

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

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App. 1

APPENDIX A

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI

NO. 2021-CA-01007-SCT

[Filed August 24, 2023]

<i>KEVIN BEACHY, EDDIE KINSEY,</i>)
<i>ANDRE MULET, AND KRIS WILLIAMS</i>)
)
<i>v.</i>)
)
<i>MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNCIL</i>)
<i>FOR ASSEMBLIES OF GOD</i>)

DATE OF

JUDGMENT: 07/23/2021

TRIAL JUDGE: HON. JAMES B. PERSONS

TRIAL COURT

ATTORNEYS: AMBER LYNN KIPFMILLER
LISA ANDERSON REPPETO
ANDREW SCOTT HARRIS
SABRINA BOSARGE RUFFIN
MALCOLM F. JONES

COURT FROM
WHICH

APPEALED: CHANCERY COURT OF THE
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF
HARRISON COUNTY

ATTORNEY FOR

APPELLANTS: MALCOLM F. JONES

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ATTORNEY FOR
APPELLEE: LISA ANDERSON REPPETO
NATURE OF
THE CASE: CIVIL - CONTRACT
DISPOSITION: REVERSED AND REMANDED -
08/24/2023
MOTION FOR
REHEARING FILED:

EN BANC.

**KITCHENS, PRESIDING JUSTICE, FOR THE
COURT:**

¶1. The General Council of the Assemblies of God (General Council) governs the Assemblies of God denomination. Its affiliate, the Mississippi District Council for Assemblies of God (District), governs the denomination's local churches in Mississippi, including Gulf Coast Worship Center (GCWC) in Long Beach.

¶2. In January 2017, Kevin Beachy, the pastor of GCWC, did not renew his credentials as an ordained pastor with the General Council. Various meetings and communications were had between Beachy and the District concerning the nonrenewal of his credentials as required by the General Council and District constitutions and bylaws. On March 15, 2017, Beachy informed the District that he and GCWC intended to disaffiliate from the General Council. The following day, March 16, 2017, the District informed Beachy that GCWC was being placed under District supervision. Then, on March 19, 2017, the GCWC congregation voted to disaffiliate from the General Council. The congregation voted also to remove a reverter clause

from its constitution and bylaws. This clause would have caused the GCWC's property to revert to the District in the event that GCWC ceased operating as a "church body."

¶3. On November 28, 2017, the District filed a chancery court petition for declaratory judgment and injunctive relief against Kevin Beachy and the GCWC board of trustees, Eddie Kinsey, Andre Mulet, and Kris Williams (collectively, Defendants). Both the District and Defendants filed motions for summary judgment. The trial court granted the District's motion for summary judgment and denied Defendants' motion. Defendants filed a timely appeal.

STATEMENT OF THE FACTS

¶4. On November 7, 1988, the GCWC congregation voted for their local church to become a member of the Assemblies of God denomination. A quorum of the congregation agreed to accept the tenets of faith of the Assemblies of God, agreed to be governed by and to accept the constitution and bylaws of the General and District Council, and they agreed to have GCWC's property deeded to the Assemblies of God, the trustees of the local Assemblies of God church, and their successors in office.¹ After the meeting on November 7, 1988, a GCWC trustee assured the District that the deed was worded as specified by the General Council.

¹ The District's constitution provides that "[a]ll church properties shall be deeded according to the sample deeds in the District Council Bylaws or comparable thereto." The District's bylaws provide that "[a]ll property of the assembly shall be deeded to the assembly and held in its name."

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On November 28, 1988, GCWC filed its formal application for affiliation with the General Council. In its application, GCWC stated that it was applying with the “purpose of cooperating with other Assemblies of like precious faith and assuming the responsibilities incidental thereto, as set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council, and the Constitution and Bylaws of the [District].” On December 2, 1988, the General Council identified GCWC as a General Council affiliated local assembly.

¶5. GCWC remained affiliated with the General Council and Assemblies of God church without disagreement until 2017. In January 2017, Beachy, the pastor of GCWC, did not renew his credentials as an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God church as mandated by the General Council. When a District representative contacted him about the nonrenewal of his credentials, Beachy informed the representative that he did not intend to renew his credentials as an ordained minister under the General Council. As a result, the District placed Beachy under investigation for his failure to renew his credentials.

¶6. After several failed attempts to reconcile, Beachy told the District that GCWC intended to disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God church. On March 16, 2017, the District informed him that GCWC had been reclassified as a “District Supervised assembly” due to the pastor’s failure to renew his credentials with the church, which violated the General Council’s constitution, article XI, section 1a(6). The District explained also that if members of GCWC intended to disaffiliate, both the General Council’s and District’s

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constitution and bylaws required that representatives of the church be given an opportunity to address the GCWC congregation about remaining affiliated with the Assemblies of God church. No such meeting ever was held.

¶7. On March 19, 2017, the GCWC congregation, with Beachy functioning as its pastor, voted to disaffiliate from the General Council and Assemblies of God church. The congregation voted also to amend its constitution and bylaws to remove a provision that called for GCWC's property to revert to the District "if the assembly cease[d] to function as a church body[.]"

¶8. On November 28, 2017, the District filed in chancery court a petition for declaratory judgment and injunctive relief against Defendants. The District requested that the trial court declare that the actions taken by the GCWC's congregation at its meeting March 19, 2017, were void; that GCWC had been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and that all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements were under the District's control. The District requested also injunctive relief to allow it to assume control of GCWC and to install an interim pastor.

¶9. Defendants filed a motion to dismiss. They argued that the trial court lacked jurisdiction because the issues of this case were purely ecclesiastical. The District argued that "ecclesiastical abstention require[d] that [the] [c]ourt grant the relief sought" because "the District's decisions to classify [GCWC] as a District Supervised assembly and to remove and replace Beachy as pastor are ecclesiastical in nature"

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and the case involves control of property. Regarding property, the District argued that GCWC adopted the constitution and bylaws of the General Council, which “acknowledge the affiliation with the General Council and acknowledge that all property [was] held in trust for the benefit of the District and the General Council.” Additionally, the District argued that the church’s bylaws contained a reverter clause, which provided that “in the event that the assembly ceases to function as a church body, the said property, real or chattel, shall revert to [District].” The trial judge denied the motion to dismiss, determining that

The General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District, of which GCWC is a member, is a hierarchal church fellowship and as such the court may not interfere in the District’s action in placing GCWC under District Supervision or in considering the actions of GCWC at the March 19, 2017 meeting to be void. The District’s decisions are those of a higher authority within the church’s hierarchal system and are protected by the law of judicial abstention as ecclesiastical disputes.

¶10. The District moved to amend its petition, which was granted on November 18, 2019. In its amended petition, the District sought the trial court’s declaration that: (1) the actions taken at the March 19, 2017, meeting were void; (2) GCWC had been under the District’s supervision since March 16, 2017; and (3) GCWC’s property, real and personal, including improvements, “were intended to be held in trust and are under the control of the District Council.”

¶11. On May 15, 2020, the District filed a motion for summary judgment, contending that (1) it had authority to govern GCWC, the GCWC had been under District supervision since March 16, 2017, thereby making the votes taken on March 19, 2017, null and void; (2) GCWC's property was held in trust for the District; and (3) the District was entitled to injunctive relief. In response, Defendants asserted that they had authority to hold a business meeting on March 19, 2017, and vote to disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God church. They asserted also that the GCWC property was not subject to a trust in favor of the District or the General Council. Defendants disputed the factual statements in the District's affidavits. They argued that GCWC's decision to affiliate with the General Council did not mean that it became part of a hierarchical church; that the GCWC never ceased operating as a church body; that the GCWC was unlawfully placed under District supervision; that neither the deeds nor the articles of incorporation of the GCWC refer to the District or the General Council; and that the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine bars the trial court from exercising jurisdiction over governance issues within the church.

¶12. On the same day the District filed its motion for summary judgment, Defendants filed a motion to dismiss and for summary judgment. Defendants argued: (1) GCWC's deed did not mention the District or General Council nor had the church ceased being a "church body," so the property does not belong to the District; (2) the District failed to join GCWC, Whitney Bank d/b/a Hancock Bank, and the General Council as necessary parties to the suit; (3) the statute of

limitations prohibited the District's trust claims; (4) the statute of frauds prohibited the court from finding an express trust existed; and (5) merger and parole evidence rules prohibited the consideration of verbal representations. In response to Defendants' motion, the District argued that its trust claims were not barred by the statute of limitations. But the District argued also that it "does not claim an express trust and, therefore, the statute of frauds, parole evidence and merger are irrelevant."² The District attached the affidavit of Bob Wilburn, the current superintendent of the District, who stated that the purpose of the suit was to preserve GCWC as an Assembly of God church and to safeguard the property.

¶13. On July 23, 2021, the trial court entered its final judgment, granting the District's motion for summary judgment and denying Defendants' motion for summary judgment and motion to dismiss.³ The chancellor determined that the "ultimate issue" was the continued affiliation between GCWC and the General Council/District following the actions taken at the March 19, 2017, meeting. In his order, the chancellor reasoned that

² But the District argued that a resulting trust existed.

³ The chancellor's order granting the District's motion for summary judgment stated that

(i) the meeting held by the pastor and board of GCWC on March 19, 2017[,] and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (2) GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council."

the defendants, as well as the congregation, had no authority to take any action, including that taken at the March 19, 2017[,] meeting as discussed hereafter. . . . [T]he Assemblies of God Church is a hierarchal church, the validity of actions taken at the March 19, 2017[,] GCWC meeting are governed by and subject to the Constitution and bylaws of the General Council, the District and the Constitution and bylaws of GCWC itself.

The trial court also determined that the real and personal property, as well as any improvements made by GCWC were under the control of the District.

¶14. In denying Defendants' motion to dismiss and motion for summary judgment, the trial court explained that the District was not seeking ownership of the real and personal property of GCWC. Rather, the District was only seeking "control for the express purpose of installing an interim pastor." Because of this, the court explained, Hancock/Whitney Bank and GCWC were not necessary parties to the action at issue. The trial court also determined that the General Council was not a necessary party to this action, based on the bylaws and constitution. The trial court explained, "[b]ecause title to GCWC property, as opposed to control, is not an issue, the motion to dismiss based on the statute of frauds, the statute of limitations, and merger and parol evidence is denied."

¶15. On July 30, 2021, Defendants filed a motion to alter or reconsider the orders granting summary judgment in favor of the District and denying Defendants' motions to dismiss and for summary

judgment. The trial court denied that motion on August 10, 2021.

¶16. Defendants timely appealed. On appeal, Defendants raise a number of issues: (1) the trial court erred by granting the District's summary judgment, and the grant of summary judgment violated the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine; (2) the trial court erred by failing to join Hancock/Whitney Bank, GCWC, and the General Council as real parties in interest; (3) the trial court erred by failing to dismiss the District's claims of an express or equitable trust, breach of a written agreement, or breach of an unwritten agreement as barred by the statute of limitations; (4) the trial court erred by failing to dismiss the District's claims of an express trust due to a violation of the statute of frauds and the formal requirements of Mississippi Code Sections 91-8-401 and -402 (Rev. 2021); (5) the trial court erred by allowing representations made by members of GCWC to be considered in violation of the doctrine of merger for deed and parole evidence; (6) the trial court erred by finding that GCWC ceased operating as a church body; (7) the trial court erred by finding that GCWC did not have authority to amend its bylaws to remove the ownership provision that would transfer property to the District; and (8) the trial court erred when it granted the District's motion to strike GCWC chain-of-title summary, and it erred by failing to strike all or portions of the affidavits included in the District's motion for summary judgment.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

¶17. This court reviews a grant of summary judgment *de novo*. ***Builders & Contractors Ass’n of Miss. v. Laser Line Constr. Co.***, 220 So. 3d 964, 965 (Miss. 2017) (quoting ***U.S. Fid. & Guar. Co. v. Martin***, 998 So. 2d 956, 962 (Miss. 2008)). “The evidence must be viewed in the light most favorable to the non-moving party.” ***Watson Quality Ford, Inc. v. Casanova***, 999 So. 2d 830, 833 (Miss. 2008) (citing ***Est. of Johnson v. Chatelain ex rel. Chatelain***, 943 So. 2d 684, 686 (Miss. 2006)). “Summary judgment is proper when the “pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories and admissions on file, together with the affidavits, if any, show that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.”” ***Maness v. K & A Enters. of Miss., LLC***, 250 So. 3d 402, 409 (Miss. 2018) (quoting ***Karpinsky v. Am. Nat’l Ins. Co.***, 109 So. 3d 84, 88 (Miss. 2013)).

DISCUSSION

I. The ecclesiastical abstention doctrine applies and prevents the chancellor from addressing GCWC’s disaffiliation from the Assemblies of God church.

¶18. On appeal, Defendants argue that the chancellor “should have abstained from addressing the purely ecclesiastical issues concerning the congregation’s decision concerning disaffiliation and the selection of their pastor and [t]rustees.” We agree.

¶19. In ***Catholic Diocese of Jackson v. De Lange***, this Court recognized that

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” U.S. Const. amend. I. Interpreting the First Amendment, the United States Supreme Court then recognized the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine in *Watson v. Jones*, 80 U.S. 679, 13 Wall. 679, 20 L. Ed. 666 (1872). See *Roman Cath. Diocese of Jackson v. Morrison*, 905 So. 2d 1213, 1235-36 (Miss. 2005) (noting that *Watson* is the origin of the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine). The Supreme Court later held that the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution applied this principle to the states. *Kedroff v. St. Nicholas Cathedral of Russian Orthodox Church in N. Am.*, 344 U.S. 94, 166, 73 S. Ct. 1443, 97 L. Ed. 120 (1952); see also, *Morrison*, 905 So. 2d at 1236 (noting that “[t]his doctrine [was] later found to be a constitutional imperative in *Kedroff*[.]”). This doctrine requires that

For where resolution of the disputes cannot be made without extensive inquiry by civil courts into religious law and polity, the First and Fourteenth Amendments mandate that civil courts shall not disturb the decisions of the highest ecclesiastical tribunal within a church of hierarchical polity, but must accept such decisions as binding on them, in their application to the religious issues of doctrine or polity before them.

Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese for U.S. and Can. v. Milivojeovich, 426 U.S. 696, 709, 96 S. Ct. 2372, 49 L. Ed. 2d 151 (1976).

Catholic Diocese of Jackson v. De Lange, 341 So. 3d 887, 892 (Miss. 2022). “The ecclesiastical abstention doctrine recognizes that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment precludes judicial review of claims that require resolution of ‘strictly and purely ecclesiastical’ questions.” ***McRaney v. N. Am. Mission Bd. of S. Baptist Convention, Inc.***, 966 F.3d 346, 348 (5th Cir. 2020) (quoting ***Milivojeovich***, 426 U.S. at 713). “[M]atters of church government, as well as those of faith and doctrine’ constitute purely ecclesiastical questions.” ***Id.*** (alteration in original) (quoting ***Kedroff***, 344 U.S. at 116).

¶20. The chancellor determined that the “ultimate issue” here was the continued affiliation between GCWC and the General Council/District after the actions taken at the March 19, 2017, meeting. But this Court has held that “[t]he alteration of a parish is, in fact, a matter of internal church government, which lies at the core of ecclesiastical affairs.” ***Schmidt v. Catholic Diocese of Biloxi***, 18 So. 3d 814, 822 (Miss. 2009) (citing ***Milivojeovich***, 426 U.S. at 721). Making a judicial determination of whether GCWC is to remain a member of the General Council and under its control intrudes into the affairs of church government. Thus, we find that it was error for the chancellor to undertake the adjudication of this internal church matter and his determination that the actions taken by Defendants during the congregational meeting on March 19, 2017, are void. The chancellor was without

jurisdiction to address the disaffiliation matter as it was and is predominately ecclesiastical in nature.⁴

II. Notwithstanding the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine, there is a genuine issue of material fact regarding ownership of the property. Therefore, the chancellor erred by granting the District's motion for summary judgment.

¶21. We have recognized that courts can address church property disputes, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine. *See Mt. Helm Baptist Church v. Jones*, 79 Miss. 488, 30 So. 714, 716 (1901) (“But the property rights of all churches are within the protection of this court, as are the property

⁴ In response to Chief Justice Randolph's dissent, when GCWC affiliated with Assemblies of God it did so as a local “General Council Affiliated Church.” According to the District's constitution, a local General Council Affiliated Church

has the right of self-government under Jesus Christ, its living Head, and shall have the power to choose or call its pastor, elect its official board, and transact all other business pertaining to its life as a local unit. It shall have the right to administer discipline to its members according to the Scriptures and its constitution or bylaws. It shall have the right to acquire and hold title to property, either through trustees or in its corporate name as a self-governing unit. The fact it is affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall in no way destroy its rights as above stated or interfere with its sovereignty.

It was not until after after Beachy had informed the District that GCWC intended to disaffiliate that the District reclassified the local church as a District Supervised assembly.

rights of citizens of every class.”); *see also Sawyer v. Brandon*, 825 So. 2d 26, 32-33 (Miss. 2002); *Schmidt*, 18 So. 3d at 823-24. We have explained “this Court’s authority in adjudicating church property disputes” as follows:

Civil courts have the general authority to resolve the question of church property ownership. *Jones v. Wolf*, 443 U.S. 595, 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020, 61 L. Ed. 2d 775 (1979). “The State has an obvious and legitimate interest in the peaceful resolution of property disputes, and in providing a civil forum where the ownership [and control] of church property can be determined conclusively.” *Id.*; *Presbyterian Church in the United States v. Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Mem’l Presbyterian Church*, 393 U.S. 440, 445, 89 S. Ct. 601, 21 L. Ed. 2d 658 (1969). The first amendment to the United States constitution, however, “severely circumscribes the role that civil courts may play in resolving church property disputes.” *Wolf*, 443 U.S. at 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020 (quoting *Blue Hull*, 393 U.S. at 449, 89 S. Ct. 601). The first amendment, therefore, forbids civil courts from resolving church property disputes by inquiring into and resolving disputed issues of religious doctrine and practice. *Wolf*, 443 U.S. at 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020; *Maryland & Virginia Eldership of the Churches of God v. Church of God at Sharpsburg, Inc.*, 396 U.S. 367, 368, 90 S. Ct. 499, 24 L. Ed. 2d 582 (1970) (Brennan, J., concurring). Accordingly, courts may not support the tenets of any one religion and must respect

the right of all persons to choose their own course with reference to religious observance. See **Wolf**, 443 U.S. at 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020. States are free to adopt any approach to adjudicate church property disputes “so long as it involves no consideration of doctrinal matters, whether the ritual and liturgy of worship or the tenets of faith.” **Id.** at 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020 (quoting **Sharpsburg**, 396 U.S. at 368, 90 S. Ct. 499) (Brennan, J., concurring).

Church of God Pentecostal, Inc. v. Freewill Pentecostal Church of God, Inc., 716 So. 2d 200, 204-05 (Miss. 1998) (alteration in original) (footnotes omitted). Addressing the property dispute, the chancellor granted the District’s motion for summary judgment, stating that “all [GCWC] personal property, real property, and improvements [were] under the control of the District Council.” In his order, the chancellor determined that only control, not ownership, of the property was at issue. We disagree, because the District was seeking ownership of all GCWC’s real and property by means of a trust.

¶22. “Mississippi has adopted the ‘neutral principles of law’ approach for resolving church property disputes.” **Schmidt**, 18 So. 3d at 824 (quoting **Church of God Pentecostal**, 716 So. 2d at 206). This Court has explained that this approach

relies on objective, traditional concepts of trust and property law familiar to attorneys and judges. It calls “for the completely secular examination of deeds to the church property, state statutes and existing local and general

church constitutions, by-laws, canons, Books of Discipline and the like to determine whether any basis for a trust in favor of the general church exists.” ***Protestant Episcopal Church in Diocese of New Jersey v. Graves***, 83 N.J. 572, 417 A.2d 19, 23 (1980), *cert denied sub nom. Moore v. Protestant Episcopal Church in Diocese of New Jersey*, 449 U.S. 1131, 101 S. Ct. 954, 67 L. Ed. 2d 119 (1981).

Church of God Pentecostal, 716 So. 2d at 205. “Religious documents must be carefully scrutinized in purely secular terms without relying on religious precepts.” ***Schmidt***, 18 So. 3d at 824 (citing ***Church of God Pentecostal***, 716 So. 2d at 205-06). In order for the District to gain ownership of the property, “[it] must demonstrate either an actual transfer of property from the congregation to the denomination, an express trust, or clear and convincing evidence evincing an intent on the part of the local congregation to create a ‘trust’ in favor of the denomination.” ***Church of God Pentecostal***, 716 So. 2d at 206.

¶23. One of the neutral principals allows courts to examine evidence respecting the deed and chain of title of real property being claimed by the competing parties. ***Id.*** at 205 (quoting ***Graves***, 417 A.2d at 23). Here, the chancellor, *sua sponte*, reopened the record, allowing the admission into evidence of the deed referenced in GCWC’s minutes from the November 1988 meeting in which GCWC had accepted the Assemblies of God faith. The deed contains the following language:

For and in consideration of the sum of ten dollars (\$10.00), cash in hand paid, and other good and valuable considerations, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, I, Donald O. Simmons, . . . , do hereby sell, convey, bargain, and warrant unto Charles W. Benefield, George Lee Young, and Leslie Thomas, the Board of Trustees of Gulf Coast Worship Center, an unincorporated Religious Organization, and their successors in title . . . the following described real property . . . [metes and bounds description follows].

Based on the record before us, there does not appear to have been an actual transfer of property from GCWC to the District. Furthermore, “[n]one of the elements of creation of an express trust are present, such as the writing, the clear intent of the trustor, or the confirming authority of creation of a trust and the transfer of property by the governing body.” *Presbytery of St. Andrew v. First Presbyterian Church PCUSA of Starkville*, 240 So. 3d 399, 405 (Miss. 2018) (citing *Church of God Pentecostal*, 716 So. 2d at 208). Thus, the only issue to be decided is whether the District acquired an implied trust interest.

