national and international levels to increase the level of trust and support among ministers.

Engaging in dialogue and partnership with local, national and international organizations who seek to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ.

(Col. 2:19; 1 Cor. 12:14-31; Gal. 6:1-6)

At the 2014 International General Assembly, three more commitments were adopted:

8. COMMUNICATION

That we commit ourselves to utilizing every available medium and means to effectively maintain open and perpetual communication with our constituency. This commitment will be demonstrated by:

Understanding that communication is the process of exchanging information, imparting ideas, and sharing the message so it is understood by others.

Exploring the best media choices available to enable the transforming message of Christ to all mankind and cultural contexts.

Discovering new ways and means of efficient and effective electronic mediums to maintain continuous connection with our constituency.

Empowering ministry resources available to the church for immediate response to

the needs of the world and the mission engagement of the church.

Employing every facet of communication to expand the global reach of Christ's message, sustaining open exchange of ministry concepts, encouraging the strengthening and growth of local churches, enlisting and equipping the next generation of leaders, and fulfilling our mission and vision as a movement that is Christ-centered, people-oriented, and need-sensitive in all its ministry endeavors.

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9. DISCIPLESHIP

We commit ourselves to the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations, to develop committed and faithful followers of Jesus Christ, and to be people of conviction identifiable by:

Their commitment to know what they believe and who they are in Christ;

Their competence through spiritual discipline, calling, and empowerment, and;

Their character development, which will result in reproducing themselves, disciples making disciples.

This commitment will be demonstrated by:

Understanding that discipleship must be intentional for all believers upon their acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior. If we are to retain them, they must be taught and have someone who will disciple them.

Asking every church to prioritize discipleship in every facet of their ministry. Everything that is planned and executed in the local church should be identified as part of the discipleship process for those who are involved. The local church must understand that the growth process is ever evolving and must provide a

framework by which growth can happen.

Providing resources and discipleship experiences that will assist pastors and church leaders in the discipleship process, understanding that models may vary, but the outcome will be committed Christ followers.

Understanding that passing the faith to the next generation will require making disciples of all ages. Discipleship must begin at the earliest age and continue.

(Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-38; 28:19-20; John 14:15, 21-23; 15:10; Acts 1:8; 2:1-11, 41-47; Romans 12:1-2; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Galatians 5:22-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-23; 2 John 6.)

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10. EDUCATION

We commit ourselves to education as a vital part of all phases of the Spirit-filled Christian life. Education is to be nurtured by the church: locally in rural areas, towns, and cities; regionally in counties, states, and geographical regions; internationally in every country with a Church of God presence; and globally on every continent of the world. We will demonstrate our commitment by:

Developing and fostering means of self-education with access to educational resources.

Recognizing local-church institutions which provide education in church and/or school formats.

Affirming in public places those who minister in education.

Sponsoring educational institutions of higher learning to equip laity, ministers, institutions, and ministries.

Providing curriculum and materials which affirm the doctrines, practices, mission, vision, and commitments of the Church of God.

Practical Commitments:

SPIRITUAL EXAMPLE

We will demonstrate our commitment to Christ through our practice of the spiritual disciplines; we will demonstrate our commitment to the body of Christ through our loyalty to God and commitment to His church; and we will demonstrate our commitment to the work of Christ through our being good stewards.

Practice of Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines involve such practices as prayer, praise, worship, confession, fasting, meditation and study. Through prayer we express our trust in Jehovah God, the giver of all good things and acknowledge our dependence on Him for our needs and for the needs of others (Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 11: 1- 13; James 5:13-18). Through both private and public worship we bless God, have communion with Him, and are provided daily with spiritual enrichment and growth in grace. Through periods of fasting we draw close to God, meditate on the passion of Christ, and discipline ourselves to submit to the control of the Holy Spirit in all areas of our life (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-17; Acts 14:23). Through confession of our sins to God we are assured of divine forgiveness (1 John 1:9-2:2). The sharing of our confession with other believers provides the opportunity to request prayer and to bear one another 's burdens (Galatians 6:2; James 5:16). Through meditation on and study of the Word of God we enhance our own spiritual growth and prepare ourselves to help guide and instruct others in scriptural truths (Joshua 1:8; Psalm

1:2; 2 Timothy 2:15, 23-26).