¶24. “While an express trust must be written, implied trusts differ in that they arise by implication of the law or are presumed from the circumstances. Mississippi recognizes two types of implied trusts: (1) constructive trusts and (2) resulting trusts.” *Id.*

¶25. Regarding resulting trusts, this Court has defined them as:

implied by law from the acts and conduct of the parties and the facts and circumstances which at the time exist and surround the transaction out of which it arises. Broadly speaking, a resulting trust arises from the nature or circumstances of consideration involved in a transaction whereby one person becomes invested with a legal title but is obligated in equity to hold his legal title for the benefit of another, the intention of the former to hold in trust for the latter being implied or presumed as a matter of law, although no intention to create or hold in trust has been manifested, expressly or by inference, and there ordinarily being no fraud or constructive fraud involved.

Church of God Pentecostal, 716 So. 2d at 207 (citing 76 Am. Jur. 2d *Trusts* § 166 (1992)). “A resulting trust ‘is designed to give effect to the unwritten but actual intention of the parties at the time of the acquisition of title to the affected property.’” ***Presbytery of St. Andrew***, 240 So. 3d at 406 (quoting 8 Encyclopedia of Mississippi Law § 73:2 (2001)).

¶26. We find that evidence presented by both parties created a genuine issue of material fact regarding whether the District has a resulting trust interest in property. The District presented GCWC’s application to the Assemblies of God church in which it is claimed that GCWC assumed the responsibilities “set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the General Council, and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Assemblies of God District Council[.]” Additionally, the District presented a document concerning GCWC’s November

1988 meeting during which the GCWC congregation agreed to adhere to the Assemblies of God faith. The document asserts that a quorum of the GCWC congregation agreed to be governed by the District's Constitution and Bylaws and to "[h]ave the property properly deeded with the name of Assemblies of God on the deed and deeded to the trustees of the local Assemblies of God church and successors in office." After this meeting, a District Superintendent "conferred with Charles Benefield [a GCWC trustee] who assured him [that] the deed was properly worded as required by the General Council."

¶27. But Defendants' evidence contradicts the assertion that GCWC had agreed to include the District's name on the deed. Defendants presented the affidavit of Clara Young, who was present at the November 1988 meeting and was the secretary of GCWC at that time. She averred that she had "no recollection that Pastor E.H. Hassler, or any member of the GCWC church, including but not limited to Trustee Charles Benefield, informed [the District] during or after the business meeting while I was in attendance that the GCWC church would have the Assemblies of God name placed on the church's deed or that the deed was properly worded as required by the District Council." The admitted certified copy of the deed from that particular time adds credence to Clara Young's assertions because the deed does not include either the General Council's, the District's, or the Assemblies of God's name. While we recognize that the deed alone may not be dispositive of the question of ownership, it is relevant and important to a determination of that issue.

¶28. Evidence of a GCWC trustee's having assured the District that the deed would include its name and the GCWC's adoption of the District's Constitution and Bylaws could demonstrate actual intent to enter into a trust relationship and might give rise to a resulting trust. But the evidence suggests also that, despite being aware of the bylaws' requirements to include the District's name in the deed, GCWC did not follow the bylaws, which weighs against an intent to enter into a trust relationship with the District. *See Church of God Pentecostal*, 716 So. 2d at 208-09. Thus, the conflicting evidence creates a genuine issue of material fact of whether there was an intent by GCWC's board of trustees to create a trust relationship with the District. "Summary judgment is appropriate if there is no genuine issue of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law." *Hospital MD, LLC v. Larry*, 138 So. 3d 922, 925 (Miss. 2014) (citing *Davis v. Hoss*, 869 So. 2d 397, 401 (Miss. 2004)). Here, the chancellor erred by granting summary judgment in favor of the District because genuine issues of material fact regarding ownership of the property remain.

CONCLUSION

¶29. Issues concerning disaffiliation, *i.e.*, actions taken at the congregational meeting on March 19, 2017, and whether GCWC was under the District's supervision, are church-governing matters. Thus, the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine deprived the chancellor of jurisdiction to address those claims. But this Court finds that genuine issues of material fact remain regarding ownership of property. Therefore, we

reverse the chancellor's grant of summary judgment to the District and remand all issues concerning ownership of property for further proceedings.

¶30. REVERSED AND REMANDED.

KING, P.J., COLEMAN, BEAM AND CHAMBERLIN, JJ., CONCUR. MAXWELL, J., SPECIALLY CONCURS WITH SEPARATE WRITTEN OPINION JOINED BY COLEMAN, BEAM AND CHAMBERLIN, JJ.; ISHEE, J., JOINS IN PART. ISHEE, J., CONCURS IN PART AND DISSENTS IN PART WITH SEPARATE WRITTEN OPINION JOINED IN PART BY MAXWELL, J. RANDOLPH, C.J., DISSENTS WITH SEPARATE WRITTEN OPINION JOINED BY GRIFFIS, J.

MAXWELL, JUSTICE, SPECIALLY CONCURRING:

¶31. Under the First Amendment, church questions—such as who has the authority to act on behalf of the church, who should serve as pastor, and if and when a church may leave a denomination—are just that. They are questions for the church, not the civil court. So it was error for the chancellor not only to entertain these questions but also to enter summary judgment in the District's favor on these ecclesiastical matters.

¶32. In its support for the chancellor's decision, the dissenting opinion says it is actually applying the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine. But by declaring that the Assemblies of God is a "hierarchical church" with the District exercising final authority over GCWC, the dissenting opinion is doing the opposite—it is

weighing in on church questions. Diss. Op. ¶ 39. And in doing so, the dissent is also *resolving* sharply contested factual disputes surrounding the District’s relationship with GCWC. This is also not appropriate on summary judgment.

¶33. The only issue properly before the chancery court was the property question—namely, the District’s claim that GCWC intended for its property to be placed in trust under the District’s control. I agree with the majority that this much more narrow question involves disputed facts that must be resolved on remand.

¶34. Therefore, I concur with the majority.

**COLEMAN, BEAM AND CHAMBERLIN, JJ.,
JOIN THIS OPINION. ISHEE, J., JOINS THIS
OPINION IN PART.**

**ISHEE, JUSTICE, CONCURRING IN PART
AND DISSENTING IN PART:**

¶35. This case involves the determination of whether summary judgment was properly granted. “Summary judgment is inappropriate where there are undisputed facts which are susceptible to more than one interpretation.” *McLeod v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 789 So. 2d 806, 809 (Miss. 2001) (citing *Canizaro v. Mobile Commc’ns Corp. of Am.*, 655 So. 2d 25, 28 (Miss. 1985)). Further, when undisputed facts are subject to more than one interpretation, this Court “will not hesitate to reverse and remand for a trial on the merits.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting *Canizaro*, 655 So. 2d at 28).

¶36. This Court has also stated, however, that “[s]ummary judgment may be *inappropriate* in most complex cases” *Allen v. Mac Tools, Inc.*, 671 So. 2d 636, 642 (Miss. 1996) (first alteration in original) (emphasis added) (internal quotation mark omitted) (quoting *Cunningham v. Lanier*, 555 So. 2d 685, 687 n.2 (Miss. 1989)). In the present case, the trial court held a hearing on the motions for summary judgment and made its findings, ultimately granting summary judgment in favor of the District. A review of the record, however, indicates that genuine issues of material fact remain as to a number of complex issues raised in this litigation.

¶37. As the Majority notes, the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine may ultimately bar most claims in this case other than those concerning property disputes. Until the record is more fully developed, however, we cannot make that decision. Because genuine issues of material fact exist at this point in the case, I would reverse and remand so the record could be further developed and the complex issues further resolved.

MAXWELL, J., JOINS THIS OPINION IN PART.

RANDOLPH, CHIEF JUSTICE, DISSENTING:

¶38. Today’s case reaches this Court after a pastor and members (collectively, Beachy et al.) of the Gulf Coast Worship Center (GCWC) declined to recognize the authority and/or decisions of the District Council, General Council, and the Harrison County Chancery Court, First Judicial District. Beachy et al. have

unconvincingly argued that they retain control over GCWC. The learned chancellor properly recognized that the District Council retained control over GCWC and that its ecclesiastical decisions were binding on GCWC.

¶39. The Assemblies of God is a hierarchical church.⁵ “Hierarchical churches” are “those organized as a body with other churches having similar faith and doctrine with a common ruling convocation or ecclesiastical head.” *Kedroff v. St. Nicholas Cathedral of Russian Orthodox Church in N. Am.*, 344 U.S. 94, 110, 73 S. Ct. 143, 97 L. Ed. 120 (1952). Courts in Mississippi follow these same principles. In a “hierarchical church, . . . local churches are subordinate members of the general church, which maintains ultimate authority or control.” *Schmidt v. Cath. Diocese of Biloxi*, 18 So. 3d 814, 818 (Miss. 2009) (citing *Watson v. Jones*, 80 U.S. 679, 726-27, 20 L. Ed. 666 (1872)). The United States Constitution permits “hierarchical religious organizations to establish their own rules and regulations for internal discipline and government” and “requires that civil courts accept their decisions as binding upon them.” *Serbian E. Orthodox Diocese for U.S. and Can. v. Milivojevich*, 426 U.S. 696, 724-25, 96 S. Ct. 2372, 49 L. Ed 2d 151 (1976).

⁵ See also *Ohio Dist. Council, Inc. of the Assemblies of God v. Speelman*, 47 N.E.3d 954 (Ohio Ct. App. 2016); *Kersh v. Gen. Council of the Assemblies of God*, 535 F. Supp. 494, 495 (N.D. Cal. 1982); *Hatcher v. S.C. Dist. Council of Assemblies of God, Inc.*, 226 S.E.2d 253 (S.C. 1976); *N. Y. Dist. of Assemblies of God v. Calvary Assembly of God*, 409 N.Y.S.2d 842, 843 (N.Y. App. Div. 1978).

¶40. In the Assemblies of God church, the ultimate governing body is the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The General Council has established the rules and regulations for discipline and government. Descending from the General Council, the District Councils are granted the authority to supervise local assemblies within their territory pursuant to the Constitution of the General Council. The District Councils also have bylaws and constitutions consistent with the General Council's. At the time of affiliation, GCWC also had bylaws and a constitution comporting with those of the General Council and District Councils.

¶41. When GCWC affiliated with the Assemblies of God, it agreed to "[a]ccept and be governed by the Constitution & Bylaws of the General Council and District Council of the Assemblies of God." The GCWC was "itself but a member of a much larger and more important religious organization [(the Assemblies of God)] and [was] under its government and control, and [was] bound by its orders and judgments." *Watson*, 80 U.S. at 726-27.

¶42. Pursuant to its authority under the Constitution of the General Council, the Mississippi District Council for the Assemblies of God placed GCWC under its supervision on March 16, 2017. The District Council exercised its authority when Kevin Beachy refused to renew his pastoral credentials, a condition imposed on all Assemblies of God churches and their pastors.

¶43. As found in their bylaws, "District Supervised Assembly," GCWC was

subject to the District Officiary for guidance and supervision in all matters, including its transactions, legal or otherwise, elections or appointments and operational affairs. It shall not have the authority to sell, lease, rent, alter, or dispose of any church property, real or chattel, without the consent of the District Superintendents.

Additionally, “all [GCWC] offices and positions [were] . . . vacated” and “[t]he assembly shall not conduct any business such as election of officers and receiving members, without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyterian.”

¶44. Without dispute, on March 19, 2017, Beachy et al. conducted a business meeting in violation of the District Council’s constitution and bylaws. They voted to disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God and voted to amend their constitution and bylaws by removing a provision that its property would revert to the District Council.

¶45. Once the District Council had made its decision to place GCWC under District Supervision and GCWC refused to recognize that decision as binding, the District Council sought a declaration of rights that its ecclesiastical decision was binding upon the dissidents. The District Council asked that the chancery court grant it declaratory and injunctive relief, seeking a judgment that: (i) the meeting held by the pastor and board of GCWC on March 19, 2017, and the actions taken at the meeting were void; (ii) GCWC had been under the District Council’s supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property,

real property, and improvements were under the control of the District Council. The District Council also sought an injunction barring Beachy et al. from claiming any position of authority or, in any way, preventing the District Council's supervision of GCWC.

¶46. Beachy et al. responded by filing a motion to dismiss alleging that the trial court lacked subject matter jurisdiction because (i) the case involved purely ecclesiastical matters that the court is prohibited from considering, (ii) the District Council lacked standing because the defendants lawfully disaffiliated, and (iii) the complaint failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Beachy et al. affirmatively pled that the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine should apply in this case. Curiously, it did not contend that the doctrine applied to the District Council's decision or to their own unlawful act of conducting business without the consent of the District Council.

¶47. “[A] chancellor’s findings of fact are unassailable on appeal unless those findings are manifestly wrong.” *McCoy v. McCoy*, 611 So. 2d 957, 960 (Miss. 1992) (citing *Dungan v. Dick Moore, Inc.*, 463 So. 2d 1094, 1100 (Miss. 1985)). “We are to accept the chancellor’s findings of facts and ensure that those findings are supported by the evidence that was before him.” *Elchos v. Haas*, 178 So. 3d 1183, 1191 (Miss. 2015) (citing *David M. Cox, Inc. v. Pitts*, 29 So. 3d 795, 804-05 (Miss. Ct. App. 2009)).

¶48. The chancellor denied the motion to dismiss, finding that

The General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District, of which GCWC is a member, is a hierarchal church fellowship and as such the court may not interfere in the District's action in placing GCWC under District Supervision or in considering the actions of GCWC at the March 19, 2017 meeting to be void. The District's decisions are those of a higher authority within the church's hierarchal system and are protected by the law of judicial abstention as ecclesiastical disputes. ***Mallette v. Church of God International, et al.***, 789 So. 2d 120, 124 (¶ 10) (Miss. Ct. App. 2001).

The District's petition alleges that GCWC personal property, real property and improvements are under the control of the District the same being accomplished in compliance with the governing constitutions and bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the District and GCWC. The bylaws of GCWC cited in paragraph 17 of the District's petition provide that in the event GCWC ceases to function as a church body, its property, real or chattel, shall revert to the District thereby providing standing to the District for the relief it seeks in its petition. ***Church of God Pentecostal, Inc. v. Freewill Pentecostal Church of God, Inc.***, 716 So. 2d 200 (Miss. 1998).

¶49. "The ecclesiastical abstention doctrine recognizes that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment precludes judicial review of claims that require

resolution of ‘strictly and purely ecclesiastical’ questions.” *Woodard v. Miller*, 326 So. 3d 439, 444 n.2 (Miss. 2021) (citing *McRaney v. N. Am. Mission Bd. of the S. Baptist Convention, Inc.*, 966 F.3d 346, 348 (5th Cir. 2020) (quoting *Milivojevic*, 426 U.S. at 713)). The United States Supreme Court has held that the doctrine provides

a spirit of freedom for religious organizations, an independence from secular control or manipulation, in short, power to decide for themselves, free from state interference, matters of church government as well as those of faith and doctrine. Freedom to select the clergy . . . must now be said to have federal constitutional protection . . . against state interference.

Kedroff, 344 U.S. at 116 (citing *Watson*, 80 U.S. at 728-29). Today’s case involves all three—church government, faith, and doctrine.

¶50. In this misguided defiance of the District Council’s decision, Beachy et al. refused to honor the decisions of the District Council, and at this stage in the litigation, refused to accept the ruling of the chancery court. Beachy et al. continued to file numerous other motions, praying that the chancellor reconsider or alter his denial of their motion to dismiss and arguing unconvincingly that GCWC, and not the District Council, should continue to control GCWC. All parties submitted motions for summary judgment for the chancellor to consider.

¶51. The chancellor correctly recognized that the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine was applicable, for

indeed the Assemblies of God was a hierarchical church. *See supra* ¶ 39. But Beachy et al. attempted to circumvent the ruling of the court that was based on the ecclesiastical abstention doctrine that the District Council was entitled to assume control. While the language in the majority’s footnote 4 is found in the bylaws and constitution, it was no longer applicable once Beachy et al. failed to follow the practices of the church and were under the District Council’s supervision. *See* Maj. Op. ¶ 20 n.4.

¶52. When Beachy et al. failed to relinquish control not only of the pulpit but also other church property, another legal principle came into play. “The State has an obvious and legitimate interest in the peaceful resolution of property disputes, and in providing a civil forum where the ownership [and control] of church property can be determined conclusively.” ***Church of God Pentecostal, Inc. v. Freewill Pentecostal Church of God, Inc.***, 716 So. 2d 200, 204 (Miss. 1998) (alteration in original) (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting ***Jones v. Wolf***, 443 U.S. 595, 602, 99 S. Ct. 3020, 61 L. Ed. 2d 775 (1979)). To determine the issue of control, the chancellor reviewed the controlling documents through a secular lens. “Mississippi has adopted the ‘neutral principles of law’ approach for resolving church property disputes.” ***Presbytery of St. Andrew v. First Presbyterian Church PCUSA of Starkville***, 240 So. 3d 399, 404 (Miss. 2018).

¶53. After reviewing the bylaws and constitutions of the General Council, the District Council, and GCWC, the chancellor found that Beachy et al. lacked authority to disaffiliate on March 19, 2017, and amend their

bylaws. On March 16, 2017, GCWC was governed by the “Constitutions and bylaws of the General Council, the District, and the Constitution and bylaws of the GCWC itself.”

The applicable General Council (Art. V, 4 d, DKT 69-1, p.17) and District (Art. XII, (d) 4., DKT 69-1, p.83) Bylaws, to which GCWC agreed to be bound when it became an affiliated Assemblies of God church in 1988, provided that the district officary would be invited to participate in a specially called business meeting in the event the termination of affiliation is under consideration. This requirement is for the express purpose of giving the district officary the opportunity to present the case for continued General Council affiliation. The District officials were then to have the opportunity to address the congregation in opposition to the disaffiliation vote. No such invitation was given and district officary did not attend the March 17, 2017 meeting. The same provision in both the General Council and District Bylaws provides that only after the District officary addresses the assembly may the “final disposition” of the termination proceed in accordance with the constitution and Bylaws of the local church. (*Id.*).

(Alteration in original.) The chancellor granted the District Council’s motion for summary judgment, holding that all actions taken at the March 19, 2017 meeting “were void and of no legal effect” The chancellor further held that GCWC had been under the

District Council's supervision since March 16, 2017, and that "all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council" pursuant to the constitutions and bylaws under which GCWC had agreed to abide. The chancellor subsequently clarified that its order granting the District Council summary judgment was limited to the declaratory relief claim and did not extend to any claim for injunctive relief. Again, the language of footnote 4 was no longer applicable to Beachy et al. after GCWC had been placed under the supervision of the District Council. *See* Maj. Op. ¶ 20 n.4.

¶54. Despite the chancellor's grant of declaratory relief in favor of the District Council, Beachy defiantly remained in the pulpit, and others acted as the governing board of GCWC. Beachy et al. did not comply with the trial court's order to provide the District Council with information about GCWC's assets. The District Council returned to a civil court, seeking an orderly and peaceful transition of control. The District Council requested that Beachy et al. "cease and desist from acting as or holding themselves out as a board member, trustee, member of any leadership body, and/or pastor of GCWC." The District Council also requested that Beachy et al. "surrender all keys, access codes, account information, and any other documents or tangible things pertaining to the GCWC to the District." After concluding that Beachy et al. failed to make a strong showing of the likelihood of prevailing on appeal, the chancellor entered an Order of Final Judgment on September 29, 2021, granting the relief sought by the District Council.

¶55. Today's record fully supports the learned chancellor's findings and conclusions that the Assemblies of God Church is a hierarchical church and that control of GCWC vested with the District Council. The futile attempt by Beachy et al. to disaffiliate and amend GCWC's constitutions and bylaws were void. The chancellor's order granting summary judgment for the District Council reads: "the District does not seek ownership or title to GCWC real and personal property. It seeks control for the express purpose of installing an interim pastor." The chancellor properly found that when GCWC ceased to operate as an Assemblies of God affiliate, control and authority of GCWC belonged to the District Council.

¶56. I would affirm the learned chancellor's decision and find no reason to remand for further proceedings.

GRIFFIS, J., JOINS THIS OPINION.

APPENDIX B

**IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HARRISON
COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

CAUSE NO. 24CH1:2017-cv-2624(JP)

[Filed July 23, 2021]

MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNSEL)
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD)
PLAINTIFF)
)
VERSUS)
)
KEVIN BEACHY, LESTER PAUL BENNETT;)
GENE COLLUMS; RICHARD (RICK))
FORTICH; EDDIE KINSEY; ANDRE MULET;)
JAMES PAGAN; and JOHN DOES 1-25)
DEFENDANTS)

**ORDER GRANTING PLAINTIFF'S
MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT
and DENYING DEFENDANTS'
MOTION TO DISMISS AND/OR FOR
SUMMARY JUDGMENT and OTHER RELIEF**

Before the court are the Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment (DKT 69); Defendants' Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment (Dkt 71); Plaintiff's Motion to Strike Chain of Title Summary

Appended to Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment (Dkt 77); and Defendant's Motion to Strike Affidavit and Memorandum of Law (Dkt 79). The Court, having heard and considered the arguments of counsel, the parties' respective pleadings and memoranda, and being otherwise fully advised of the premises herein, now Finds and Determines as follows:

1. The plaintiff herein is the Mississippi District Council of Assemblies of God ("District"). The defendants are the pastor ("Beachy") and members of the board of trustees and deacons of the Gulf Coast Worship Center ("GCWC"), a church located within the jurisdiction of this court and initially affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God ("General Council") and the District.
2. The continued affiliation of GCWC with the General Council and the District is the ultimate issue in this litigation following the vote to disaffiliate from the General Council taken at the March 19, 2017 meeting of Beachy, the GCWC board and members. The District asserts that any action taken at this meeting, including the vote to disaffiliate, is void because the District, acting in accordance with the constitutions and by-laws of the General Council and the District, had on March 16, 2017, placed GCWC under District Supervision. The District by-laws provide that once under District Supervision, the board of GCWC and all of its offices and positions were vacated, with the exception of the pastorate. Thus, GCWC was not

permitted to conduct any business without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter to include votes to disaffiliate from the District and General Council and to amend its bylaws.

3. In its Amended Petition for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, the District seeks a declaratory judgment that: (i) the meeting held by the pastor and board of GCWC on March 19, 2017 and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (ii) GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council. The District also seeks an injunction barring the defendants from claiming any position of authority or, in any way, preventing District supervision of GCWC. On December 9, 2019, the Defendants filed their Answer and Motion to Dismiss. (DKT 60) The Defendants assert that the Plaintiff's Amended Petition should be dismissed on multiple grounds and deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the relief they seek.
4. On May 15, 2020, the Plaintiff filed its Motion for Summary Judgment (DKT 69) as well as its Memorandum in Support of its Motion for Summary Judgment. (DKT 70). Also on May 15, 2020, the Defendants filed their Motion to Dismiss and for Summary Judgment and Memorandum of Law. (DKT 71) Thereafter, both parties filed multiple pleadings and memoranda.

5. Prior to March, 2017, Beachy was in discussions with the District regarding his disagreement over a certain tenet of the Assemblies of God faith and his related refusal to renew his approval as pastor of GCWC. At a meeting on February 12, 2017, with District officials, Beachy refused reconciliation, and advised that disaffiliation from the General Council was being considered. On March 15, 2017, Beachy spoke with District officials and confirmed the defendants' intent to pursue disaffiliation from the District and General Council. (DKT 57-7) Thereafter on March 16, 2017, the District, acting under its Constitution and Bylaws and factually based on Beachy no longer being an approved pastor, declared GCWC to be under its direct supervision. (DKT 57-2) The District bylaws provide that a church declared under District supervision shall not conduct any business and that all offices and positions are vacated, with the exception of the pastorate. (DKT 69-2, p. 87, District bylaws Art. XIX, Sec. 8).
6. Despite the District's actions, on March 19, 2017, the members voted to discontinue GCWC's affiliation with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and to amend its Constitution and Bylaws removing the provision that if the assembly ceases to function as a church body, its property, real or chattel, then reverts to the District, with full authority to use or dispose of the property at their (sic) discretion. The actions of GCWC at its March 19, 2017 meeting are

sometimes collectively referred to hereafter as the “disaffiliation vote”. (DKT 69-9, p. 35 of 69).

7. The Court finds that defendants, as well as the congregation, had no authority to take any action, including that taken at the March 19, 2017 meeting as discussed hereafter. The Court having found by its June 18, 2019 Order Denying Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss (DKT 44) that the Assemblies of God Church is a hierarchal church, the validity of actions taken at the March 19, 2017 GCWC meeting are governed by and subject to the Constitutions and bylaws of the General Council, the District and the Constitution and bylaws of GCWC itself.
8. The applicable General Council (Art. V, 4 d, DKT 69-1, p.17) and District (Art. XII, (d) 4., DKT 69-1,p.83) Bylaws, to which GCWC agreed to be bound when it became an affiliated Assemblies of God church in 1988, provided that the district officary would be invited to participate in a specially called business meeting in the event the termination of affiliation is under consideration. This requirement is for the express purpose of giving the district officary the opportunity to present the case for continued General Council affiliation. The District officials were then to have the opportunity to address the congregation in opposition to the disaffiliation vote. No such invitation was given and district officary did not attend the March 17, 2017 meeting. The same provision in both the General Council and District Bylaws provides that only

after the District officary addresses the assembly may the “final disposition” of the termination proceed in accordance with the constitution and Bylaws of the local church. (*Id.*)

9. The Motion for Summary Judgment filed by the District alleges that the Constitution and Bylaws of GCWC itself acknowledge its affiliation with the General Council of the Assemblies of God as well as the District Counsel and further provide that if GCWC ceases to function as a “church body”, then its property, real or chattel, reverts to the District which then has full authority to use or dispose of the property at its discretion. The defendants argue, without citing specific evidence, that GCWC has not stopped functioning as a “church body” and therefore the reverter clause is inapplicable. The term “church body” is not defined in the Constitutions or Bylaws of either the District or the General Counsel. However, as discussed hereafter, the only logical meaning of the term “church body” as used in these documents is one affiliated with and operating under the District and General Counsel of the Assemblies of God, to include a properly credentialed pastor.
10. At its March 19, 2017 meeting, GCWC voted (i) to disaffiliate from the General Council and the District and (ii) to amend its Constitution and bylaws removing a provision that its property be transferred to the District when it ceased to function as a church body. The court

finds and holds that the actions taken at the March 19, 2017 meeting were void and of no legal effect because:

- (1) As of March 19, 2017, GCWC was under District supervision and could not conduct any business or take any actions;
- (2) The district officary was not provided the opportunity to address the membership in opposition to the disaffiliation vote; and
- (3) The GCWC Articles of Incorporation prohibited any bylaw amendment inconsistent with the articles.

- 11. The court therefore grants the District's Motion for Summary Judgment and holds (i) the meeting held by the pastor and board of GCWC on March 19, 2017 and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (2) GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council.
- 12. The Defendants' Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment asks the court to require the District to join the GCWC non-profit corporation and Whitney Bank d/b/a Hancock Bank as parties and to join the General Council as a real party in interest and if not so joined the District's Amended Petition should be dismissed. The Defendants further raise the issues of Statute of Limitations, Statute of Frauds, Merger and Parol Evidence and Conditions

Precedent not being met. The Court finds said motion not well taken and is denied.

13. In considering the Defendants' motion the court first notes that the District does not seek ownership or title to GCWC real and personal property. It seeks control for the express purpose of installing an interim pastor. For this reason, neither the non-profit corporation and Whitney Bank d/b/a Hancock Bank are necessary or proper parties. The control of the non-profit and its property is presently vested with the District to be governed by the Constitution and bylaws of the District and GCWC. The secured position of the bank remains unaffected by GCWC being under District supervision. Its rights are governed by its deed of trust and loan agreements with GCWC.
14. General Council is not a necessary party or proper party to this litigation according to its Constitution and Bylaws.
15. Because title to GCWC property, as opposed to control, is not an issue, the motion to dismiss based on the statute of frauds, the statute of limitations and merger and parol evidence is denied.
16. The GCWC bylaws provide that if it ceases to function as a "church body" that its property reverts to the District. The Defendants argue that GCWC, notwithstanding the disaffiliation vote, continues to function as a church body. (MEC 69-5 at p. 12) The Court finds that the

only reasonable interpretation of this provision is that if the church is no longer affiliated with the General Council or District Council its property reverts to the District, even if certain members of the congregation continue to worship as a church. The GCWC bylaws, including the church body provision, were adopted verbatim from the District's Suggested Constitution and Bylaws for Local Assemblies. Further, the action taken by the membership at the March 19, 2017 meeting removing the reverter clause from the bylaws is void for the reasons the court has stated above.

17. For the reasons stated above the Defendants' Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment is denied.
18. On May 30, 2020, the plaintiff filed its Motion to Strike Chain of Title Summary Appended to Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment (Dkt 77). The court finds that the "Chain of Title Summary" in question (DKT 71, pp22-23) is unauthenticated and appears to have been prepared by an unknown source. The court therefore grants plaintiff's motion and finds that the Chain of Title Summary is not properly before the court and should be stricken.
19. Also on May 30, 2020, defendants filed their Motion to Strike Affidavit and Memorandum of Law (Dkt 79). The defendants argue that portions of the affidavits of Bob Wilburn, Lori Hedgepeth, P.T. Palmer, Derek Youngblood and Teresa TYoungblood, which plaintiff

incorporates into its Motion for Summary Judgment, should be stricken from the record because they are not based upon personal knowledge, among other reasons. The affidavits in question address matters including, but not limited to, the structure or the Assemblies of God church and certain documents created and kept by the District when GCWC first became affiliated with District and General Council. Having reviewed the District's Response to Motion to Strike Affidavit and Memorandum of Law (DKT 81), the court finds that the affidavits in question are based upon the personal knowledge of the affiants themselves, and where applicable, contain statements which by definition are not hearsay or fall within one of the accepted exceptions to the rule against hearsay. The defendants' Motion to Strike Affidavit and Memorandum of Law is therefore Denied.

20. For the reasons stated above, it is therefore ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment and Motion to Strike Chain of Title Summary Appended to Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment are GRANTED. It is further ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that defendants' Motion to Dismiss and/or for Summary Judgment and Motion to Strike Affidavit and Memorandum of Law are hereby DENIED.

App. 45

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 23
of July, 2021.

/s/ [signature]
CHANCELLOR

Copies to:
Lisa Repetto, Esq.
Malcolm Jones, Esq.

APPENDIX C

**IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HARRISON
COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

CAUSE NO. 24CHI1:2017-cv-2624(JP)

[Filed June 28, 2019]

MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNSEL)
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD)
PLAINTIFF)
)
VERSUS)
)
KEVIN BEACHY, LESTER PAUL BENNETT;)
GENE COLLUMS; RICHARD (RICK))
FORTICH; EDDIE KINSEY; ANDRE MULET;)
JAMES PAGAN; and JOHN DOES 1-25)
DEFENDANTS)

**ORDER DENYING DEFENDANTS'
MOTION TO DISMISS**

Before the court is the Defendants' Motion to Dismiss ("Motion") (DKT 24) the Plaintiff's Petition for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief ("Petition") (DKT 3). This case was originally assigned to Chancellor Carter Bise who heard oral arguments on the motion on August 16, 2018. An agreed order staying all proceedings in this case for 60 days was entered on

October 22, 2018 for the purpose of permitting the parties to conduct settlement discussions. Thereafter, and prior to ruling on the Motion, Judge Bise recused by order of February 12, 2019 and this case was randomly assigned to the undersigned chancellor. On or about April 18, 2019, the court was provided with the transcript of the August 18, 2018 oral arguments before Judge Bise. Having read the transcript, the undersigned chancellor certifies that he has familiarized himself with the record of this case. *See* Rule 65, M.R.C.P.

The defendants are the pastor and members of the board of trustees/deacons of Gulf Coast Worship Center (“GCWC”), a church located within the jurisdiction of this court and affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and the Mississippi District Council of Assemblies of God. The Mississippi District Council of Assemblies of God (“District”) is the plaintiff herein. On March 19, 2017, the members of GCWC elected to disaffiliate from the District and the General Council of the Assemblies of God and to adopt a new Constitution and Bylaws. The District alleges that the vote to disaffiliate was in violation of the GCWC Constitution and Bylaws, District Constitution and Bylaws and General Council Assemblies of God Constitution and Bylaws.

The petition alleges that the Constitution and Bylaws of GCWC acknowledge the affiliation with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District and further provide that if GCWC ceases to function as a church body, then its property, real or chattel, reverts to the District which shall have full

authority to use or dispose of the property at its discretion. Following various communications and notices between the parties, the defendants, on October 10, 2017, notified the District that its supervision or the authority of the District Officer would not be recognized by GCWC.

On November 28, 2017, the District filed its petition seeking a declaratory judgment that: (i) the meeting held on March 19, 2017 and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (ii) GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council. The District also seeks an injunction barring the defendants from claiming any position of authority or, in any way, preventing District supervision of the GCWC.

On January 29, 2018, the defendants filed their motion to dismiss alleging that the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction because (i) the case involves purely ecclesiastical matters which the court is prohibited from considering by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; (ii) the District lacks standing to pursue its claims because the defendants lawfully disaffiliated; and (iii) the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

The court, having considered the pleadings, arguments of counsel and authorities cited by both parties, finds that the defendants's Motion to Dismiss should be denied. The General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District, of which GCWC is a member, is a hierarchical church fellowship and as such the court may not interfere in the District's action

in placing GCWC under District Supervision or in considering the actions of GCWC at the March 19, 2017 meeting to be void. The District's decisions are those of a higher authority within the church's hierarchal system and are protected by the law of judicial abstention as ecclesiastical disputes. *Mallette v. Church of God International, et al.*, 789 So.2d 120, 124 (¶ 10) (Miss. Ct. App. 2001).

The District's petition alleges that GCWC personal property, real property and improvements are under the control of the District the same being accomplished in compliance with the governing constitutions and bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the District and GCWC. The bylaws of GCWC cited in paragraph 17 of the District's petition provide that in the event GCWC ceases to function as a church body, its property, real or chattel, shall revert to the District thereby providing standing to the District for the relief it seeks in its petition. *Church of God Pentecostal, Inc. v. Freewill Pentecostal Church of God, Inc.*, 716 So. 2d 200 (Miss. 1998).

The court finds that the allegations in the petition by the District are sufficient to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. For these purposes, the court is limited to the allegations in the District's petition which must be taken as true.

The defendants's Motion to Dismiss is therefore DENIED

SO ORDERED AND ADJUDGED, this the 28 day of June, 2019.

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/s/ [signature]
CHANCELLOR

Copies to:

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APPENDIX D

**SUPREME COURT OF MISSISSIPPI
COURT OF APPEALS
OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
*Office of the Clerk***

Supreme Court Case # 2021-CA-01007-SCT

[Filed October 19, 2023]

D. Jeremy Whitmire
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Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0249
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October 19, 2023

This is to advise you that the Mississippi Supreme Court rendered the following decision on the 19th day of October, 2023.

Supreme Court Case # 2021-CA-01007-SCT
Trial Court Case # 24CH1:17-cv-02624-JP

Kevin Beachy, Eddie Kinsey, Andre Mulet and Kris Williams v. Mississippi District Council for Assemblies of God

The motion for rehearing filed by the appellee is denied. Randolph, C.J., and Griffis, J., would grant.

*** NOTICE TO CHANCERY/CIRCUIT/COUNTY
COURT CLERKS ***

If an original of any exhibit other than photos was sent to the Supreme Court Clerk and should now be returned to you, please advise this office in writing immediately.

Please note: Pursuant to MRAP 45(c), amended effective July, 1, 2010, copies of opinions will not be mailed. Any opinion rendered may be found by visiting the Court's website at: <https://courts.ms.gov>, and selecting the appropriate date the opinion was rendered under the category "Decisions."

APPENDIX E

**Constitution and Bylaws
of
The General Council of the Assemblies of God
in the
United States of America and Foreign Lands
Revised to August 11, 1987**

CONSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION

WE BELIEVE:

That God's purpose concerning man is (1) to seek and to save that which is lost, (2) to be worshiped by man, and (3) to build a body of believers in the image of His Son.

That these believers, saved and called out of the world, constitute the body or church of Jesus Christ built and established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

That the members of the body, the church (ecclesia) of Jesus Christ, are enjoined to assemble themselves for worship, fellowship, counsel, and instruction in the Word of God, the work of the ministry and for the exercise of those spiritual gifts and offices provided for New Testament church order.

That it is evident the early apostolic churches came together in fellowship as a representative body of saved, Spirit-filled believers who ordained and sent out

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evangelists and missionaries, and under the supervision of the Holy Spirit set over the church pastors and teachers.

That the priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God is to be an agency of God for evangelizing the world, to be a corporate body in which man may worship God, and to be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.

That the Assemblies of God exists expressly to give continuing emphasis to this reason-for-being in the New Testament apostolic pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, which enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs, adding a necessary dimension to worshipful relationship with God, and enabling them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the edifying of the body of Christ.

That we are a cooperative fellowship of Pentecostal, Spirit-baptized saints from local Pentecostal assemblies of like precious faith throughout the United States and foreign lands to be known as the General Council of the Assemblies of God whose purpose is neither to usurp authority over the various local assemblies, nor to deprive them of their scriptural and local rights and privileges; but to recognize and promote scriptural methods and order for worship, unity, fellowship, work, and business for God; and to disapprove unscriptural methods, doctrines, and conduct, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, "till we all

come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

ARTICLE I. NAME

The corporate name shall be *The General Council of the Assemblies of God*, which term is reserved for legal use when referring to the legal entity.

The term *General Council* shall be used to refer to sessions of the corporation.

The term *Assemblies of God* shall be used to refer to the entire constituency.

ARTICLE II. NATURE

The General Council of the Assemblies of God is a cooperative fellowship based upon mutual agreements voluntarily entered into by its membership.

ARTICLE III. PREROGATIVES

The prerogatives of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be:

- a. To encourage and promote the evangelization of the world.
- b. To encourage and promote the worship of God.
- c. To encourage and promote the edification of believers.
- d. To provide a basis of fellowship among Christians of like precious faith.

e. To establish and maintain such departments and institutions as may be necessary for the propagation of the gospel and the work of this Pentecostal fellowship.

f. To approve all scriptural teachings, methods, and conduct; and to disapprove unscriptural teachings, methods, and conduct.

g. To have the right to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of such property, real or chattel, as may be needed for the prosecution of its work.

ARTICLE IV. PRINCIPLES FOR FELLOWSHIP

The Assemblies of God shall represent, as nearly as possible in detail, the body of Christ as described in the New Testament Scriptures. It shall recognize the principles inherent in the body as also inherent in this Fellowship, particularly the principles of unity, cooperation, and equality. It recognizes that these principles will enable it to achieve its priority reason-for-being as an agency of God for evangelizing the world, as a corporate body in which man may worship God, and as a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.

ARTICLE V. STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

The Bible is our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. This Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended simply as a basis of fellowship among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, 1 Corinthians 1:10; Acts 2:42). The phraseology employed in this statement

is not inspired or contended for, but the truth set forth is held to be essential to a full-gospel ministry. No claim is made that it contains all Biblical truth, only that it covers our need as to these fundamental doctrines.

1. The Scriptures Inspired

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15,17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21).

2. The One True God

The one true God has revealed himself as the eternally self-existent "I AM," the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10,11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22).

THE ADORABLE GODHEAD

(a) Terms Defined

The terms *trinity* and *persons*, as related to the Godhead, while not found in the Scriptures, are words in harmony with Scripture, whereby we may convey to others our immediate understanding of the doctrine of Christ respecting the Being of God, as distinguished from "gods many and lords many." We therefore may speak with propriety of the Lord our God, who is One Lord, as a Trinity or as one Being of three persons, and

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still be absolutely scriptural (examples, Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 14:16,17).

(b) Distinction and Relationship in the Godhead

Christ taught a distinction of persons in the Godhead which He expressed in specific terms of relationship, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but that this distinction and relationship, as to its mode is inscrutable and incomprehensible, because unexplained (Luke 1:35; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Matthew 11:25-27; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3,4).

(c) Unity of the One Being of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Accordingly, therefore, there is that in the Son which constitutes Him the Son and not the Father; and there is that in the Holy Ghost which constitutes Him the Holy Ghost and not either the Father or the Son. Wherefore, the Father is the Begetter; the Son is the Begotten; and the Holy Ghost is the One proceeding from the Father and the Son. Therefore, because these three persons in the Godhead are in a state of unity, there is but one Lord God Almighty and His name one (John 1:18; 15:26; 17:11,21; Zechariah 14:9).

(d) Identity and Cooperation in the Godhead

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are never identical as to person; nor confused as to relation; nor divided in respect to the Godhead; nor opposed as to cooperation. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son as to relationship. The Son is with the Father and the Father is with the Son, as to fellowship. The Father is not from the Son, but the Son is from the

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Father, as to authority. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son proceeding, as to nature, relationship, cooperation, and authority. Hence, no person in the Godhead either exists or works separately or independently of the others (John 5:17-30,32,37; 8:17,18).

(e) The Title, Lord Jesus Christ

The appellation *Lord Jesus Christ*, is a proper name. It is never applied in the New Testament either to the Father or to the Holy Ghost. It therefore belongs exclusively to the Son of God (Romans 1:1-3,7; 2 John 3).

(f) The Lord Jesus Christ, God with us

The Lord Jesus Christ, as to His divine and eternal nature, is the proper and only Begotten of the Father, but as to His human nature, He is the proper Son of Man. He is, therefore, acknowledged to be both God and man; who because He is God and man, is "Immanuel," God with us (Matthew 1:23; 1 John 4:2,10,14; Revelation 1:13,17).

(g) The Title, Son of God

Since the name *Immanuel* embraces both God and man, in the one person, our Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that the title *Son of God* describes His proper deity, and the title *Son of Man*, His proper humanity. Therefore, the title *Son of God* belongs to the order of eternity, and the title *Son of Man* to the order of time (Matthew 1:21-23; 2 John 3; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 7:3; 1:1-13).

(h) Transgression of the Doctrine of Christ

Wherefore, it is a transgression of the doctrine of Christ to say that Jesus Christ derived the title *Son of God* solely from the fact of the Incarnation, or because of His relation to the economy of redemption. Therefore, to deny that the Father is a real and eternal Father, and that the Son is a real and eternal Son, is a denial of the distinction and relationship in the Being of God; a denial of the Father and the Son; and a displacement of the truth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (2 John 9; John 1:1,2,14,18,29,49; 1 John 2:22,23; 4:1-5; Hebrews 12:2).

(i) Exaltation of Jesus Christ as Lord

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, having by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, angels and principalities and powers having been made subject unto Him. And having been made both Lord and Christ, He sent the Holy Ghost that we, in the name of Jesus, might bow our knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father until the end, when the Son shall become subject to the Father that God may be all in all (Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22; Acts 2:32-36; Romans 14:11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

(j) Equal Honor to the Father and to the Son

Wherefore, since the Father has delivered all judgment unto the Son, it is not only the express duty of all in heaven and on earth to bow the knee, but it is an unspeakable joy in the Holy Ghost to ascribe unto the Son all the attributes of deity, and to give Him all the honor and the glory contained in all the names and

titles of the Godhead (except those which express relationship (see paragraphs b, c, and d), and thus honor the Son even as we honor the Father (John 5:22,23; 1 Peter 1:8; Revelation 5:6-14; Philippians 2:8,9; Revelation 7:9,10; 4:8-11).

3. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Scriptures declare:

- (a) His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31,35).
- (b) His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22).
- (c) His miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:38).
- (d) His substitutionary work on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- (e) His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:4).
- (f) His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9,11; 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).

4. The Fall of Man

Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, man by voluntary transgression fell and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:17; 3:6; Romans 5:12-19).

5. The Salvation of Man

Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

(a) Conditions to Salvation

Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7).

(b) The Evidences of Salvation

The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12).

6. The Ordinances of the Church

(a) Baptism in Water

The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded in the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47,48; Romans 6:4).

(b) Holy Communion

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the

elements—bread and the fruit of the vine—is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers “till He come!”

7. The Baptism in the Holy Ghost

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the enduement of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9). With the baptism in the Holy Ghost come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost

The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance

(Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28), but different in purpose and use.

9. Sanctification

Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). Scriptures teach a life of “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). By the power of the Holy Ghost we are able to obey the command: “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15,16).

Sanctification is realized in the believer by recognizing his identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union, and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Ghost (Romans 6:1-11,13; 8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 1:5).

10. The Church and Its Mission

The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22,23; 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

Since God’s purpose concerning man is to seek and to save that which is lost, to be worshiped by man, and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, the

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priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as part of the Church is:

- a. To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16).
- b. To be a corporate body in which man may worship God (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- c. To be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:12).