Loyalty to God and Commitment to the Church

The life of Christian discipleship calls for the fulfillment of our duties to the body of Christ. We are to unite regularly with other members of the church for the purpose of magnifying and praising God and hearing His Word (Matthew 18:20; John 4:23; Acts 2:42, 46, 47; 12:24; Hebrews 10:25).

Sunday is the Christian day of worship. As the Lord's Day, it commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Matthew 28:1) and should be employed for worship, fellowship, Christian service, teaching, evangelism, and proclamation (Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5, 6; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Colossians 2:16, 17).

We are to provide for the financial needs of the church by the giving of tithes (Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23) and offerings (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 9:1-15).

It is our duty to respect and to submit to those whom the Lord Jesus has placed over us in the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17). Our exercise of authority must be as a spiritual example rather than as a lord over God's flock (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Furthermore, our submission must be a manifestation of the spiritual grace of humility (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5, 6). Finally, we are to avoid affiliation with oath-bound societies. Such societies may appear to have spiritual character, but by being oath-bound and secretive, they contradict Christian spirituality (John 18:20; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Christians must not belong to any body or society that requires or practices an allegiance that supersedes or excludes their fellowship in Christ (Matthew 12:47-49; John 17:21-23).

Being Good Stewards

In the Scriptures, the virtues of thrift and simplicity are honored, but the vices of

waste and ostentation are solemnly prohibited (Isaiah 55:2; Matthew 6:19-23). The living of a godly and sober life requires the wise and frugal use of our temporal blessings, including time, talent and money. As good stewards we are to make the most of our time, whether for recreation or for work (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). The idle use of leisure time degrades (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; 1 Timothy 5:13), but the edifying use of it brings inner renewal. All our work and play should honor the name of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). As good stewards we must use fully our spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4 : 9 - 11) and natural talents (Matthew 25:14-30) for the glory of God. As good stewards we must recognize that the wise use of money is an essential part of the Christian's economy of life. God has committed temporal blessings to our trust (Matthew 7:11; James 1:17).

MORAL PURITY

We will engage in those activities which glorify God in our body and which avoid the fulfillment of the lust of the flesh. We will read, watch and listen to those things which are of positive benefit to our spiritual well-being.

Glorifying God in Our Body

Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and we are to glorify God in our body (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31). We are to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). Examples of fleshly behavior which do not glorify God are noted in several passages of Scripture (Romans 1:24; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8). Sinful practices which are made prominent and condemned in these scriptures include homosexuality,

adultery, worldly attitudes (such as hatred, envy, jealousy), corrupt communication (such as gossip, angry outbursts, filthy words), stealing, murder, drunkenness and witchcraft. Witchcraft has to do with the practices of the occult, which are forbidden by God and lead to the worship of Satan.

Reading, Watching and Listening

The literature we read, the programs we watch and the music we listen to profoundly affect the way we feel, think and behave. It is imperative, then, that the Christian read, watch and listen to those things which inspire, instruct and challenge to a higher plane of living. Therefore, literature, programs and music which are worldly in content or pornographic in nature must be avoided. A Christian is not to attend (or watch on television) movies or theatrical performances of a demoralizing nature (Romans 13:14; Philippians 4:8).

Benefiting Spiritual Well-Being

The use of leisure time in the life of a Christian should be characterized by those activities which edify both the individual and the body of Christ (Romans 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:31,32). We are to avoid places and practices which are of this world. Consequently, a Christian must not be a part of any other types of entertainment which appeal to the fleshly nature and/or bring discredit to the Christian testimony (2 Corinthians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22; 1 John 2:15-17).

PERSONAL INTEGRITY

We will live in a manner that inspires trust and confidence, bearing the fruit of the Spirit and seeking to manifest the character of Christ in all our behavior.

Trust and Confidence

A Christian should be trustworthy, dependable and a person of his word (Matthew

5:37; 1 Peter 2:11, 12). Therefore, the swearing of oaths is contrary to a Christian's trustworthiness and should be avoided (Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12). Christ, by precept and example, taught that we love our enemy and prefer our brother (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3, 1 John 3:16). We should behave in a way that will point others to Christ (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Fruit of the Spirit

If we live in the Spirit, we will manifest the fruit (attitudes and actions) of the Spirit and will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16, 22-25; 1 John 1:7). Trustful relationships with others are a natural outgrowth of our positive relationship with the Lord (Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 22:37-40). A lack of fruit-bearing in our lives will be judged (Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8).