The Assemblies of God exists expressly to give continuing emphasis to this reason-for-being in the New Testament apostolic pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This experience:

- a. Enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:29-31; Hebrews 2:3,4).
- b. Adds a necessary dimension to a worshipful relationship with God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14).
- c. Enables them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the edifying of the body of Christ (Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Colossians 1:29).

11. The Ministry

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in: (1) evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20), (2) worship of God (John 4:23,24), and (3) building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11,16).

12. Divine Healing

Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the Atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; James 5:14-16).

13. The Blessed Hope

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

14. The Millennial Reign of Christ

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-14; 20:1-6). This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel (Ezekiel 37:21,22; Zephaniah 3:19,20; Romans 11:26,27) and the establishment of universal peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 72:3-8; Micah 4:3,4).

15. The Final Judgment

There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:8).

16. The New Heavens and the New Earth

“We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21,22).

ARTICLE VI. RELATIONSHIPS

The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall prosecute its activities through its general offices and district councils.

ARTICLE VII. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. The General Council of the Assemblies of God

The membership of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall consist of all ordained and ministers holding a current fellowship certificate and churches holding a Certificate of Affiliation issued by The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

Section 2. Assemblies of God

The membership of the Assemblies of God shall consist of all ministers of the Assemblies of God and all

other persons who are members of churches affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God and its district councils.

Section 3. Voting Constituency

The voting constituency at a General Council shall be composed of all members of The General Council of the Assemblies of God holding a current fellowship certificate who are present and registered; and of such delegates present and registered, as may be chosen by churches affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God, each church being entitled to one delegate.

ARTICLE VIII. MEETINGS

a. Regular sessions. Regular sessions of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be held biennially, pursuant to a call by the Executive Presbytery.

b. Special sessions. Special sessions of The General Council of the Assemblies of God may be arranged by the Executive Presbytery if agreed to by a majority of the general presbyters.

c. Right of initiative. The right of initiative in the matter of calling special sessions shall be granted to any ordained minister of The General Council of the Assemblies of God when occasion demands. A statement setting forth the reasons for the special session of the Council, signed by at least 15 ordained ministers, may be considered sufficient reason for the call of a special session, such statement to be filed with the Executive Presbytery, which may, if it shall be

deemed advisable, respond to the summons and issue the call for a special session.

ARTICLE IX. OFFICERS

Section 1. Executive Officers

a. Officers and terms of office. The officers shall consist of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, and the general treasurer, together with such other officers as may be authorized in the future. Their terms of office shall begin 3 months after the date of election. The term of office for the general superintendent shall continue for 4 years or until a successor qualifies. The terms of office for all other officers shall continue for 2 years or until their successors qualify.

b. Board of Administration. The executive officers shall constitute a Board of Administration.

Section 2. Executive Presbytery

a. Composition and terms of office. The Executive Presbytery shall consist of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, the general treasurer, the executive director of the Foreign Missions, together with 8 other brethren to be chosen from the active Fellowship to bring the number to 13. The terms of office for all members of the Executive Presbytery, except as stated in Section 1, shall continue for 2 years or until their successors qualify.

b. A Board of Directors. The Executive Presbytery shall constitute the Board of Directors, performing such

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functions as are usual and customary in the use of the term. Executive Presbytery and Board of Directors shall be interchangeable terms and wherever used shall be inclusive one of the other.

Section 3. General Presbytery

a. Representation, qualifications, and responsibilities. The General Presbytery shall be composed of representative men of mature experience and ability whose lives and ministry are above reproach, who shall represent the Fellowship in all phases of its work and interest in their respective fields. The General Presbytery shall be the official policy-making body of the General Council when the General Council is not in session. Each district shall have the privilege of representation on the General Presbytery by three members, the district superintendent together with two others who shall be elected by their district council, one of whom shall be an ordained pastor of a church located in the district. They shall take office immediately.

b. Executive presbyters ex officio members. All members of the Executive Presbytery shall be ex officio members of the General Presbytery.

c. Foreign missions representation. The foreign fields shall be represented on the General Presbytery by the field directors of the Division of Foreign Missions and by two others from each of the overall areas which the field directors represent.

d. College representation. The duly endorsed colleges of the Assemblies of God shall be represented on the General Presbytery by three college presidents.

e. Honorary general presbyters. Upon the approval of the General Presbytery, honorary members may be chosen by the General Council from among those ministers who have served on the General Presbytery for 20 years, or more, and have reached the age of 60. The addition of such honorary members shall not disturb the regular number of presbyters granted each district.

ARTICLE X. DISTRICT COUNCILS

a. Membership. Membership of the district councils shall consist of all ordained and licensed ministers of the district, and such delegates as may be elected by assemblies to represent them in the meetings of the district council. Delegates shall be elected upon a basis of representation as may be agreed upon by the council.

b. Area of supervision. The district council shall have supervision over all the activities of the Assemblies of God in its prescribed field, except such as are agreed upon by a district council and the officials of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

c. Foreign language districts. A foreign language group may be recognized as a district of the Assemblies of God in accordance with the provision for district councils in the bylaws. The territory of such a district is confined to ministry among certain language groups, and its geographical areas of operation may therefore overlap or coincide with that of one or more other district councils. (See Article V of the bylaws.)

d. Credentialing authority. The district council shall have the authority to examine and license ministers who are to become members thereof. They shall report

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the names of approved ministers to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. The district council shall also have the authority to examine and ordain ministers after having received approval from the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Any certain extent of academic education shall never be a requirement for credentials, but it shall be required of applications that they take such reading courses and pass examinations as may be prescribed by respective district councils in agreement with the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

e. Areas of authority. The district council shall elect its own officers and arrange for its own meetings.

f. Amenability to General Council. The district council, being the creature of The General Council of the Assemblies of God and subordinate thereto, cannot be authorized, in any way, to violate the principles of The General Council of the Assemblies of God constitutional agreements or bylaws. In the prosecution of the work in its prescribed field the district council shall be expected to keep vigilant watch against any violation of the principles of spiritual unity and cooperative fellowship to which the Assemblies of God fellowship is unalterably dedicated. It shall be amenable to The General Council of the Assemblies of God in matters of doctrine and the personal conduct of all ministers who are permitted to have district endorsement.

ARTICLE XI. LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Section 1. General Council Affiliated Assemblies

A General Council affiliated assembly is one that has applied for and has received a Certificate of Affiliation from The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

a. Requirements for affiliation. Churches desiring to be affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall meet the following requirements. They shall:

(1) Accept the tenets of faith of the Assemblies of God.

(2) Adopt a standard of membership which may be determined either by the local assembly or by agreement with the district council.

(3) Have a minimum active voting membership of 20 persons who shall accept their full shared of responsibility for the maintenance of scriptural order in the local body.

(4) Adopt a constitution and bylaws compatible with those recommended by the district council.

(5) Have an adequate number of spiritually qualified members to fill the offices of the church called for in its constitution or bylaws.

(6) Make provision for a pastor who is a credentialed minister in good standing with the General Council and/or a district council.

b. Relationship to and support of the General Council and district councils. A General Council affiliated assembly should cooperate in the work and support the programs of the General Council and district councils and may send delegates to the General Council and district councils.

c. Right of self-government (sovereign rights). Each General Council affiliated assembly has the right of self-government under Jesus Christ, its living Head, and shall have the power to choose or call its pastor, elect its official board, and transact all other business pertaining to its life as a local unit. It shall have the right to administer discipline to its members according to the Scriptures and its bylaws. It shall have the right to acquire and hold title to property, either through trustees or in its corporate name as a self-governing unit. The fact it is affiliated with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall in no wise destroy its rights as above stated or interfere with its sovereignty.

d. Subordinate in matters of doctrine and conduct. A General Council affiliated assembly shall recognize that a district council or The General Council of the Assemblies of God has the right to approve scriptural doctrine and conduct and to disapprove unscriptural doctrine and conduct and the authority to withdraw its Certificate of Affiliation if deemed necessary.

e. Right of appeal. When in need of counsel or advice, the General Council affiliated assembly may appeal to the district officers for help. It may appeal from a decision by the district officary to the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God when there is a question whether or not the

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assembly has received proper help from the district. When exceptions are taken to the decisions of the Executive Presbytery, either by the General Council affiliated assembly or by the district presbytery, appeal may be made to the General Presbytery.

Section 2. District Council Affiliated Assemblies

Provision shall be made by the district councils for district council affiliated assemblies which shall be under the supervision of the district council, in accordance with the provisions of the district council constitution and bylaws. These assemblies shall be encouraged to proceed to the status of sovereign General Council affiliated assemblies.

Section 3. World Ministries Participation

All assemblies are expected to have an interest in the world ministries of the Assemblies of God and to plan for regular contributions for its support.

ARTICLE XII. DISSOLUTION

The assets of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, a Missouri corporation, are irrevocably dedicated to religious and/or charitable purposes, the same being stated fully in its Articles of Agreement and heretofore in the articles of this constitution. In the event of the liquidation, dissolution, or the revocation of its charter or abandonment of its stated purposes, after providing for the payment of its debts and obligations of the corporation, the remaining assets will not inure to the benefit of any private person or persons but all such remaining assets will be distributed to a nonprofit

organization, or to nonprofit organizations, which are organized and operated exclusively for religious and/or charitable purposes which are exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, under which section the organization or organizations shall have established tax exempt status.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the constitution may be made at any regularly called session of the General Council provided that the proposed amendments have been submitted at least 6 months prior thereto in writing to the Executive Presbytery. Before the Executive Presbytery may submit such proposed amendments for consideration by a session of the General Council, it shall cause notice thereof to be provided by mail to the office of each district superintendent and each district secretary, and by insertion in the Assemblies of God Minister, sent periodically to ministers of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, not later than 60 days prior to said session. Amendments to the constitution shall require a two-thirds vote of all members present and voting.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I. PARLIAMENTARY ORDER

The work of the General Council shall be governed by parliamentary procedure as set forth in the current edition of *Roberts' Rules of Order Newly Revised*, in keeping with the spirit of Christian love and fellowship.

ARTICLE II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers

The officers of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be elected at one of its regular meetings, according to the manner of election as provided. They shall be chosen from the membership of The General Council of the Assemblies of God and shall be men of mature experience and ability, whose life and ministry are above question, and such qualities alone shall determine their eligibility.

Section 2. Nominations and Elections

a. General superintendent, assistant general superintendent, and general secretary. All candidates for the offices of general superintendent, assistant general superintendent, and general secretary shall be nominated by secret ballot. A two-thirds vote of all votes cast shall be necessary to constitute an election. In the event two-thirds of the votes cast are received by a qualified candidate on the nominating ballot, an election shall be declared. If no election has been declared after the second elective ballot has been cast, the 15 candidates having the highest number of votes in the last ballot cast shall be nominees to be further

voted upon, and all other names shall be eliminated. If no election has been declared after the third elective ballot has been cast, the three candidates having the highest number of votes in the last ballot cast shall be nominees to be further voted upon, and all other names shall be eliminated.

b. General treasurer. The general treasurer shall be elected in the following manner: The General Presbytery, serving as a nominating committee, shall be entrusted with the responsibility of making careful investigation concerning the qualifications and general fitness of available candidates for this strategic post and shall select by secret ballot one or more names to be presented to the General Council in session for election. The General Presbytery shall submit as nominees to the General Council all qualified candidates who have received at least 15 votes in the General Presbytery. A two-thirds vote of the General Council shall be required for election.

c. Executive director of foreign missions. The executive director of foreign missions shall be elected in the following manner: The General Presbytery, serving as a nominating committee, shall be entrusted with the responsibility of making careful investigation concerning the qualifications and general fitness of available candidates for this strategic post and shall select by secret ballot one or more names to be presented for each office to the General Council in session for election. The General Presbytery shall submit as nominees to the General Council all qualified candidates who have received at least 15 votes in the

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General Presbytery. A two-thirds vote of the General Council shall be required for election.

d. General presbyters

(1) *District representatives.* In addition to the district superintendent of each district, who shall serve on the General Presbytery by virtue of his office, two others shall be elected by the district council in session, one of whom shall be an ordained pastor of a church located in the district. They shall take office immediately upon election.

(2) *Foreign Missions representatives.* Field directors of the Division of Foreign Missions, representing the missionaries from their respective areas, are members of the General Presbytery by virtue of office. Two additional representatives on the General Presbytery from each field fellowship shall be chosen in the following manner: The Foreign Missions Board shall nominate four missionaries from each general area represented by the field directors, including international ministries. Nominees will be selected from missionaries who will be in the United States at the time of the General Presbytery Meeting and who preferably have had administrative experience in the field fellowship. Ballots shall be sent to all missionaries in each area who shall by vote select two to represent them on the General Presbytery. These shall be mailed to the general secretary who shall prepare a report to the Executive Presbytery. A simple majority vote shall be required to elect.

(3) *College representatives.* College representatives, as provided for in Constitution, Article IX, Section 3,

paragraph d, shall be nominated by the Executive Presbytery and elected by the General Presbytery for a 2-year term on a rotating basis. A two-thirds vote shall be required. Two years shall elapse after a term is completed before a president shall be eligible for reelection to the General Presbytery.

e. Nonresident executive presbyters

(1) *Nominations and elections.* The General Council shall have the right to elect additional officers to serve on the Executive Presbytery as provided in Article IX, Section 2, of the constitution. The nominations for eight nonresident executive presbyters shall be made as follows: Each district council at its annual meeting prior to the General Council session shall nominate two ministers from its district, one of whom is not an elected full-time district official, to be presented to the General Council as nominees from its area. These nominees shall be presented to and be balloted upon by the General Council in session. A two-thirds vote shall be required to nominate and elect.

(2) *Area divisions for electing nonresident executive presbyters.* For the purpose of electing nonresident executive presbyters, The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be divided into eight areas, according to district boundary lines in the following manner:

Northwest Area: Alaska, Montana, Northwest, Oregon, Southern Idaho, Wyoming

Southwest Area: Arizona, Hawaii, Korean, Northern California-Nevada, Pacific Latin American, Rocky Mountain, Southern California

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North Central Area: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Northern Missouri, South Dakota, Wisconsin-Northern Michigan

South Central Area: Central Latin American, Gulf Latin American, Kansas, New Mexico, North Texas, Oklahoma, South Texas, West Texas

Great Lakes Area: Appalachian, German, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Midwest Latin American, Ohio

Gulf Area: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Southern Missouri, Tennessee

Northeast Area: Italian, New Jersey, New York, Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Potomac, Southern New England, Spanish Eastern

Southeast Area: Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Peninsular Florida, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Southeastern Spanish, West Florida

f. Boards of education and foreign missions members. For the purpose of selection by the General Presbytery of the members of the Board of Education in compliance with Bylaw Article XII, Section 2, paragraph b, (2)(a), and of the Laymen's Advisory Committee of the Division of Foreign Missions as provided for in Article XV, Section 2, paragraph e, members of foreign language districts shall vote with the area in which the district office is located. Foreign missionaries on furlough shall vote with their home districts.

Section 3. Vacancies

a. Executive officers. In the event any of the executive offices of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall become vacant through death or other cause, the Executive Presbytery shall fill the office by appointment until the next meeting of the General Council, with the exception that in the event of death or incapacity of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent shall succeed to the office of general superintendent until the next General Council.

b. Nonresident executive presbyters

(1) In the event a vacancy shall occur, for any reason, in the office of a nonresident executive presbyter, the general secretary shall request each district council within that area (see Bylaws Article II, Section 2.e) to submit two nominees for the office. The General Presbytery shall, at its next meeting, elect one minister from among the nominees submitted, to fill the vacancy until the next meeting of the General Council. (See Bylaws Article II, Section 1, for qualifications.)

(2) Should a vacancy occur so close to the time of the meeting of the General Presbytery that insufficient time remains for district councils to select and submit nominees in the above manner, then nominees shall be obtained by a caucus of the general presbyters of the area involved. Such caucus to be held during the meeting of the General Presbytery.

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(3) Nominees shall be voted upon by the entire General Presbytery until one receives two-thirds of all votes cast.

(4) In the event a nonresident executive presbyter moves to a location outside of the boundaries of the area, it shall be incumbent upon the Executive Presbytery to declare a vacancy in that office.

c. General presbyters. In the event a general presbyter shall move to another district or shall vacate the office for any other reason, the presbytery of the district council shall appoint one to serve as general presbyter until that office is regularly filled at the next meeting of the district council.

ARTICLE III. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. Duties of the General Superintendent

a. The general superintendent shall emphasize and implement the threefold mission of the church: the evangelization of the world, the worship of God, and the building of a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son; and promote and coordinate efforts directed toward the fulfilling of that mission.

b. He shall be general superintendent of all work of on the field conducted in behalf of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

c. He shall supervise all the work of the general office, act as president of the corporation in all legal matters, and be an ex officio member of all committees and boards.

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d. He shall preside at the sessions of the General Presbytery and the General Council.

e. He shall preside at all meetings of the Credentials Committee and sign all credentials.

f. He shall preside at all sessions of the Executive Presbytery and the Board of Administration and receive all communications directed to these bodies.

g. He shall administer discipline in all cases when requested to do so by the Credentials Committee.

h. He shall be authorized to sign all official and legal documents.

i. He shall be authorized to perform any other functions usual and customary as presiding officer or such as may be directed by the General Council, the General Presbytery, or by the Executive Presbytery.

Section 2. Duties of the Assistant General Superintendent

a. The assistant general superintendent shall assist the general superintendent.

b. He shall serve as vice-president of the corporation and preside at meetings of the Executive Presbytery and the Board of Administration in the absence of the general superintendent.

c. He shall perform any other functions under the supervision of the general superintendent, or such as may be directed by the General Council, the General Presbytery, or the Executive Presbytery.

Section 3. Duties of the General Secretary

a. The general secretary shall make and keep true records of the proceedings of the General Council and shall publish the same as approved and directed by the Executive Presbytery.

b. He shall be the custodian of the official seal and issue credentials under the direction of the Credentials Committee and shall keep a record of all ordained and licensed ministers and assemblies of the Fellowship.

c. He shall be authorized to sign all official and legal documents.

d. He shall serve as secretary of the General Presbytery, Executive Presbytery, the Credentials Committee, and the Board of Administration and shall keep accurate minutes of the deliberations of these bodies.

e. He shall be authorized to edit and prepare for distribution the minutes of the meeting of the General Presbytery after examination and approval thereof by the Executive Presbytery.

f. He shall perform such other functions as are customary or as may be directed by the General Council, the General Presbytery, or the Executive Presbytery.

Section 4. Duties of the General Treasurer

a. The general treasurer shall be the executive director of the Division of the Treasury.

b. He shall be custodian of all funds.

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c. He shall keep an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements, conducting the work of his office according to accepted business methods.

d. He shall give a report from time to time as may be requested by the General Council or the Executive Presbytery.

e. He shall give bond to the amount of \$50,000. The treasurer's books shall be audited annually by competent auditors.

f. He shall perform such other functions as are customary to his office or as may be directed by the General Council, the General Presbytery, or the Executive Presbytery.

Section 5. Duties of the Executive Director of Foreign Missions

He shall be the executive director of the Division of Foreign Missions under the supervision of the Executive Presbytery. Under his direction the division shall perform the following duties and render the following services:

a. Keep a record of all official acts of the Foreign Missions Board and other committees of the division.

b. Conduct all correspondence with prospective missionaries and with those already on the field.

c. Prepare the foreign missions materials in the Pentecostal Evangel from missionary letters and reports.

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d. Represent The General Council of the Assemblies of God in all relationships with governments or authorities where our foreign missions work is involved.

e. Direct the foreign missions activities of the Fellowship.

f. Distribute all foreign missions funds as directed by the donors by agreement with the Foreign Missions Committee.

g. Keep such records of all funds received and disbursed as will safeguard the funds from loss en route to the field.

h. Act as purchasing agent for foreign missions supplies.

i. Perform such other functions as may be directed by the Executive Presbytery or the General Presbytery.

Section 6. Duties of the Executive Presbytery

a. The executive presbytery shall serve as trustees of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. They shall be empowered to supervise and have general oversight of all departments. They shall be authorized to act for the corporation in all matters that affect its interests while the General Council is not in session, subject to the provisions of paragraphs h and j of Section 6 and paragraph a of Section 8 of this article.

b. The Executive Presbytery shall have the right and duty of interpreting policy originating in the legislation of the General Council or the General Presbytery. Such interpretations shall stand as final

unless reversed at the next meeting of the body in which the legislation originated.

c. They shall have the right to buy, take, lease, or otherwise acquire, own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of real property, personal and mixed, tangible and intangible of whatsoever kind; to borrow monies as deemed necessary and to issue bonds of whatsoever kind, trust deeds, mortgages, debentures, and notes; and to enter into contracts; all as may seem expedient and proper in the furtherance of the work of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

d. To hold in trust such funds as may be committed to them as trustees, or to dispose of the same as may be directed.

e. To issue annuity bonds or contracts, and to protect the same by judicious investments.

f. They shall be authorized to purchase or dispose of securities as need requires in an effort to strengthen the financial position of the corporation.

g. All properties of the corporation shall be bought, taken, held, sold, transferred, mortgaged, leased, assigned, or conveyed in the corporate name upon authorization by the Executive Presbytery, as trustees thereof, and the president and the general secretary shall be authorized and they hereby are authorized to execute all documents pertaining to such transactions.

h. In all matters of great importance, the Executive Presbytery shall communicate with the members of the General Presbytery before final action shall be taken.

The Executive Presbytery shall be amendable to the General Presbytery.

i. The executive presbytery shall be empowered to arrange for and announce the meetings of the General Council, with consideration for the interests of the Fellowship as a whole. The decision of time and place for such meetings shall rest in their hands.

j. The executive presbytery shall also at their discretion call business meetings of the General Presbytery when deemed advisable.

k. The executive presbytery shall make a report to the General Council of their activities in behalf of the Fellowship as may be directed.

Section 7. Duties of the Board of Administration

a. The Board of Administration shall be the executive arm of the Executive Presbytery.

b. The Board of Administration shall not originate or interpret policy but shall be confined to the administration of those matters delegated to it by the Executive Presbytery.

c. The Board of Administration shall provide for general services as required for the various operations at general headquarters.

d. It shall be responsible to the Executive Presbytery.

Section 8. Duties of the General Presbytery

a. The General Presbytery shall be empowered to act in all matters pertaining to foreign missionary and

ministerial relationships, and all matters which pertain to the proper functioning of divisions, departments, and institutions in the Fellowship. Should an irreconcilable difference arise between the General Presbytery and the Executive Presbytery, the decision of the General Presbytery shall prevail until such time as the issue may be submitted to the General Council. All decisions pertaining to constitutional order or fundamental doctrines shall be referred to the General Council for ratification in the manner provided in the constitution.

b. Any 12 members of the General Presbytery shall have the prerogative of calling a special session of the General Presbytery by presenting a signed request to the general superintendent who shall determine the time of such meeting in consultation with the Executive Presbytery.

c. Any district council by the action of its district presbytery or any three or more general presbyters may have a matter added to the General Presbytery agenda at any time during any duly called General Presbytery meeting.

d. The General Presbytery shall also act as a Court of Appeals for the reviewing of testimony given in missionary and ministerial trials. Its decisions shall be final.

e. The General Presbytery shall determine the salaries and/or allowances of all elected officers of the General Council. A committee of five general presbyters shall be appointed annually by the Executive Presbytery for the purpose of making a

review of such salaries and allowances. It shall report its recommendations to the General Presbytery for final action.

ARTICLE IV. COMMITTEES

Section 1. Standing Committees

Standing committees shall be appointed as necessity may require. They shall serve for the designated time or until their purpose is accomplished. In the event a vacancy shall occur in a standing committee, the Executive Presbytery shall be authorized to fill such vacancy.

Section 2. Credentials Committee

The Executive Presbytery shall constitute the Credentials Committee. It shall have the authority to issue certificates of ordination to approved ministers, who have district council endorsement, and to issue annual fellowship cards. It may delegate the routine work of the Credentials Committee to the Board of Administration.

Section 3. Roster Committee

A Roster Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Presbytery prior to each meeting of the General Council. This committee shall be expected to open the roster on the morning of the day preceding the convening of the General Council. It shall be entrusted with the responsibility of examining credentials of all ministers and delegates. Ordained ministers shall identify themselves by fellowship cards of the current year; delegates from assemblies shall obtain letters

from their church secretary or pastor certifying to their appointment by the assembly to represent it in the General Council. Suitable badges shall be issued by the committee to all qualified delegates and ministers, such badges to indicate the classification of ordained ministers, licensed ministers, delegates from assemblies, visitors, etc.

Section 4. Resolutions Committee

a. Procedure for presentation of resolutions. A Resolutions Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Presbytery. All resolutions for presentation to the General Council, except emergency measures, shall be presented to the general secretary's office at least 100 days prior to a General Council session. The Resolutions Committee shall prepare the resolutions in printed form and mail them to the General Council ministers and churches at least 30 days prior to the General Council, with the understanding that this does not apply to business growing out of Executive Presbytery and General Presbytery meetings just prior to the General Council; and that resolutions of an emergency nature shall be decided by a two-thirds vote of the council.

b. Sponsorship policy. All resolutions presented to the Resolutions Committee shall be signed by the author or sponsor. When a resolution is presented for the consideration of the General Council in session the author, sponsor, or a spokesman therefore shall be expected to be the first speaker on behalf of the resolution.

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c. Appropriateness of resolutions. The Resolutions Committee shall, by a two-thirds vote, determine the appropriateness of proposed resolution, including the following criteria in its decision:

(1) Possible conflict with the corporate charter, constitution, or bylaws.

(2) Those proposals absurd in substance.

d. Right of sponsor. If the Resolutions Committee determines that a resolution is inappropriate, it shall so advise the author and shall apprise him of his right to present the proposed resolution to the house for a determination as to appropriateness.

f. Format of presentation. The Resolutions Committee shall:

(1) Put resolutions in proper form.

(2) Eliminate duplication where similar resolutions relating to a specific subject will be offered in a logical sequence.

Section 5. Spiritual Life Committee

A Spiritual Life Committee shall be appointed by the general superintendent in conjunction with the Executive Presbytery, selected from a cross section of the Fellowship. The committee shall function for a 2-year period and report to the biennial meeting of the General Council and to the Executive Presbytery as feasible.

Section 6. Other Committees

Other committees may be appointed by the General Presbytery or the Executive Presbytery.

ARTICLE V. DISTRICT COUNCILS

Section 1. Formation of New Districts

a. Conference status. In isolated geographical areas where there is growth and development potential, the first step may be the establishing of a conference status that would provide the supervision and assistance of an existing established district until the new district is capable of an aggressive program.

b. Guidelines. Guidelines for the establishing of new districts shall include:

(1) Number of General Council affiliated churches.

(2) Size and maturity of the churches as to membership, leadership, and program ministries.

(3) The location, the size, and the potential growth of the geographical area under consideration.

(4) The effect the establishing of the proposed new district will have on the district or districts involved.

c. Boundaries. The boundaries of the new district shall be determined or rearranged by cooperative agreement between the district or districts involved and the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

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Section 2. Officers

Each district council shall be authorized to elect a superintendent, secretary-treasurer, and presbyters, together with such other officers as may be deemed advisable by the district membership.

Section 3. Voting Constituency

The voting constituency shall consist of all accredited members present and registered, including ordained and licensed ministers and accredited delegates from affiliated churches.

Section 4. Foreign Language Districts

a. Recognition qualifications. In order to become a district of the Assemblies of God, a foreign language group must have a minimum number of 20 churches. If a group does not qualify for recognition as a distinct foreign language district, the pastors and the congregations will find ready acceptance in the fellowship of the geographical districts in which they are located.

b. Equality with geographical districts. A foreign language district shall have the same privileges and responsibilities which are accorded district councils within the framework of the Constitution and Bylaws.

c. Cooperative relationship. Both the foreign language district and the geographical district shall seek to promote a spirit of fellowship and cooperation. The foreign language officers shall consult with the officials of the geographical district concerning the opening of new works, or institutions of any kind, in a

given area. The churches shall unite, where possible, in fellowship activities.

d. Sponsorship and affiliation of a foreign language group. Should an English-speaking church desire to initiate sponsorship of an foreign language group, it should consult with both the geographical and the foreign language districts for counsel and guidance and seek assistance from the foreign language district for a minister to the group. Such an effort should be initiated with the objective in mind that it will develop into foreign language church in affiliation with the foreign language district. The sponsoring church may provide facilities and/or support to such a work through its district home missions department. When such a group reaches as many as 20 adult foreign language members, and desires to become a separate church, the sponsoring church should take steps to encourage the group to become affiliated with the foreign language district.

e. Church transfer procedure. When a church desires to transfer from a foreign language district to the district in which it is located, a church business meeting shall be properly called and the minutes of said meeting shall reflect the action authorized by the congregation. This action shall be submitted to the officers of the foreign language district and the geographical district. If either district has objections, the church shall have the right of appeal to the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution (Article XI).

Section 5. Dissolution of District

a. Loss of recognition. In the event an existing district (foreign language or geographical) shall have less than 10 churches, General Council or district affiliated, its recognition shall cease.

b. Foreign language districts guidelines. Guidelines for dissolution of foreign language districts are provided for in Section 4, paragraph a, of this article.

c. Geographical districts guidelines. Dissolution of geographical districts shall be the prerogative of the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God in cooperation and consultation with the original district or districts involved.

ARTICLE VI. ASSEMBLIES

Section 1. Procedure for Affiliation

It shall be the responsibility of the district presbytery to determine when an assembly has reached a state of growth, stability, and maturity qualifying it for affiliation with The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Qualifications shall include a minimum active voting membership of 20 persons. The assembly shall have matured to a point where a sufficient number of qualified persons are available for the offices called for in its constitution and bylaws.

The procedure for affiliation shall be:

a. A church desiring affiliation shall forward its request to the office of the district in which it is situated. The district council shall provide an approved application form and procedural instructions.

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b. The meeting in which an assembly shall be set in order shall be presided over by an officer of the district who shall assist the assembly in the adoption of a constitution and bylaws acceptable to the district.

c. An existing, mature church which desires to affiliate with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall apply to the office of the district council for guidance and assistance.

d. Upon approval by the district presbytery, the application for affiliation shall be forwarded to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Recognition of affiliation shall be regarded as completed upon receipt by the assembly of an official Certificate of Affiliation to be issued by the general secretary.

Section 2. Annual Report from Assemblies

Each church of the Assemblies of God shall be requested to keep an up-to-date record of its membership and a report of the same shall be sent annually, on forms provided, to the office of the district secretary and the General Council secretary.

Section 3. Safeguarding the Assemblies

Pastors and leaders of assemblies should make proper investigation regarding persons who seek to gain entrance to teach or minister. Use of the platform should be denied until spiritual integrity and reliability have been determined. Since the use of non-Assemblies of God ministers may bring confusion and problems detrimental to the Fellowship, it is recommended that Assemblies of God churches use Assemblies of God

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ministers. Pastors and district officials should maintain a reciprocal exchange of information relative to unknown persons seeking ministry in our assemblies.

Section 4. Relationships Between Churches, District Councils, and the General Council

a. Nature. General Council affiliated churches are deemed to be sovereign, autonomous, self-governing, and self-determining bodies which have, by their sovereign, self-determining action in making application for and receiving recognition as a General Council affiliated church, entered into an agreement with the Fellowship to be amenable to the General Council and district council in matters of doctrine and conduct. (See Article XI, Section 1, paragraph d, of the constitution.)

b. Relationships. *Cooperative fellowship* describes both the relationship that exists between local churches and their relationships with the district councils and the General Council.

c. Organizational assistance. The services of both the General Council and district council are available to assist the General Council affiliated church in dealing with any of its problems, either internal or external, when requested by the pastor and/or a majority of the official board of the church or a petition signed by 20 percent of the voting members.

d. Preservation of affiliation. In the event the termination of affiliation with The General Council of the Assemblies of God is under consideration by an affiliated assembly, the pastor and/or board shall invite

the district officary to participate in a specially called business meeting for the express purpose of giving the district officary the opportunity to present the case for continued General Council affiliation. Final disposition of the matter may then proceed in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of the local church.

Section 5. Guidelines for Minimal Membership for General Council Affiliated Assemblies

When the membership of a General Council affiliated church falls below 20 active voting members, it shall seek the assistance of the district officary for help in maintaining the minimal requirement for General Council affiliation. If after 1 year the minimal number of 20 members is not attained the church shall revert to district affiliated status. The church shall remain in a district council affiliated status until it again meets the standard for affiliation as a General Council affiliated church as provided for in Article XI, Section 1, of the constitution. An application for same shall be filed with the district secretary and approved by the district presbytery.

Section 6. New Assemblies Resulting From a Division

a. Status of assembly. When efforts to maintain unity and harmony in an assembly have failed, and a division results in a new congregation being formed, the district should exercise strong and wise leadership in ascertaining the facts and seek to preserve Assemblies of God adherents for the Fellowship. Within the bounds of ethical principles, sound doctrine, and

district policy, all districts should seek to retain any meritorious group within the Assemblies of God.

b. Status of minister. Circumstances of the occasion would determine whether the minister should be disciplined or denied ministry in either the original church or the dissident group, or even residency in the area where the division occurred. If a minister is guilty of wrong conduct and wrong attitudes resulting in a split, the district presbytery shall deal appropriately with the minister as provided in Article IX, Section 2, of the bylaws.

Section 7. Transfer of Local Church Membership

a. Letter of introduction. It is recommended that the member should request a letter of introduction from the church of which he is a member to be sent by mail to the church with which he wishes to affiliate.

b. Acknowledgment of transfer. It is recommended that the receiving church shall give an acknowledgment of transfer to the former church.

ARTICLE VII. MINISTRY

Section 1. Ministry Described

Christ's gifts to the Church include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11), exhorters, administrators, leaders, and helpers (Romans 12:7,8).

In terms of maturity of ministry, three classifications of ministry are recognized, viz., the ordained minister, the licensed minister, and the Christian worker.

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Ministers holding certificates of ordination, license to preach, and specialized ministries licenses are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

Section 2. Basic Qualifications

The following qualifications pertain to all applicants for ministerial recognition:

a. Testimony to having experienced the new birth (John 3:5).

b. Testimony to having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues according to Acts 2:4. The Spirit-filled life will enable him to fulfill the threefold mission of the church (Article V, paragraph 10, of the constitution).

c. Clear evidence of a divine call to the ministry, evidenced by a personal conviction, confirmed by the work of the Spirit and the testimony of fellow ministers.

d. A blameless Christian life and a good report of those who are without (Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:7).

e. A thorough understanding of and agreement with our doctrinal position as contained in the Statement of Fundamental Truths.

f. A satisfactory working knowledge of the principles, practices, and purposes of the Fellowship through a study of the General Council and district council constitution and bylaws.

g. An active loyalty to our constitutional agreements, a cooperative spirit, and a readiness to seek and receive the counsel of older brethren and those in positions of authority.

h. Basic educational requirements. Any level of formal academic achievement (diploma or degree) shall not be a requirement for credentials; however, it shall be required of applicants that they demonstrate adequate knowledge of (1) the Bible, (2) Assemblies of God doctrines, and (3) ministerial practices by either having completed the prescribed courses of the Berean College of the Assemblies of God as specified by the General Presbytery, or by passing standardized examinations approved by the General Presbytery, which shall give evidence of having accomplished the same through self-study and life experience, or by equivalent training in an approved school, together with such other training as may be required by respective district councils in conformity with such provisions as are made for applicants by the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

i. Marriage status. We disapprove of any married persons holding ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God or district councils granting credentials to such, if either marriage partner has a former companion living, except as hereinafter provided.

j. Annulments and marriage dissolutions. The Executive Presbytery shall have the authority to determine whether an applicant's annulment of a former marriage is consistent with the scriptural

position of the Fellowship relating to the granting or holding of ministerial credentials; or, in the case of a divorce or a dissolution whether the circumstances would more appropriately be classified as calling for an annulment. The application must be accompanied by clear and satisfactory evidence of an illegal marriage through deception or fraud. Appeals from the decisions of the Executive Presbytery may be made to the General Presbytery.

k. Eligibility of women. The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the ministry of the Word (Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Women who have developed in the ministry of the Word so that their ministry is acceptable generally, and who have proved their qualifications in actual service, and who have met all the requirements of the credentials committees of the district councils, are entitled to whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant and the right to administer the ordinances of the church when such acts are necessary.

l. Ministers from other organizations. If a minister from another reputable body desires to affiliate with the Assemblies of God, the credentials committees of both the General Council and the district councils are under no obligation to accept the applicant's previous ministerial status, but will judge each candidate on his or her own merits as to the level of credentials to be granted. Such applicants shall be required to:

(1) Conform to Assemblies of God criteria for recognition.

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(2) Complete an application for ministerial recognition.

(3) Submit a recommendation for ministerial recognition.

(3) Submit a recommendation from the body with which he/she was formerly affiliated. If such is not available, letters of recommendation should be sought from three reputable ordained ministers who are familiar with the applicant's ministry.

(4) Take the credential examination.

(5) Meet with the credentials committee.

(6) Be recommended by the district credentials committee for the approval of the General Council Credentials Committee.

(7) All so approved shall not be reordained, but shall have the hands of the district presbytery laid upon them as they enter this new phase of ministry.

(8) Ministers who receive Assemblies of God recognition shall relinquish their ministerial credentials with any other organization.

Section 3. Graded Qualifications

a. Christian worker. Efficient helpers in gospel work who devote a part of their time to Christian service, and whenever possible remain under the supervision of a pastor, may be recognized as Christian workers. They shall preach at least 12 times a year or be actively engaged in some other aspect of ministry, except in case of ill health or infirmity.

b. License. Qualifications for license shall be in two categories:

(1) *Preaching ministry*. Clear evidence of a divine call, a practical experience in preaching, together with an evident purpose to devote one's time to preaching the gospel. They shall preach at least 15 times a year, except in case of ill health or infirmity.

(2) *Specialized ministry*. An evident purpose to devote one's time to a specialized ministry such as Christian education, music, or other full-time ministries. The same qualifications as outlined in Section 2 of this article shall apply.

c. Ordination. Qualifications for ordination are outlined in the New Testament Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). In addition:

(1) Applicants must be 23 years of age or older.

(2) They must have met all the requirements in making application and in completing the prescribed application form.

(3) No person may be ordained to the ministry until he shall have held a license to preach and has been engaged in active work as a pastor, evangelist, or some other recognized and proven full-time preaching ministry for at least 2 full consecutive years immediately prior thereto.

(4) *Residency requirements of applicants*. Applicants must be residents of or hold credentials in the district where they make application and appear before its credentials committee. District councils are

required to refrain from approving any applicant for ordination who may have been licensed in another district, until such licensed minister shall have been a member of the district in which he is seeking ordination at least 1 year. If the applicants has not been a member of the district where he applies for ordination for 2 full consecutive years, he must meet the requirements and secure the endorsement of the officary of the district in which he was previously licensed, as well as the district of his residence.

(5) *Exceptions to residency requirements.* In the event that an applicant has qualified and been approved for ordination by the district of his former residence before being publically ordained, the district where he resides may waive the 1-year residency requirement and ordain him upon the request or approval of his former district.

(6) In order to maintain active status, ordained ministers must preach at least 15 times each year.

Section 4. Action of Credentials Committee

a. Christian worker and license. The district councils have the authority to recognize approved candidates as Christian workers and to grant licenses to those who qualify, The names of approved licensed ministers and Christian workers shall be reported to the office of the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

b. Ordination. The General Council Executive Presbytery constitutes the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, and has the authority to give recognition as approved ordained

ministers to those endorsed and recommended by the district councils to the General Council Credentials Committee. This approval must be obtained prior to the public ordination. All ordinations shall take place under the auspices of the district councils.

Section 5. Certificates

a. Christian worker and license. Christian workers certificates and licenses shall be granted by district councils to properly qualified applicants.

b. Ordination. The Executive Presbytery, in its capacity as the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, is authorized to issue ordination certificates together with the accompanying annual fellowship cards.

Section 6. Credential Renewals and Reinstatements

a. Expiration date. All fellowship certificates are valid only until January 31 of each year and must be renewed annually. The renewing of credentials is the responsibility of the individual minister. In the event a minister does not receive his/her renewal form by January 1, he/she should notify his/her district office.

b. Grace period until February 15. All who should have failed to renew their fellowship certificates by mail postmarked on or before January 31 shall be considered delinquent. They shall be required to pay a late fee of \$25 up until February 15, to be divided equally between the district and General Council.

c. Reinstatement of lapsed minister. Ministers whose renewal applications are not postmarked by

February 15 shall be recorded as lapsed as of January 31. They must make application for reinstatement and pay a nonrefundable fee of \$50, which shall be divided equally between the district and the General Council offices. These ministers shall not be subject to the minimal time-lapse required of those whose credentials have been terminated for other causes.

d. Reinstatement of other than dismissed minister. When a minister who is a member of our Fellowship is removed from our rolls for any cause, except failure to renew and dismissal, and shall apply for reinstatement, he/she shall in no case be eligible for reinstatement until at least 6 months shall have elapsed after his/her name has been stricken from our list of ministers. The application must be made in the district where he/she resides and be accompanied with a nonrefundable fee of \$50 which will be divided between the national district offices. (See Bylaws Article IX, A, Section 10, paragraph a, for reinstatement of dismissed minister.)

The district of residence shall seek a letter of clearance from the district which processed the termination and, upon receipt of the clearance, may add its endorsement and forward the application, together with the letter of clearance, to the General Council Credentials Committee for its action.

Section 7. Official List

a. Active ministers. An official list of all ordained and licensed ministers shall be compiled by the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God and published for the convenience of

the Fellowship, with the understanding it is not to be used for purposes of solicitation. This official list shall be revised annually and shall contain the names of those who are engaged in active ministry and whose Certificates of Ordination have been renewed by the issuance of a fellowship card for the current year.

b. Inactive ministers. All ordained ministers who shall withdraw from active ministry or shall cease to engage in pastoral, evangelistic, or other full-time ministry shall be expected to notify the district office, which shall inform the general secretary. He shall then be authorized to transfer the names of such persons to the inactive list, unless the district of which said person is a member specifically requests otherwise.

(1) *Definition.* All ordained ministers who shall have preached less than 15 times within a period of 1 year shall have their names placed upon the inactive list for the following year.

(2) *Removal of inactive ministers from ministerial list.* When a minister is definitely inactive for 2 consecutive years, his name shall be eliminated from the ministerial list, unless the credentials committee of the district of which said person is a member specifically requests otherwise by letter.

(3) *Exceptions.* This shall not apply to those whose inactivity has been caused by infirmity of old age or ill health; or those engaged in other aspects of full-time ministry such as headquarters or district workers, educators, ministers of music, ministers of youth, and ministers of Christian education; or those who have reached the age of 60 years; or those

ministers who have had 25 years of approved service as ordained ministers in the Assemblies of God, regardless of age.

(4) *Disabled ministers.* A permanently disabled or permanently ill minister whose illness prevents him or her from engaging in active ministry shall be indicated as inactive. The credential status of the disabled minister shall remain unchanged. The annual renewal of his or her credentials shall take place in the regular manner. Disabled ministers thus approved by their district shall not have further obligation of financial support to the General Council.

c. Restoration to active status. Should the minister at any time return to active ministry, his or her name may be restored to the active list upon application bearing endorsement by the district officary.

Section 8. Senior Ministers

In respect and honor to those ministers who have given years of service to the Fellowship, senior status shall automatically be given to all credential holders who have reached the age of 65, whether they continue in full-time ministry or not.

a. Terminology

(1) The term *senior-active* shall be used for credential holders who continue to serve three-quarters to full-time in the ministry.

(2) The term *senior-semiretired* shall be used for credential holders who continue to be active, but for half time or less.

(3) The term *senior-retired* shall be used for those who have ceased to engage in any regular appointed ministry.

b. Application for retired category. Senior-semiretired and senior-retired status shall be granted only to those ministers who filed a request for such status with their district office. The district secretary shall forward annually to the general secretary a list of those ministers who have made these requests.

c. Guidelines

(1) *Reports.* Senior-active and senior-semiretired ministers shall continue to file their annual reports and pay the General Council portion of their tithes in the regular manner. Senior-retired ministers shall file an abbreviated report to maintain a correct address file for mail and insurance purposes.

(2) *Sources of income.* These designations and guidelines shall apply regardless of whether the senior minister's income is from his ministry, from retirement plans or Social Security payments, or from investments or other employment.