Character of Christ

Love for others is the hallmark of the Christ-life (John 13:34, 35; 15:9-13; 1 John 4:7-11). In His relationship with His Father, Jesus displayed submission (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30). In His relationship with others, He demonstrated acceptance (John 8:11), compassion (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34) and forgiveness (Matthew 9:2; Luke 5:20). We cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit and manifest the character of Christ without being spiritually joined to Christ (John 15:4, 5) and without having the seed of the Word planted in our heart (John 15:3, 1 Peter 1:22, 23).

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

We will give priority to fulfilling family responsibilities, to preserving the sanctity of marriage and to maintaining divine order in the home.

Priority of the Family

The family is the basic unit of human relationship and as such is foundational to both society and the church (Genesis 2:18-24). The divine origin of the family, along with its foundational character, makes it imperative that we give priority to ministry to the family, both from a personal and corporate standpoint. The practice of Christian disciplines and virtues should begin in the home (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7). Therefore, our families should establish some pattern for family devotions and should endeavor to provide a Christian environment in the home (1 Timothy 3:3, 4; 5:8).

Sanctity of Marriage

Marriage is ordained of God and is a spiritual union in which a man and a woman are joined by God to live together as one (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:7). Because of the divine character of marriage, it is a lifelong commitment with the only clear biblical allowance for divorce being fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Sexual involvement, either before marriage or with someone other than the marriage partner, is strictly forbidden in Scripture (Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-18). Understanding the sanctity of marriage, partners should strive to maintain a happy, harmonious and holy relationship. Should divorce occur, the church should be quick to provide love, understanding and counsel to those involved. The remarriage of divorced persons should be undertaken only after a thorough understanding of and submission to the scriptural instructions concerning this issue (Matthew 19:7-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 10, 11). Should a Christian desire to remain single, this decision should be respected and should be seen as a viable scriptural alternative (1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-34).

Divine Order in the Home

When God created man, He created them male and female (Genesis 1:27). He gave them distinctly different characteristics (1 Corinthians 11: 14, 15; 1 Peter 3:7) as well as different responsibilities (Genesis 3:16-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7). In God's order,

the husband is head of the home (Ephesians 5:22-31; Colossians 3:18, 19), parents are to nurture and admonish their children (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21), and children are to obey and honor their parents (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). In order for harmony to exist in the home, God's order of responsibility must be observed.

BEHAVIORAL TEMPERANCE

We will practice temperance in behavior and will abstain from activities and attitudes which are offensive to our fellowman or which lead to addiction or enslavement.

Temperance

One of the cardinal Christian virtues is temperance or self-control (1 Corinthians 9:25; Titus 1:8, 2:2). It is listed as fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We are admonished to practice moderation and balance in our behavior (Philippians 4:5). The Scripture indicates that it is within our prerogative to control our thinking (Philippians 4:8), our anger (Ephesians 4:26) and our communication (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8). To exercise self-discipline reflects the power of God in our life (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

Offensive Behavior

The Bible speaks clearly that we are to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others as a demonstration of our love for them (Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:9-21, 13:10; Philippians 2:3-5). At times it is necessary for us to control our behavior so as not to bring offense to others (Romans 14:13-21; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13). As we know Christ after the Spirit, we are also to know others in the same manner so we will not judge them after their outward behavior alone (2 Corinthians 5:16). A respect and tolerance for differences in others should characterize our

relationships (Romans 14:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 8:8; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Addiction and Enslavement

One of the primary benefits of our liberty in Christ is freedom from the domination of negative forces (John 8:32, 36; Romans 6:14; 8:2). We are counseled not to put ourselves again under bondage (Galatians 5:1). Therefore, a Christian must totally abstain from all alcoholic beverages and other habit-forming and mood-altering chemical substances and refrain from the use of tobacco in any form, marijuana and all other addictive substances, and further, must refrain from any activity (such as gambling or gluttony) which defiles the body as the temple of God or which dominates and enslaves the spirit that has been made free in Christ (Proverbs 20:1; 23:20-35; Isaiah 28:7; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 5:11; 6:10; 2 Corinthians 7:1; James 1:21).

MODEST APPEARANCE

We will demonstrate the scriptural principle of modesty by appearing and dressing in a manner that will enhance our Christian testimony and will avoid pride, elaborateness or sensuality.

Modesty

According to the biblical idea, modesty is an inner spiritual grace that recoils from anything unseemly and impure, is chaste in thought and conduct, and is free of crudeness and indecency in dress and behavior (Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31; 5:1-8; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10). Therefore, modesty includes our appearance, dress, speech and conduct and can be applied to all situations. The essential issue is, does our style of life please or displease God?"

Appearance and Dress

Our life, character and self-image are reflected by our apparel and mode of dress. The admonition of Scripture, "Be not conformed to this world," reminds us that our manner of dress must be modest and decent (Romans 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 23). It is not displeasing to God for us to dress well and be well groomed. However, above all we must seek spiritual beauty, which does not come from outward adornment with jewelry, expensive clothes or cosmetics, but from good works, chaste conversation, and a meek and quiet spirit (Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 3:3-5).

Pride, Elaborateness, Sensuality

As godly people we are to abstain from all lusts of the flesh and avoid dressing in a manner that encourages immoral thoughts, attitudes and lifestyles (Galatians 5:13-21; 1 Peter 2:11, 2 Peter 1:4). Our beauty does not depend on elaborate, showy dress extravagant, costly attire or on the use of jewelry or cosmetics, but on our relationship with Christ. External adornment, whether clothing or jewelry, as an outward display of personal worth, is contrary to a spiritual attitude (James 2:1-4).

SOCIAL OBLIGATION

It should be our objective to fulfill our obligations to society by being good citizens, by correcting social injustices, and by protecting the sanctity of life.

Being Good Citizens

As Christians we are members of the kingdom of God as well as a social order of this world. Obedience to God requires us to act in a responsible manner as citizens of our country (Mark 12:13-17; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). Therefore, we should support civil law and order; hold our leaders in respect and pray for them; participate in school, community and governmental activities; exercise our voting

rights; and speak out on clear-cut moral issues. God's law is supreme, but we are to obey the laws of our country insofar as they are not in conflict with obedience to God (Acts 5:29). When it becomes necessary to disagree with practices and requirements of government, we should do so out of a concern for the promotion of righteousness and not out of delight in discord and controversy.

Correcting Social Injustices

Love for others and the recognition of the equal worth of all men in the sight of God (Acts 10:34; 17:26) should compel us to take steps to improve the situation of those who are underprivileged, neglected, hungry, homeless and victimized by prejudice, persecution and oppression (Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:8-10; 1 John 3:17). In all of our dealings, we must be sensitive to human needs (Luke 10:30-37; James 1:27) and guard against racial and economic discrimination. Every person should have freedom to worship and participate in the life of the church regardless of race, color, sex, social class or nationality.

Protecting the Sanctity of Life

God alone confers life (Genesis 1:1-31); therefore, we are responsible to God to care for our physical life and that of others. If the circumstances require, we must be prepared to risk our life in the service of our neighbor (John 15:13); but the general rule is that we must respect our physical life and employ every worthy means to maintain it. Since God alone confers life, God alone must decide when it is to be ended (Psalm 31:14, 15). Because a human fetus is sacred and blessed of God, we believe that we have the responsibility to protect the life of the unborn (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:41). It is our firm conviction that abortion and euthanasia of aged, mentally incompetent, terminally ill and otherwise handicapped, for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment or economic advantage, are morally wrong. Furthermore, we believe it is our Christian responsibility to care for the earth and its resources. In the beginning God gave man dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-30). This does not, however, give us license to pollute our

natural environment or to waste the resources of the earth.

Doctrine And Polity Papers

The Church of God Doctrine and Polity Committee is a group appointed by the International Executive Committee in the early 1990s consisting of ministers, university and seminary professors, and theologians. The group is engaged in continual examination and dialogue of cultural issues as it relates to Church of God beliefs, core values, and Practical Commitments. The D&P Committee has undertaken the task of addressing some of the most pertinent and frequently-asked questions of today and are releasing their research over the course of several months. Each issue has been scripturally vetted and presented for clarification of the current Church of God polity stance.

(My notes: see the .pdf files)