(3) *Designation in publications.* No distinguishing mark shall accompany the listing of senior-active in the official publications of the Assemblies of God, but may be so indicated in the working lists used for insurance and retirement purposes. Senior-semiretired and senior-retired ministers shall have this status appropriately indicated in the Official List of Assemblies of God Ministers.

(4) *Support of General Council headquarters.* Senior-active and senior-semiretired ministers shall continue to designate \$10 monthly to the support of the General Council headquarters. Senior-retired ministers shall be free to distribute as they desire the portion of their tithes previously paid to the General Council.

d. Limitations of this Section 8

(1) *For General Council usage only.* The definitions and decisions included in Section 8 apply only to General Council usage and are not binding upon the various districts, nor to the official legislation under which their members serve.

(2) *Other financial responsibility not circumvented.* No part of Section 8 is intended to modify the responsibility of ministers to their districts nor to terminate the Biblical responsibility for tithing.

Section 9. Ministerial Relations

a. Amenability. All ministers holding credentials shall be amendable to both the district council and The General Council of the Assemblies of God in matters of doctrine and conduct.

b. Affiliation with district of residence. All ministers ordained and licensed shall be expected to affiliate with the district council within the boundaries of which they reside and work in cooperation with the same.

(1) *Exception.* In the case where a minister resides in one district but pastors a church located in another district, he shall be required to be a member of the district in which the church is located.

(2) *Nationally appointed home missionary.* A nationally appointed home missionary shall become a member of the district in which he or she serves and shall be listed on the ministerial roster of that district by the office of the general secretary. He/she may also retain honorary membership in his/her home district, be listed as a missionary under national appointment in the home district's yearbook, and be extended voice and vote in his/her home district while on official furlough.

c. Cooperation with other districts. Ministers shall be expected to cooperate with other district councils in which they may labor temporarily. It is recommended as a standard of proper practice that all ordained and licensed ministers conform to the financial policy of the district with which they are affiliated with the following exceptions:

(1) *Financial responsibility of foreign missionaries.* Foreign missionaries will be obligated to pay \$25 per month to their home district when resident in the U.S. and \$10 per month when resident on their fields.

(2) *Financial responsibility of chaplains.* All chaplains, military and institutional, will be obligated to their home district in the amount of 10 percent of their tithes from income earned from the chaplaincy. All chaplains are also encouraged to make voluntary contributions to the district in which they fulfill their assignments.

(3) *Financial responsibility of nationally appointed and/or approved home missionaries.* Nationally appointed and/or approved home missionaries shall contribute 25 percent of their tithe to their member district where they serve and 25 percent of their tithe to their home district if they are listed as honorary members. The missionary who ministers in his home district shall contribute a minimum of 50 percent of his/her tithe to that district.

Section 10. Transfer of Credentials

a. Certificate of transfer. When a member minister takes up residence in another district, a certificate of transfer shall be issued within 60 days by the district of which he/she is a member, unless there are definite charges pending against him/her. The certificate of transfer shall be accepted by the district into which he/she moves. Exceptions may be made for the following:

(1) Ministers moving to serve at general headquarters.

(2) Those who have attained the age of 60 and are no longer engaged in active ministry and those who have attained the age of 65 and are not pastoring a church.

(3) Those who are in the Armed Forces currently on active duty.

(4) Those who are serving on the staffs of schools affiliated with the General Council and district council or nonaffiliated schools acceptable to the General

Council and the district council in which the school is located.

(5) Those who are appointed home missionaries or foreign missionaries who are on furlough or on temporary assignment in the United States and reside in a district other than their home district.

(6) Ministers having membership in one district and a mailing address only in another district.

(7) Students in schools outside their home districts.

(8) Those who are serving in a non-Assemblies of God institution providing:

(a) They have a regular scope of ministry which reaches beyond district boundaries.

(b) Both districts agree to the exception.

(c) The institution is acceptable to both districts.

b. Transcript. In order to assist a member minister who is transferring into another district, a transcript giving helpful information concerning him/her and his/her spouse should accompany the certificate of transfer.

Section 11. Ministerial Status Changes

All changes in a minister's status are to be reported immediately by him/her to his/her district office, which in turn is to report this information to the office of the general secretary of the General Council, on the Ministerial Status Report form provided by that office.

Section 12. Privileged Communications

Assemblies of God ministers are encouraged to respect as sacred and confidential information confided to them while they are functioning in their ministerial capacities as spiritual counselors and are encouraged not to disclose such confidential information except with the permission of the confidant or to prevent the commission of a crime.

**ARTICLE VIII. DOCTRINES AND
PRACTICES DISAPPROVED**

A. COMMISSION ON DOCTRINAL PURITY

a. Authorization and purpose. A Commission on Doctrinal Purity shall be established for the purpose of giving careful attention to preventing deviations from the Statement of Fundamental Truths and proliferation of unscriptural teachings. The commission shall receive its assignments from and make its reports to the Executive Presbytery.

b. Appointments and terms of office. The commission shall be appointed by the Executive Presbytery and shall consist of 10 members representing, insofar as possible, the geographical area divisions of the Assemblies of God. Members shall be recognized authorities in Biblical knowledge. Their terms of office shall be for 4 years.

c. Vacancies and terminations. The Executive Presbytery shall be empowered to declare the office of any commission member vacant should it deem such action advisable. A decision to declare a vacancy and to

fill such vacancy may be made at any meeting of the Executive Presbytery.

**B. LIST OF DOCTRINES AND
PRACTICES DISAPPROVED**

In accord with its constitutional prerogatives, The General Council of the Assemblies of God has declared itself pertaining to disapproval of certain matters as follows:

Section 1. Unconditional Security

In view of the biblical teaching that the security of the believer depends on a living relationship with Christ (John 15:6); in view of the Bible's call to a life of holiness (1 Peter 1:16; Hebrews 12:14); in view of the clear teaching that a man may have his part taken out of the Book of Life (Revelation 22:19); and in view of the fact that one who believes for a while can fall away (Luke 8:13); The General Council of the Assemblies of God disapproves of the unconditional security position which holds that it is impossible for a person once saved to be lost.

Section 2. Legalism

a. Matters of conscience. The Assemblies of God disapproves of those who hold to matters of conscience, such as eating or not eating of meats, who press their personal opinions on others.

b. Adding conditions to salvation. The Assemblies of God also disapproves of those who hold to issues which seem to add conditions to salvation, such as keeping of the seventh day, who press their opinions on others.

Section 3. Eschatological Errors

a. The restitution of all things. The Assemblies of God understands the teaching of Acts 3:21 to limit the restoration to that of which the prophets have spoken, thus denying the universal redemption theory. We are opposed to all forms of universalism (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:10).

b. Setting a date for the Lord's return. It is unwise to teach that the Lord will come at some specified time, thereby setting a date for His appearing (Mark 13:32,33; Luke 12:37-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). It is also unwise to give out from the platform, or publish, visions of numbers and dates fixing the time of the second coming of the Lord.

c. Post-Tribulation Rapture. The General Council of the Assemblies of God has declared itself in the Statement of Fundamental Truths that it holds to the belief in the imminent coming of the Lord as the blessed hope of the Church; and since the teaching that the Church must go through the Tribulation tends to bring confusion and division among the saints, it is recommended that all our ministers teach the imminent coming of Christ, warning all men to be prepared for that coming, which may occur at any time, and not lull their minds into complacency by any teaching that would cause them to feel that specific Tribulation events must occur before the rapture of the saints.

d. Amillennialism. The General Council of the Assemblies of God disapproves of the amillennial teaching and its attendant erroneous philosophy which

denies the fact of a literal 1,000 years reign of Christ on the earth, and substitutes for it the theory that this Christian or Church dispensation is the spiritual Millennium of which, its proponents say, the Bible writers prophesied.

e. Credentials jeopardized if made an issue. We recommend that should any of our ministers embrace any of the foregoing eschatological errors, they refrain from preaching or teaching them. Should they persist in emphasizing these doctrines to the point of making them an issue, their standing in the Fellowship will be seriously affected (Luke 21:34-36; 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10; Revelation 3:10,19,20).

Section 4. Membership in Secret Orders

Ours is a last-day message in preparation for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:14), leaving us no alternative but wholehearted devotion to the cause of spreading the gospel (Luke 9:62); and it is well known that the various secret orders require much valuable time and interest, thus diverting the servant of the Lord out of the way (Ephesians 5:16).

The nature of such organizations demands secrecy (John 18:20; Acts 26:26) reinforced by religious oaths (Matthew 5:34) and strong attachment by binding obligations to persons who are for the most part unregenerated (2 Corinthians 6:14). The spirit, philosophy, and general influence of such secret orders aim at the improvement of the natural man only (1 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 2:8), thus wrongly channeling by incorrect interpretation important spiritual truths (2 Peter 3:16).

Confidence in these secret orders and their teachings has always tended toward the embracing of a false hope of salvation through good works and improved moral service (Ephesians 2:8,9).

In consideration of the foregoing, all ministers affiliated with us should refrain from identifying themselves with any of the secret orders which we recognize as essentially of the world, worldly; and we advise any who may have identified themselves with such orders to sever their connections therewith (2 Corinthians 6:17). Furthermore, our ministers are requested to use their good influence among our lay members to dissuade them from such fraternal affiliations (1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Section 5. Divorce and Remarriage

a. Membership

(1) *Marriage entanglements before conversion.* There are now among Christian people those who became entangled in their marriage relations in their former lives of sin and who do not see how these matters can be adjusted. We recommend that these people be received into the membership of local assemblies and that their marriage complications be left in the hands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:17,20,24).

(2) *Common-law marriages.* We recommend that in no case shall persons be accepted into membership who are known to be living in a common-law state of matrimony.

b. Remarriage. Low standards on marriage and divorce are very hurtful to individuals, to the family,

and to the cause of Christ. Therefore, we discourage divorce by all lawful means and teaching. We positively disapprove of Christians getting divorces for any cause except fornication and adultery (Matthew 19:9). Where these exceptional circumstances exist or when a Christian has been divorced by an unbeliever, we recommend that the question of remarriage be resolved by the believer as he walks in the light of God's Word (1 Corinthians 7:15,27,28).

c. Local church leadership

(1) *Standard for offices of bishop, or elder, and deacon.* Since the New Testament restricts divorced and remarried believers from the church offices of bishop, or elder, and deacon, we recommend that this standard be upheld by all our assemblies (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:12). However, we recommend that all other opportunities for Christian service for which these believers may be qualified be made available to them.

(2) *Prerogative of local assemblies.* It is understood that recommendations are not binding, but local assemblies shall maintain the prerogative of setting their own standards (in accord with provisions of Article XI of the constitution).

d. Performing marriage ceremonies

(1) *Ministerial guidelines.* We disapprove of any Assemblies of God minister performing a marriage ceremony for anyone who has been divorced and whose former companion is still living, unless his case is included in the exceptional circumstances described in Article VIII, B, Section 5, paragraph b. Any minister of

our Fellowship who performs a ceremony for a disapproved marriage (indicated above), unless he has been innocently deceived into doing so, may be dismissed from the Fellowship. An Assemblies of God minister is required to counsel applicants for marriage ceremonies with scriptural guidelines for Christian marriage prior to the performing of the ceremony. He may not perform ceremonies for persons who, in the minister's opinion, approach marriage without proper forethought, wisdom, and sobriety.

(2) *Violation of conscience not required.* We realize that the remarrying of such persons included in the exceptive circumstances in Article VIII, B, Section 5, paragraph b, could violate the conscience of a minister, and if this should be the case, the minister should not be expected to perform such ceremonies.

e. Ministerial credentials. We disapprove of any married minister of the Assemblies of God holding credentials if either minister or spouse has a former companion living. (See also Article VII, Section 2, paragraphs i and j.)

Section 6. Worldliness

In view of the alarming erosion of national moral standards, we reaffirm our intention of holding up Bible standards against all forms of worldliness. We urge all believers to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15,16).

In its teaching regarding worldliness, the Scriptures warn against participation in activity which defiles the body, or corrupts the mind and spirit; the inordinate love of or preoccupation with pleasures, position, or possessions, which lead to their misuse; manifestation of extreme behavior, unbecoming speech, or inappropriate appearance; any fascination or association which lessens one's affection for spiritual things (Luke 21:34,35; Romans 8:5-8; 12:1,2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 2:8-10; 4:12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; Titus 2:12).

Section 7. Abuses of Stewardship

a. Tithing

(1) According to the Scriptures, tithes should be used for the support of the active ministry and for the propagation of the gospel and work of the Lord and not be given to charity or used for other purposes. In tithing, the ministers ought to be examples.

(2) We recognize the duty of tithing and urge all our people to pay tithes to God. It is recommended that arrangements satisfactory to the pastor and the church be made by all pastors and churches, so that the pastor may receive regular and adequate support. We disapprove, however, of the teaching that all tithes necessarily should belong to the pastor for his support.

b. Solicitation of funds

(1) It is considered improper and unethical for ministers or missionaries to solicit funds, by letter or otherwise, for anything or any reason whatsoever without proper authorization.

(2) The purpose of this section is not to hinder or discourage legitimate projects but to protect the Fellowship from those who employ methods not in harmony with Assemblies of God principles or policies.

Leaders in local projects shall have unquestioned freedom in local churches or communities.

Projects of general interest to the district must have authorization of the district officary.

Projects or institutions of national scope must have the authorization of the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

Promotion of all projects of a missions character must have the authorization of the Executive Presbytery.

(3) The obtaining and use of mailing lists for promotional purposes not having proper authorization or which are not in keeping with policies of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be considered improper and unethical, whether it be under the name of a prayer chain beyond a local scope, chain letters, or appeals to the constituency for the support of ventures of strictly local or personal character. All offenders guilty of the practices expressed in the foregoing paragraphs shall be subject to discipline.

c. Private ownership of religious institutions. The General Council of the Assemblies of God approves the holding of title to all church buildings, schools, or other institutions that are supported by funds solicited for the work of God by properly constituted corporations.

It disapproves the holding title to such properties by the ministers of the Assemblies of God, through private ownership, corporation of sole, closed corporation or any other type of ownership where initiative of action or final authority is not vested in a corporation of the whole. In the event a local congregation is not incorporated or set in order by the district council, title should be vested in properly qualified trustees. Where private ownership exists, a properly incorporated body shall be formed and title to the property shall be transferred to the corporation, taking into consideration equity that the title holder may legitimately have.

A disregard of this principle and recommendation shall seriously affect the relation of the Assemblies of God members involved in such ownership.

Section 8. Violations of Ministerial Courtesy

All discourteous conduct is disapproved, and all ministers are advised against interfering with pastors in charge of assemblies, whether it be by going in upon their work without consent or by such correspondence with members of the assembly as will hurt the influence of the leader. All correspondence which concerns the whole assembly shall be addressed to the one in charge and not to individual members. Where there is no pastor, letters concerning the work shall be addressed to the officers of the assembly.

Any minister who so offends shall be subject to scriptural discipline as an offender by the district officary or by the Executive Presbytery. Such

discourtesy will seriously affect the granting of annual fellowship cards and may be the basis for their recall.

Section 9. Ministry in a Non-Assemblies Church

Ministers shall not be limited or restrained from entering open doors to preach this Pentecostal message, so long as they retain Assemblies of God doctrine, standards of holiness, proper attitudes, and proper ministerial conduct without compromise.

Inasmuch as unity is a vital principle for growth and spiritual development of the Assemblies of God Fellowship, it is essential that we recognize our relationship to each other and that we practice Christian cooperation in all our pastoral, evangelistic, missionary, and local church work.

We recommend therefore that our ministers confer with district council officials before engaging in ministry in any church group or organization not affiliated with the Assemblies of God so as to ascertain whether such ministry might result in confusion or misunderstandings. If the minister does not have district approval, he or she shall be expected to refrain from conducting services for the church. Ministers who violate this principle shall be considered as having opened the door for censure or charge which may necessitate the recall of their credentials.

Section 10. An Improper Attitude Toward Those Removed From the Fellowship

In order to render effective decisions made in the interest of proper discipline and for the protection of our assemblies, all who hold credentials shall refrain

from taking any attitude toward offenders that would tend to nullify or set at naught the solemn verdict of the brethren entrusted with this responsibility. The offenders shall be subject to reprimand or, if persisted in, appropriate discipline.

Section 11. The Ecumenical Movement

The General Council of the Assemblies of God disapproves of ministers or churches participating in any of the modern ecumenical organizations on a local, national, or international level in such a manner as to promote the Ecumenical Movement, because:

a. We believe the basis of doctrinal fellowship of said movement to be so broad that it includes people who reject the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the universality of sin, the substitutionary Atonement, and other cardinal teachings which we understand to be essential to Biblical Christianity.

b. We believe the emphases of the Ecumenical Movement to be at variance with what we hold to be Biblical priorities, frequently displacing the urgency of individual salvation with social concerns.

c. We believe that the combination of many religious organizations into a world superchurch will culminate in the religious Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18.

(This is not to be interpreted to mean that a limitation may be imposed upon any Assemblies of God minister regarding his Pentecostal witness or participation on a local level with interdenominational activities.)

ARTICLE IX. DISCIPLINE

A. DISTRICT ACTION

Section 1. The Nature and Purposes of Discipline

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The aims of discipline are that God may be honored, that the purity and welfare of the ministry may be maintained, and that those under discipline may be brought to repentance and restoration.

Discipline is to be administered for the restoration of the minister, while fully providing for the protection of the spiritual welfare of our local assemblies. It is to be redemptive in nature as well as corrective, and is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy.

Section 2. Causes of Disciplinary Action

Violations of Assemblies of God principles as stated in these Constitution and Bylaws may give cause for disciplinary action by the Credentials Committees. Among such causes for action shall be:

- a. Any conduct unbecoming to a minister or indiscretions involving morals.
- b. General inefficiency in the ministry.
- c. A failure or inability to represent our Pentecostal testimony correctly.
- d. A contentious or noncooperative spirit.
- e. An assumption of dictatorial authority over an assembly.

- f. An arbitrary rejection of district counsel.
- g. A declared open change in doctrinal views.
- h. A habit of running into debt which brings reproach upon the cause.
- i. A marriage in violation of our stand on marriage and divorce. (See Article VIII, B, Section 5, paragraphs d and e.)
- j. Violations of ministerial courtesy. (See Article VIII, B, Section 8.)
- k. Ministry without prior approval in a non-Assemblies church. (See Article VIII, B, Section 9.)
- l. An improper attitude toward those dismissed from the Fellowship. (See Article VIII, B, Section 10.)

Section 3. Initiative

- a. Authority. Occasions sometimes arise which make it necessary to deal with ministers who for some reason seem to have reached the place where, in the opinion of the brethren, endorsement can no longer be given. Credentials committees which have the authority to ordain ministers and to recommend them for credentials also have the right to withdraw their approval and to recommend the recall of credentials.
- b. Prior right of district. The officary of the district in which the alleged offense is reported to have occurred shall be recognized as having the prior right of initiative in matters of discipline. Reports or complaints against a minister, alleging violations of Assemblies of God principles (Article IX, A, Section 2),

filed with the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, shall be referred to the district in which the offense occurred for investigation and such action as the revealed facts may warrant. A copy shall be sent to the minister's home district.

c. Responsibility of home district. If the district in which an alleged offense is reported to have occurred for some reason cannot take action, the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall refer the matter, together with the facts and supporting instruments, to the district with which the minister is affiliated.

d. Responsibility of General Council Credentials Committee. In the event a district fails to take action within 90 days after a matter has been referred to it, it shall be the responsibility of the Credentials Committee of the General Council of the Assemblies of God to see that action is initiated.

Section 4. Investigation of Reports or Complaints of
Alleged Violations of Assemblies of God
Principles

a. Within United States. When a report or complaint of alleged violations by a minister is received, the superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is reported to have occurred, and/or an appointed representative, shall make an investigation, having in mind that it is his responsibility to safeguard the church, the minister, the district, and the Fellowship. This shall be done to determine the source of the report or complaint.

(1) *Interview with complainant(s)*. The persons involved shall be interviewed in order to ascertain the facts in the case and the reasons underlying the persistence of the reports or complaints.

(2) *Interview with accused minister(s)*. The accused minister(s) shall be given an opportunity to be interviewed to discuss with him/her the complaints received against him/her in the hope that the matter can be resolved.

(3) *Signed complaints*. In the event the investigation so warrants, signed complaints shall be filed with the district office by the complainant(s) describing the alleged violations.

(4) *Suspension for extended investigation or minor violations*. A minister may be placed under suspension for a period not to exceed 3 months in order to complete the investigation. This provision may also be applied for some minor infraction not meriting rehabilitation or dismissal, and which can be resolved within the above time frame. The 3-month period is subject to renewal if deemed necessary. In this setting, suspension is for the purpose of holding in an undetermined or undecided state, awaiting further information.

b. *Outside United States*. In case the alleged misconduct occurs outside the United States in an area under the general oversight of the Division of Foreign Missions, that division shall take the initiative to place complete data in the hands of the home district of the minister involved. Any hearing or trial affecting that individual's ministerial credentials shall be held in the

home district. The Division of Foreign Missions shall convey all information available to the home district in the following manner.

(1) *Report to home district.* At the earliest date after the Division of Foreign Missions receives a report of misconduct, such report shall be conveyed by telephone and by letter to the superintendent of the home district of the minister or missionary, with a copy to the district missionary secretary.

(2) *Confidential file.* A confidential file shall be submitted to the superintendent, conveying to him all information as it becomes available to the division. A final complete file shall be prepared under the direction of the field director of the field involved and shall be presented to the district superintendent for his use in any action the district may take.

(3) *Additional information.* When in the judgment of the Division of Foreign Missions or the district involved, basic information is lacking (which information may be available at the site of the alleged misconduct), arrangements may be made for the gathering of such.

Section 5. Preparation and Filing of Charges

If after due investigation it is determined that charges should be made, proper charges shall be prepared and filed in the district office. If no one appears to sign the charges, members of the district officary making the investigation may prefer charges based on the evidence in their possession. The person against whom charges have been filed shall be

informed in writing by certified mail of the charges made in keeping with Bylaws, Article IX, Section 2.

Section 6. District Hearing and Discipline

In the event the reports or complaints cannot be dealt with privately to the satisfaction of all concerned, the superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is said to have occurred, or the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated, shall arrange for a hearing by the district credentials committee for the accused minister. The minister shall be requested to appear at the hearing in the hope the matter can be resolved.

A hearing shall not be considered as final disposition of the case until the accused be present and be allowed all rights and privileges granted herein; provided, however, an accused member may be disciplined and found guilty of charges preferred, if he refused to appear at the hearing, or if proof is found of willful neglect on his part to take advantage of his rights and privileges.

If the district determines that guilt has been established, a discipline shall be administered prayerfully and in the fear of God, in accordance with the Scriptures, and as set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of this ecclesiastical body.

Section 7. Credentials Terminations

In all cases the minister shall be requested to surrender his Certificate of Ordination and his current fellowship card to the district office. The district shall forward these to the office of the general secretary of

The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Refusal to surrender his Certificate of Ordination and current fellowship card shall be considered insubordination and may result in placing a charge against the minister. Credentials terminations may occur in the following manner:

a. On the initiative of the minister.

(1) *Lapsed*. A minister who does not elect to renew his credentials, provided there is no cause for disciplinary action, shall be listed as having “lapsed.” His name shall be published as “lapsed” in the Assemblies of God Ministers, hereinafter referred to as the ministers letter.

(2) *Resigned*. A minister who has elected to remove himself from the Fellowship, and against whom there are no charges filed, shall be published in the ministers letter as “resigned.” In the event of an announced desire of a minister to resign from our Fellowship, before action shall have been taken in the matter either by the district or the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, due investigation shall be made as to the standing of the minister in the district of his affiliation. His request shall be granted, provided he is found in good standing. In case the evidence warrants contrary action, the minister shall be advised of the findings, and appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken. All information pertaining to the disciplinary action taken against the minister shall be preserved for future reference in the office of the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

b. On the initiative of the district. (See Article IX, A, Section 3.)

(1) *Dismissed.* A minister who has been found guilty of violating any of the Assemblies of God principles set forth in Article IX, A Section 2, shall be subject to disciplinary action by the Credentials Committee. Said discipline shall be administered in brotherly love and kindness in an effort to lead the offending minister through a program of rehabilitation (Article IX, A, Section 9). The Credentials Committees shall weigh decisions on the basis of the offense itself, the attitude of the offending minister toward the discipline, the manner and thoroughness of his repentance, the desire he manifests to cooperate, and the possibility of success in his rehabilitation. In the event rehabilitation is not feasible or fails, the minister shall be listed as having been dismissed. His name shall be published as dismissed in the ministers letter.

(2) *Inactive.* When a minister becomes inactive for 2 consecutive years, according to the stipulations set forth in Article VII, Section 7, paragraph b, of the bylaws, his name shall be published as inactive in the ministers letter.

(3) *Not renewed.* If in the opinion of the Credentials Committee a minister's credentials should not be renewed short of disciplinary action, his name shall be published as not renewed in the ministers letter.

(4) *Publication only after notification.* No publication of disciplinary action shall be made until the district has been advised by the office of the

general secretary that such has been authorized by the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

c. As a result of affiliation with other church organizations. In the event a minister shall identify himself with another organization granting ministerial credentials, and shall have received such credentials, he shall then be requested by the district to surrender his Certificate of Ordination and his current fellowship card to the district office. The district shall forward these to the office of the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. An investigation shall be made to determine the proper category of termination.

Section 8. Referral for Action to the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God

a. District recommendation. If it is determined that a minister's credentials are to be terminated, the district shall recommend to the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God that his name be removed from the official list of ministers, in accordance with Section 7 of this article. Such recommendation shall set forth in writing satisfactory reasons for the action. Copies of these charges and recommendations shall be forwarded to the said Credentials Committee, to the minister involved, and to the superintendent of the home district.

b. General Council Credentials Committee action. The said Credentials Committee shall be authorized to comply with the request of the district if in its

judgment the district was justified in the action taken. If the said Credentials Committee finds that justice has not been served, it may refer the case, together with its recommendations, back to the district for review and reconsideration. Disposition of the case shall await further report from the district.

c. Right of appeal. Thirty days from the date of the notification of the decision of the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be allowed for the accused to request a trial. He shall be apprised officially of this right at the time the decision of the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God is made.

Section 9. Rehabilitation

When it has been determined, either by confession of the minister involved or by deliberation of the district presbytery, that there is a cause for disciplinary action as a result of a violation of Assemblies of God principles as set forth in Article IX, A, Section 2, it shall then be the responsibility of the district presbytery to determine whether or not the offense warrants expulsion from the Fellowship by dismissal or restoration to good standing in the Fellowship through a program of rehabilitation. Recognizing that the underlying principle involved in discipline is redemptive, and that man's conscience frequently brings him to judgment and confession, and that justice can sometimes best be served with mercy; therefore, the following provisions for rehabilitation shall apply:

a. Basis. Those found to have violated any of the Assemblies of God principles (Article IX, A, Section 2) shall be subject to a period of rehabilitation.

b. Period of time. The period of rehabilitation shall be not less than 1 year except when the violation involves misconduct defined in Article IX, A, Section 2, paragraph a, in which case it shall be for not less than 2 years.

c. Procedure and requirements. The following procedure shall be used by the district presbytery in determining the specific requirements for rehabilitation for the individual minister.

(1) *Suspension*. The minister shall be considered to be under suspension during the entire period of rehabilitation, and his credentials shall be held in the district office. The extent to which he may be permitted to minister, if any, shall be determined by the district presbytery. Certain offenses may not require complete cessation of ministerial activities, although some restrictions or limitations may be warranted.

(2) *District member with conditions*. The minister must remain a member of the district during the period of rehabilitation. While his credentials are in a state of suspension, his name shall not be published as removed from the ministerial roster. In the event his ministerial activity has been terminated, the minister must become established in a local church working under the supervision of a pastor or presbyter.

(3) *District progress reports*. The Credentials Committee of the district shall submit to the Credentials Committee of the General Council on

February 1 and August 1 of each calendar year a progress report relative to the rehabilitation of ministers under discipline.

(4) *Minister's reports.* The minister must submit reports quarterly to the district superintendent.

(5) *Classified information.* The rehabilitation record shall not accompany the Certificate of Transfer to another district. The information shall be preserved for further reference in the files of the district and the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

(6) *Completion of rehabilitation.* When the rehabilitation period is satisfactorily completed, the minister shall be considered in good standing and his credentials restored.

(7) *Terms subject to district discretion.* The terms of rehabilitation as above stated shall be administered at the discretion of the district presbytery.

(8) *Ministerial benefits not forfeited.* During the period of rehabilitation the minister shall continue to be eligible for benefits such as the Ministers Group Insurance and Ministers Benefit Association.

d. Eligibility for rehabilitation.

(1) *Previous dismissal.* In the event a minister who has been dismissed shall later show repentance and indicate his desire for reinstatement, he shall, upon obtaining the approval of the district, enter the appropriate rehabilitation program as prescribed in Section 9, paragraph b, of this article, with the

provision that he shall not be eligible for reinstatement until the requirements of the program have been satisfactorily completed.

(2) *Previous rehabilitation.* In the event a minister has undergone a previous rehabilitation experience, and/or has a record of a prior violation(s) of Assemblies of God principles necessitating disciplinary action as defined in Article IX, A, Section 2, permission for rehabilitation shall be granted only by the General Council Credentials Committee and terms of such rehabilitation shall be approved by that body.

Section 10. Restoration of Credentials

a. Minimal time-lapse for dismissed minister. For a minister who is listed as “dismissed,” the minimal time-lapse required before he/she is eligible to apply for reinstatement shall be 1 year, except that a minister who is dismissed because of charges as stated in Article IX, A, Section 2, paragraph a, the minimal time-lapse shall be 2 years. The time-lapse shall be computed from the date of the district presbytery action as it appears on the termination report filed with the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God (See Bylaw Article VII, Section 6, for other renewals and reinstatements.)

b. Rehabilitation requirement obligatory. When a minister has been dismissed from our Fellowship and applies for reinstatement, it shall be the responsibility of the district council and General Council credentials committees to determine if he should go through the formal rehabilitation program, or is he has satisfactorily fulfilled the remedial requirements of

such rehabilitation as outlined in Bylaws Article IX, A, Section 9, paragraph c.

c. Option to refer to General Presbytery. The Credentials Committee may also hold reinstatement of a minister's credentials in abeyance until the next session of the General Presbytery in order that the General Presbytery may have the opportunity to review the case, in which event the matter of reinstatement of such minister may be left entirely with that body.

d. Authorization. Application for reinstatement may be made through the district council within which territory the applicant resides. The applicant shall be considered subject to the approval of the district in which the termination was made.

e. Terminology

(1) *Renewed*. The term renewed shall be used to apply strictly to those who for inadvertent reasons fail to comply with the annual deadline of January 31, but do renew with said renewal bearing a postmark of not later than February 15.

(2) *Reinstatement*. The term *reinstatement* shall apply to all those whose names have been deleted from the official ministerial list for whatever reason and have paid a \$50 reinstatement fee to be divided equally between the district and General Council offices, and received district clearance for restoration to the ministerial list. (See also Article IX, B, Trial by Jury, Section 15.)

B. TRIAL BY JURY

Section 1. Right of Appeal and Authorization for a Trial

a. Filing of appeal. If a disciplined minister desires to appeal from the decision that has been rendered, his request shall be filed by him with the office of the general superintendent within 30 days of his notification. A copy of his appeal must be sent to the superintendent of the minister's home district, and copies filed with other districts involved.

b. Record of proceedings. The district shall be expected to furnish a record of the proceedings leading up to the district action.

c. Remanding of case to the district. If in the judgment of the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, justice has not been served, the case shall be remanded to the district presbytery for review and reconsideration.

d. Authorization for a trial. In the event there is no change of viewpoint by the district, a trial by jury may be authorized by the General Council Credentials Committee.

e. Denial of appeal.

(1) *Forfeiture of right of appeal.* No trial shall be granted if proof is found of willful neglect on the part of the accused to take advantage of his rights and privileges of trial.

(2) *Insufficient grounds for appeal.* The General Council Credentials Committee shall have the

prerogative to determine whether there is sufficient cause to authorize a trial.

f. Surrender of credentials. The accused minister shall be required to surrender his current fellowship card, to be retained by the district until the case has been tried and judgement has been rendered. Refusal to surrender credentials shall be considered insubordination and may result in the placing of an additional charge against the minister.

g. Right of appeal to the General Presbytery. A disciplined minister who has been denied a trial may appeal to the General Presbytery for that right. The decision of the General Presbytery shall be final.

Section 2. Responsibility for Arrangements and Expenses of Trial

The appointed judge shall be responsible for making arrangements in the trial of members, as outlined in subsequent sections of this article. In the event it should appear to the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, after consultation with the district, that it would not be feasible to conduct a trial within the bounds of the district where the alleged offense may have occurred, the said Credentials Committee shall designate a more suitable location.

The defendant shall be responsible for the expenses of his own witnesses and counsel.

Section 3. The Judge

The district executive officers, or the district presbytery, shall select a presiding judge, who shall be approved by the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. The judge shall be a mature, ordained minister in good standing in fellowship with The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Any person known to be prejudiced toward the case shall be disqualified to serve as judge. The judge shall be authorized and instructed to conduct a fair trial.

Section 4. The Jury

The jury shall be chosen by the presiding judge, subject to agreement both by the plaintiff and the defendant. The jury shall be composed of six ordained ministers who are mature men in good standing in fellowship with the Assemblies of God. There shall be one or more qualified alternates present. The plaintiff and defendant must present valid reasons for the disqualification of a juror prior to the time of trial.

Section 5. Time and Place

The time and place for the trial shall be determined by the judge, with the convenience of the principals fully considered in connection therewith. Trials shall be held at a place convenient to the location where the facts of the case are available.

Section 6. Notice of Trial

Preceding the trial the accused shall be notified by the judge of the time and place of trial by registered or

certified mail, with a return receipt requested. Up to 30 days shall be allowed to make all necessary arrangements for the trial. An extension of time may be granted at the discretion of the judge upon request by the defendant, or upon a request by the plaintiff. Such notice of trial shall be accompanied by a copy of the charges in writing, which shall be provided by the district.

Refusal of the defendant to appear for trial may be interpreted as an admission of guilt and shall result in forfeiture of his right to appeal any decision rendered and any discipline administered.

Section 7. Conduct of Trial

Trials shall be conducted in all fairness to all concerned as brethren in the ministry and in accordance with Assemblies of God principles and rules for trial by jury as herein defined. Considering the nature of such a trial only participants shall be permitted to attend. No discourtesy to anyone shall be allowed. Counsel in the case must conduct the trial subject to the rulings of the presiding judge. When objections to such rulings are made, they shall be written into the record, but the ruling shall stand for the trial.

Any person involved in or attending a trial, who shall engage in discourteous action or misbehavior, or who shall disregard the rulings of the court, may be held in contempt of court by the judge. The judge shall then order that the record of the court proceeding shall show such ruling. Charges or penalties may be placed against the offender. Should the defendant be found in

contempt and refuse to comply with the ruling of the court, the judge may adjourn the court and submit his report to the Credentials Committees of the district and The General Council of the Assemblies of God. In this event the previous rulings in the case shall stand. Such decision will not jeopardize the defendant's right to appeal.

Section 8. Counsel

A mature, ordained minister, resident in the district, and in good standing in The General Council of the Assemblies of God, shall be chosen by the district to conduct the case for the plaintiff. The accused may conduct his own case or be represented by another ordained minister. Counsel for the defendant must be in good standing in The General Council of the Assemblies of God and in his respective district.

Both the counsel for plaintiff and defendant shall recognize the spiritual implications of their trust. They shall be obligated to present only pertinent material relating to the case.

Section 9. Record and Report of Trial

Provision shall be made by the plaintiff, with the approval of the judge, for making a true and accurate record of the trial. This shall be the official record and shall be kept on file in the district office for future reference. A certified copy of all records shall be forwarded to the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. If the offense shall have occurred in any district other than the one in which the accused is a member, a report of the findings of the trial shall be filed with the

superintendent of his district. These records, as certified, are the sole property of the district council and of The General Council of the Assemblies of God and are to be held in their respective files.

Section 10. Witnesses

Witnesses shall be free to testify under the direction of counsel. They shall not be required to answer questions asked by anyone other than the one presiding or the counsel who is at the time conducting the inquiry. Interrogation of witnesses and the taking of testimony from them shall be conducted in a Christlike manner, for the purpose of establishing the facts of the case.

No undue influence or unfair means shall be allowed to affect the testimony of witnesses. Opportunity for cross-examination of witnesses shall be given as the case proceeds.

Section 11. Order of Trial

a. The plaintiff. The counsel for the plaintiff shall first present all testimony and exhibits intended to prove the charges made against the defendant. No testimony except such as is relevant to the charges shall be allowed. The counsel for the defendant shall have opportunity to examine all exhibits and cross-examine all witnesses.

b. The defendant. Counsel for the defendant shall be allowed time and opportunity to present his side of the case and shall be granted all due respect and consideration.

Defense testimony shall be confined to disproving the charges and must not include countercharges against anyone, or, use the attitude or conduct of others as reason or excuse for the alleged misconduct. This shall not exclude the right to impeach a witness.

Counsel for the plaintiff shall have opportunity to examine all exhibits and cross-examine all witnesses.

c. Review. When the defense has rested, the case may be reviewed by counsel for each side, beginning with the defense.

d. Instructions to the jury. The case shall be given to the jury with proper instructions by the presiding judge. Such instructions shall be confined to setting forth the true basis of judgment in the case as represented by the evidence and shall in no wise be intended to prejudice the jury.

Accusation does not imply guilt, but may imply a misunderstanding or wrong information. The purpose of a trial is to arrive at all available facts relative to the case and to render a verdict based upon the evidence submitted. Judgment in the case shall be rendered in accord with the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

The jury shall be instructed to choose one of its number to serve as foreman when it retires to the jury room. The foreman shall lead the jurors in the review of the case and shall poll the jurors until a decision is reached.

Should there seem to be no possibility of reaching a decision of a two-thirds majority after repeated ballots, the foreman shall so apprise the judge. It shall be the prerogative of the judge to determine whether the balloting shall continue. Should the jury be unable to reach a verdict, the judge shall dismiss the jury and declare a mistrial. In the event of a mistrial because the jury cannot reach a verdict, the judge shall set the date for a new trial and a new jury will be selected.

Section 12. The Verdict

The verdict shall be reached by a two-thirds vote of the jury, and when presented to the court, the judge shall announce the verdict and adjourn the court, advising the defendant if found guilty that his counsel will inform him of his further rights of appeal. It shall then be the responsibility of the counsel for the defense to advise the defendant of his rights and privileges of appeal from the decision of the court.

The judge shall file his report with the district involved and with the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. The district shall take appropriate action in accordance with the verdict rendered.

Section 13. New Trials

a. Right of appeal. The defendant may appeal from the decision of a court. Appeal shall be filed with the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, and notice of such appeal shall be made in writing addressed to the general superintendent. A copy of notice of appeal shall be

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given and appeal made within 30 days following the date of notification of the verdict.

In the event the trial occurred in a district other than the one in which the defendant is a member, a copy of the appeal shall also be filed with the superintendent of his home district.

b. Bases for appeals. Appeals from the decision of the court affecting the minister's standing in the Assemblies of God fellowship as a result of a trial may be made only upon the following grounds:

(1) *Mistrial*. When there has been error either in arrangement for trial or method of conducting the same, or in the case of a verdict unsupported by sufficient evidence;

(2) *New evidence*. After final decision has been rendered, in the event new evidence is presented to the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, such new trial shall be authorized and conducted as herein defined.

c. Review by the Appeals Board. The Executive Presbytery on notice of an appeal shall appoint an Appeals Board of seven impartial ordained ministers of The General Council of the Assemblies of God to hear the case and render a decision. Appeal from a trial cannot result in a retrial at the Assemblies of God national headquarters. It shall be the duty of the Appeals Board to review the case, carefully examining the official record of trial.

All appeals shall be considered on the basis of the record of trial. No person or persons shall have the

right to introduce testimony of new evidence at a review of a tried case. All such evidence or testimony must be presented in new trials. The parties involved shall not be present at a review of an appeal, but may file a written brief in summation of trial material with the general secretary.

In case the Appeals Board shall rule a mistrial, it shall be the right of that body to which appeal has been made to nullify the decision of the court and to authorize a new trial. The Executive Presbytery shall outline proper procedure.

Section 14. Review by the General Presbytery

When exceptions are taken to the decision of the Appeals Board, either by the defendant or by the district presbytery, appeal may be made to the General Presbytery. This appeal shall be addressed to the office of the general secretary. Procedure in such cases shall conform to that in making appeal from a district credentials committee action or a jury trial, and must be made within 30 days following the notification of the decision of the Appeals Board.

Section 15. Reinstatement

a. A disciplined minister shall have the right to apply for reinstatement of his credentials, according to the provisions for such set forth in Article IX, A, Section 10. This provision shall apply to disciplinary action taken by either the General Council Credentials Committee or the General Presbytery, and also to action sustained by a trial.

b. A minister shall not be considered to have exhausted the avenues of remedy provided by the Constitution and Bylaws of this ecclesiastical body until application for reinstatement has been acted upon by both the district officary and the General Council Credentials Committee.

c. No publication of the action of the district shall be made until such time as action has been taken and authorization given by the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

ARTICLE X. SPIRITUAL LIFE-EVANGELISM

Section 1. Authorization and Purpose

There shall be a Spiritual Life-Evangelism planning and coordinating office to assist the general superintendent in implementing the threefold mission of the church. Divisions and departments shall cooperate in this priority effort.

Section 2. Organizations

a. Coordinator. This office shall be under the direction of the general superintendent and amenable to the Executive Presbytery. A Spiritual Life-Evangelism coordinator shall be nominated by the general superintendent and appointed by the Executive Presbytery.

b. Committee on Mission. There shall be a Committee on Mission to assist in promoting and coordinating efforts to fulfill the threefold mission of the church.

(1) *Function.* The committee shall offer advice, indicate ways in which divisional and departmental resources can be used in fulfilling the mission of the church, and communicate to divisions and departments the emphasis which it or the general superintendent places upon each phase of the threefold mission.

(2) *Composition.* The Committee on Mission shall be appointed by the Executive Presbytery and shall consist of the Board of Administration and representatives from the various headquarters ministries. The general superintendent shall serve as chairman of the Committee on Mission. The Spiritual Life-Evangelism coordinator shall serve as secretary.

(3) *Subcommittees.* Subcommittees of the Committee on Mission shall include the Mobilization and Placement Service Committee, the Evangelism Literature for America Committee, and such other committees as may be required to give full emphasis to the mission of the church. They shall be appointed by the Board of Administration.

Section 3. Functions

a. The Spiritual Life-Evangelism office shall serve as an agency to provide leadership and to coordinate efforts through all divisions and departments.

b. Specific functions shall include:

(1) Providing leadership in coordination of efforts to fulfill the threefold mission of the church.

(2) Planning and promoting special evangelistic and spiritual life emphases.

(3) Developing and implementing the Mobilization and Placement Service.

(4) Developing and implementing the Evangelism Literature for America program.

(5) Serving the Evangelists Fellowship.

ARTICLE XI. NATIONAL DIRECTORS

Section 1. Purpose and Scope

National directors shall be selected to serve as the heads of the various divisions of The General Council of the Assemblies of God as need may require. They shall be responsible to the Executive Presbytery and supervised by the general superintendent within guidelines set forth by the policy-making bodies.

Section 2. Selection

a. The Executive Presbytery shall make a careful survey of the Movement for potential candidates when seeking to fill national director positions.

b. The national directors shall be elected by the Executive Presbytery, subject to the ratification of the General Presbytery. Their terms of office shall continue for 2 years or until their successors qualify.

c. All national directors shall be members of the Assemblies of God.

d. The Executive Presbytery shall determine the salaries of the national directors.

Section 3. Duties

The duties of a national director shall include the following:

a. He shall be charged with the operational function of the division in accordance with the job description provided by the Executive Presbytery.

b. He shall have the prerogative of presenting the programs and budgets of the division in person to the Executive Presbytery for approval.

c. He shall coordinate the various functions of the departments in such a manner as to provide needed services and ministries for the constituency with efficiency and economy.

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APPENDIX F

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT PREAMBLE

For the purpose of promulgating the Gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means in our District, so that the results of our efforts may be conserved and assemblies established and developed in general unity and cooperative fellowship along the lines of our distinctive testimony; and for the further purposes of cooperating with all other like districts in the work of the General Council at home and abroad; we, who are members of the General Council of the Assemblies of God hereby associate ourselves together for scriptural fellowship and recognize ourselves as The District Council of Mississippi, and agree to be governed by the following Constitution and Bylaws.

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this body shall be the Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God with headquarters in Jackson, Mississippi.

ARTICLE II - TERRITORY

The District shall include the territory covered by the State of Mississippi.

ARTICLE III - PURPOSE

To fulfill the commission of the Church (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 1:8), in the propagation of the gospel in its fullness, and to carry out the principles of The General Council of the Assemblies of God in the maintenance of scriptural doctrine and order.

ARTICLE IV-RELATIONSHIPS

SECTION 1.

This District Council shall recognize itself as a part of The General Council of the Assemblies of God with headquarters in Springfield, Missouri.

* * *

ARTICLE VI - PREROGATIVES

In connection with its purpose to promulgate the gospel of Jesus Christ at home and abroad by all available means, this council shall have the following rights.

SECTION 1.

To supervise all the activities of the Assemblies of God in its prescribed field, in accordance with the rights conferred by Article X of the General Council Constitution.

SECTION 2.

To examine candidates for the ministry, and to license and ordain those who have met the requirements of the District, as set forth in its Constitution and Bylaws.

SECTION 3.

To elect its own officers and committees, to arrange for its own meetings and to govern itself. It shall be subordinate to the General Council and amenable thereto in all matters of doctrine and the conduct of ministers who shall have District endorsement.

SECTION 4.

To establish churches, and to provide for their development, to establish and maintain such departments and institutions for the fellowship as may be necessary for the propagation of the gospel in its borders.

SECTION 5.

All departments, as creatures of the District Council, shall be amenable to the District Presbytery.

SECTION 6.

Incidental to, or in connection therewith, it shall have the right to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease or otherwise dispose of such property, real or chattel, as may be needed for the prosecution of its work.

SECTION 7.

In the event that the District Presbytery should feel that the District Headquarters or Camp Grounds should be disposed of (in their entirety) and relocated, a resolution shall be prepared and mailed to each member of the District Council thirty days prior to the annual District Council Meeting.

ARTICLE VII - CONSTITUENCY

SECTION 1.

All Ordained ministers, Licensed ministers, and Certified Ministers who hold current accredited Fellowship Certificates from the General Council or the District Council, and who are affiliated with the District Council, shall be recognized as members.

SECTION 2.

Each assembly shall have the right to representation in the District Council meetings by one delegate. Each lay delegate should present a letter from the secretary or pastor of the assembly certifying his appointment to represent the assembly in the District meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - OFFICERS

SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The Executive officers shall consist of the District Superintendent, Assistant District Superintendent, and District Secretary-Treasurer.

SECTION 2. EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY

The Executive Presbytery shall consist of the District Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent, the District Secretary-Treasurer, and no less than two Executive Presbyters. Such members to be elected at the District Council.

SECTION 3. SECTIONAL PRESBYTERS

There shall be one Presbyter for each Section in the District; each Presbyter to be elected by his respective Section.

SECTION 4. DISTRICT PRESBYTERY

The District Presbytery shall consist of the Executive Presbytery together with General and Sectional Presbyters and the Youth Department Director of the District.

SECTION 5. GENERAL PRESBYTERS

The District Superintendent, the Assistant District Superintendent, and the Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as General Presbyters and shall represent the District in the General Presbytery. The Assistant Superintendent shall be an Ordained minister and pastor of a church. General Council Constitution, Article IX, Section 3.

ARTICLE IX - COMMITTEES

Standing committees shall consist of the Credentials Committee the Devotional Committee, the Home Missions Committee, and the Roster Committee, together with such other committees as may be required.

ARTICLE X - MEETINGS

SECTION 1.

- A.** The District Council shall meet annually, time and place to be selected, and announced by the District Presbytery at least thirty days prior to convening.

- B.** The District Council shall begin on Tuesday evening and conclude on Thursday night.
- C.** The district presbytery and/or executive presbytery shall decide the appropriate schedule.

SECTION 2.

Special sessions may be called to meet any emergency that may arise within the District. Such a call shall be issued by the Secretary after the emergency has been fully considered and approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the District Presbytery. (See Bylaws Article V, Section 7 B,C).

SECTION 3.

The right of initiative in the nature of calling a special session shall be granted to any Ordained minister of the District Council. A statement setting forth the reasons for the special session and signed by not less than twenty percent of the Ordained ministers of the District may be considered sufficient reasons for such a call, said statement to be filed with District Presbytery, who shall issue the call, setting the time and place for the meeting.

ARTICLE XI - LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

SECTION 1. DESIRING AFFILIATION

Local assemblies desiring recognition and affiliation as members of the District Council may apply, therefore, to the District Presbyter of the section where they are located or to the Superintendent of the District. The District, through its appointed representatives, may receive such assemblies into fellowship if they meet

constitutional requirements, and may also refuse membership, to assemblies if it sees fit.

SECTION 2. CLASSIFICATION OF ASSEMBLIES

There are five classifications of Assemblies defined as follows:

SECTION 3. GENERAL COUNCIL AFFILIATED ASSEMBLY

A General Council affiliated assembly is one that has applied for and has received Certificate of Affiliation from the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

A. Described

1. A church which has met all requirements and qualifications of the General Council and District Council Bylaws and Constitution; and
2. Has made request to the District Superintendent or Sectional Presbyter that it become sovereign and General Council affiliated; and
3. A duly called business meeting has been conducted by the District Superintendent for the purpose of it becoming sovereign, and a General Council affiliation application has been completed; and
4. Has applied for and received a certificate of affiliation from the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

B. Requirements for affiliation. Churches desiring to be affiliated with the General Council of the

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Assemblies of God shall meet the following requirements. They shall:

1. Accept the tenets of faith of the Assemblies of God;
2. Adopt a standard of membership that may be determined either by the local assembly or by agreement with the District Council;
3. Have a minimum active voting membership of 20 persons who shall accept responsibility to maintain scriptural order in the local body. In cases where there are fewer than 20 voting members, an exception may be granted by the District, in compliance with General Presbytery policy, and provided that the church has demonstrated the capacity for self-governance.
4. Adopt articles of Incorporation, a constitution or bylaws compatible with models recommended by the District Council, or district approved governance models that provide for adequate accountability, amenability, and safeguards so that a pastor and/or governing body cannot directly or indirectly exert dictatorial control over a church;
5. Have an adequate number of spiritually qualified members to fill the offices of the church called for in its constitution or bylaws; and
6. Make provision for a pastor who is a credentialed minister in good standing with the General Council and a district council.

C. Procedure for becoming General Council affiliated.

1. Churches desiring to become affiliated with the General Council may make request for the same with the District Superintendent through the Sectional Presbyter in the section in which the church is located. The District Superintendent, or someone he appoints, may respond to the request. (See Bylaws Article XIX Section 1).
2. A duly called business meeting of the church shall be announced not less than two Sundays prior to the meeting by the pastor or church secretary.
3. The District Superintendent, or someone he appoints, shall preside over the meeting.
4. Application for recognition as a General Council affiliated church with the General Council of the Assemblies of God, furnished by the General Secretary's office, shall be completed. One copy is retained at the church and two copies are sent to the District Office, one of which is sent to the General Secretary's office.
5. Upon approval by the General Secretary's office, a certificate of affiliation and the official letter of affiliation are issued by the General Secretary's office. A copy of the official letter is also sent to the District Office.

D. Relationship to and support of the General Council and district councils. A General Council affiliated assembly should cooperate in the work

and support the programs of the General Council and District Council and may send delegates to the General Council and District Council.

E. Right of self-government (Sovereign Rights).

Each General Council affiliated assembly has the right of self-government under Jesus Christ, its living Head, and shall have the power to choose or call its pastor, elect its official board, and transact all other business pertaining to its life as a local unit. It shall have the right to administer discipline to its members according to the Scriptures and its constitution or bylaws. It shall have the right to acquire and hold title to property, either through trustees or in its corporate name as a self-governing unit. The fact it is affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God shall in no way destroy its rights as above stated or interfere with its sovereignty. The governance model adopted by the local assembly shall conform to the guidelines of General Council Constitution Article XI, Section 1, paragraph B, subparagraph (6).

F. Subordinate in matters of doctrine and

conduct. A General Council affiliated assembly shall recognize that a District Council or The General Council of the Assemblies of God has the right to approve scriptural doctrine and conduct and to disapprove unscriptural doctrine and conduct and the authority to withdraw its Certificate of Affiliation if deemed necessary. (See General Council Article IX of the Bylaws.)

G. Right of appeal. When in need of counsel or advice, the General Council affiliated assembly may

appeal to the district officers for help. It may appeal from a decision by the district officers to the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God when there is a question whether or not the assembly has received proper help from the district. When exceptions are taken to the decisions of the Executive Presbytery, either by the General Council affiliated assembly or by the district presbytery, appeal may be made to the General Presbytery.

H. Voting Privilege. The General Council affiliated assembly may have representation at the General Council, District Council, and Sectional Council meetings, by one delegate. Such delegate shall be able to interpret and represent the desires of his/her assembly and shall be entitled to full speaking and voting privileges at the Council. Such delegate shall be furnished a letter of authorization by his/her assembly as its representative in the Council.

SECTION 4. DISTRICT COUNCIL AFFILIATED ASSEMBLIES

A. Provisions for District Council Affiliated Assemblies

Provision shall be made by the district councils for district council affiliated assemblies which shall be under the supervision of the District Council, in accordance with the provisions of the district council constitution and bylaws. These assemblies shall be encouraged to proceed to the status of sovereign General Council affiliated assemblies.

B. A District Affiliated Assembly

1. One newly organized.
2. One in a Home Missions status under three years of age.
3. One which may not have matured to a state in which it is able to elect a qualified board of three deacons or three trustees, in compliance with the District Constitution or recommended Constitution and Bylaws for Local Assemblies. (Bylaws Article XIX, Section 6).
4. One which does not have twenty qualified adult members.
5. A church which was sovereign, whose membership declined below the required twenty adult members and not granted an exception as stated at Article XI, Section 3., paragraph B.3., or has been declared by the District Officiary or General Secretary to have lost its sovereignty.
6. These assemblies shall not receive recognition as sovereign, but should remain in a District affiliated status until such time as the assembly gives evidence of sufficient maturity to warrant sovereignty.
7. Such assemblies do not receive an official letter of recognition as sovereign and General Council affiliated until the District Officiary and Sectional Presbyterian consider it the proper time and the necessary procedure and requirements are met.

SECTION 5. DISTRICT SUPERVISED ASSEMBLY

1. An assembly that is subject to the District Officiary for guidance and supervision in all matters, including its transactions, legal or otherwise, elections or appointments and operational affairs. It shall not have the authority to sell, lease, rent, alter, or dispose of any church property, real or chattel, without the written consent of the District Superintendent.
2. When a church is declared under District Supervision all offices and positions are thereby vacated, with the exception of the pastorate, except as hereafter set forth in Bylaws Article XIX Section 7.
3. The assembly shall not conduct any business such as election of officers and receiving members, without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter.

SECTION 6. HOME MISSIONS CHURCH

A Home Missions Church is dealt with fully in the Bylaws in Article XVII World Missions, Section 2 - Home Missions.

SECTION 7. PARENT AFFILIATED CHURCHES

Provision shall be made by the Mississippi District for the recognition of Parent Affiliated Churches (PAC) which shall be under the supervision of a parenting church, in accordance with the parenting church's constitution and bylaws.

SECTION 8. COOPERATING ASSEMBLY STATUS

Provisions may be made by the District Council and the General Council Executive Presbytery for the status of a cooperating assembly, which would allow churches that subscribe to Article V, Statement of Fundamental Truths, of the General Council Constitution to enter into a cooperative status with a district and the General Council on a temporary basis (4 year term, renewable by the request of the local church congregation at the discretion of the district council in cooperation with the General Council Executive Presbytery), before officially affiliating with the District Council and the General Council.

SECTION 9.

Each local assembly affiliated with this District Council may have representation at the District Council meetings by one lay delegate. Such delegate shall be able to interpret and represent the desires of his assembly and shall be entitled to full speaking and voting privileges at the Council. Such delegate must provide himself with a letter from his church stating his appointment and authorization as its delegate.

SECTION 10.

Local assemblies are expected to recognize and respect the officers of the General Council and of the District Council and to share in the missionary and other joint enterprises of these Councils. It is recommended that regular missions giving be included in the church budget and that offerings, pledges and conventions be utilized to promote Home and World Missions.

SECTION 11.

The Constitution and Bylaws for Local Assemblies as recommended by the Mississippi District Council in harmony with those recommended by the General Council of the Assemblies of God under which the Local Assemblies of this District are required to operate are in this Yearbook.

All assemblies will be governed by the same unless the local assembly has adopted a governance model compatible with the district recommended model or a model approved by the District which is in harmony with the policies and governmental practices of the General and District Council, so as to preserve adequate accountability, amenability and safeguards so that the pastor and/or governing board cannot directly or indirectly exert dictatorial control over a church. Changes in the governance model inconsistent with these guidelines would not be acceptable.

SECTION 12.

Each church of the Assemblies of God is requested to keep an up-to-date record of its membership and a report of the same shall be sent annually on forms provided to the office of the District Secretary and the General Council Secretary.

SECTION 13.

The standard of individual membership in local assemblies of this District Council as set by the District Council is as follows: no one shall be admitted as a member in local assemblies of this District who shall not:

- A. Be born again.
- B. Be baptized in water by immersion.
- C. Disapprove of and refrain from participation in worldly amusements, theaters, movies, cards, dancing, etc.
- D. Abstain from drinking intoxicating liquors of every kind and the use of tobacco in any form.
- E. Refrain from the sin mentioned in Gal. 5:19-21.
- F. Accept the ruling on remarriage and divorce according to the General Council Bylaws Article VII, Section 2, d.
- G. Undertake to contribute regularly to the financial support of the church of which he is a member.
- H. Believe in all the orthodox doctrines of the Christian faith including the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in other tongues as the initial physical evidence, Divine healing, and the pre-millennial second Coming of Jesus Christ.

SECTION 14. INSURANCE COVERAGE

All assemblies which have financial obligations on buildings and properties that are underwritten by the District shall maintain sufficient insurance to cover the obligations.

SECTION 15. SHARING IN MISSIONS ENTERPRISES

Local assemblies are encouraged to share in missionary and other joint enterprises of the General Council and District Council.

SECTION 16. NAME

In order that we may attain uniformity in our identity, and to distinguish our assemblies from other denominations and branches of Pentecostal organizations, it is recommended that all assemblies include in their name their affiliation with the Assemblies of God.

SECTION 17. DEEDS

All church properties shall be deeded according to the sample deeds in the District Council Bylaws or comparable thereto.

SECTION 18.

No assembly shall elect as one of its deacons any man who is not an active member thereof, in good standing, filled with the Spirit according to Acts 2:4, and free from entanglements in his marriage relationship.

SECTION 19.

The District council advises all of its local assemblies not to elect to their official boards, men who hold Ordination, License, or Certified Ministers credentials.

SECTION 20.

- A.** No assembly shall call as its pastor one who is not a member in good standing in the General Council or one of its District Councils.
- B.** No assembly shall call as its evangelist a minister who is not in good standing in the General Council or one of its District Councils, or the equivalent thereof, in character and doctrine.
- C.** It is recommended that each assembly call its pastors for indefinite periods.
- D.** It is requested also that the Sectional Presbyter and District Superintendent be advised immediately upon a pastorate becoming vacant.

SECTION 21.

The District Council disapproves of private ownership of church properties. A disregard of this may seriously affect the standing with the Council of both the owner of such property and the church worshipping therein.

SECTION 22.

Any local assembly which shall disobey or fall below the requirements for local assemblies set forth in this Constitution, and shall reject or ignore the request and warning of the District representatives to return to assembly standards and requirements, may be suspended or expelled from membership in this District Council by action of the District Presbytery.

SECTION 23. ASSEMBLIES OF GOD TOTAL GIVING PARTICIPATION

All assemblies are expected to have an interest in, and contribute regularly to, the Assemblies of God Total Giving plan.

ARTICLE XII - CREDENTIALING

SECTION 1. CREDENTIALING AUTHORITY

The district council shall have the authority to examine and present candidates who qualify as certified ministers, licensed ministers, or ordained ministers in accordance with Article XVI of the Bylaws. The applications of such candidates shall be forwarded to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God for presentation to the General Council Credentials Committee for final review and issuance of the ministerial credential if the qualifications prescribed by Article XVI of the Bylaws are satisfied. Any level of formal academic achievement (diploma or degree) shall not be a requirement for credentials, but it shall be required of applicants that they take such courses and pass examinations as shall be prescribed by the General Presbytery unless an exception is provided for in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE XIII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Constitution may be made at any regular meeting of the District Council provided the proposed amendments have been submitted to the District Secretary Treasurer's office for review by the Executive Presbytery no later than 90 days prior to the District Council session. The Resolutions Committee

shall prepare the resolutions in printed form and mail them to the district ministers and churches 30 days prior to the District Council.

Amendments of the Constitution shall require a two-thirds majority of all members present for adoption.

BYLAWS

ARTICLE I - PARLIAMENTARY ORDER

SECTION 1. PROCEDURE

In order to expedite the work of the District Council and to avoid confusion in its deliberations, this District Council shall be governed by the parliamentary procedure of Roberts Rules of Order newly revised, all in keeping with the spirit of Christian love and fellowship and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

ARTICLE II - VOTING CONSTITUENCY AND QUORUM

SECTION 1. THE VOTING CONSTITUENCY

The eligible voting constituency shall consist of all accredited members, present and registered. This shall include Ordained ministers, Licensed ministers, Certified ministers and church delegates.

SECTION 2. QUORUM

All ministers and delegates who shall respond to the announcement of the time and place of a District Council meeting as decided by the District Presbytery, shall constitute of quorum. (Note: Minimum of 20% must respond.)

SECTION 3. THE COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

The courtesy of the floor may be extended to visitors by invitation of the chair.

ARTICLE III - ORDER OF BUSINESS

SECTION 1.

The regular order of business for the District Council shall be as follows:

- A.** Announcement and confirmation of appointment of committees;
- B.** Reports of District Officials and Departmental Heads shall be printed and passed out at the beginning of the District Council. These shall not be read, but action shall be taken during the Council in session as to their acceptance.
District Superintendent
District Secretary-Treasurer
Departmental Reports
- C.** Report of Roster Committee
- D.** Unfinished business
- E.** All available pending resolutions shall be distributed in printed form to the Council at the opening of the first business session.
- F.** All booths shall be closed for business during the ministry of the Word in District Council sessions.
- G.** Election of Officers
- H.** New Business and Committee Reports

I. Report of Ordination Committee and Ordination Service

J. Adjournment

SECTION 2.

A. All business sessions of the Council shall begin with prayer.

B. A time shall be set aside in each District Council for prayer for the sick.

C. The Council business sessions schedule may be altered by a majority vote of the Council in session as need dictates.

ARTICLE IV - ELECTION OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1. TIME OF ELECTIONS

A. District Officers

1. The District Superintendent and one Executive Presbyter shall be elected at the annual District Council on uneven years.
2. The Secretary-Treasurer, the Assistant Superintendent, and one Executive Presbyter shall be elected at the annual District Council on the even years.

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS

A. District Officers

1. The Executive Officers and Executive Presbyters of the District Council shall be men who have

been ordained, of mature experience and ability, whose lives and ministry are above reproach.

2. The Executive Officers and the Executive Presbyters of the District Council shall be required to have been members of this District for at least one full year prior to District Council. They shall be deemed fully cooperative in all matters.
3. The Executive Presbyters, other than the Superintendent and the Secretary-Treasurer, shall be ordained pastors in the District at the time of their election and hold no other district or sectional office while serving.

B. General Presbyters

1. The General Presbyters shall be representative men of mature experience and ability, whose lives and ministry are above reproach.
2. They shall be required to have been members of this District Council for at least one full year prior to the District Council.

C. Section Presbyters, Assistant Presbyters, and Secretaries

1. The Sectional Officers shall be men who are ordained, and of mature experience and ability, whose lives and ministry are above reproach.
2. They shall be required to have been members of this District Council for at least one full year prior to election. They shall serve as pastors in the section.

D. All officers shall subscribe to the financial policy of the District

SECTION 3. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

The following procedure shall apply to all elections including Executive Officers, Executive Presbyters, Non-Resident Executive Presbyters, General Presbyters and all Sectional Officers. If no nominee receives a two-thirds majority of all votes cast on the first ballot, all names shall remain on the board with the number of votes received by each nominee. If an election is not reached after the second ballot is cast, all names except the three receiving the highest number of votes shall be dropped. If an election is not reached in the next ballot, the two receiving the highest number of votes will be balloted upon until one receives the necessary two-thirds majority of all ballots cast.

A. Election of District Officers

1. The Executive officers, namely; the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and the Secretary-Treasurer, as well as the Executive Presbyters, shall be nominated by secret ballot, it being understood that the first ballot cast, shall be considered an electoral ballot. The Executive Presbyters, other than the Executive Officers, shall serve no more than one-term in sequence.
2. The Executive Presbyters. One shall be elected from each of the two areas of the state. These areas shall be defined as North being that area of the state which includes Sections 1 through

Section 7, and the South being that area which includes Sections 8 through Section 12.

3. Names of all nominees and the number of votes received by each nominee shall be placed visibly before the Council. A two-thirds majority of all ballots cast shall constitute an election.
4. Names of all nominees and the number of votes received by each nominee on each ballot shall be recorded in the minutes and reported to the District Council in session.
5. It is recommended that no office shall be filled by acclamation at the District Council.
6. All District officers shall be elected for a four-year term beginning 30 days after election.

B. Election of Non-Resident Presbyters

1. By virtue of his office the Superintendent of the Mississippi District shall be a nominee for Non-Resident Executive Presbyter to the General Council.
2. An additional nominee for the Office of Non-Resident Executive Presbyter shall be elected at the District Council preceding the Biennial General Council from the ordained Ministers of the District who are in good standing.
3. A two-thirds majority of all ballots cast shall constitute an election.

4. The nominees' names shall be forwarded to the General Secretary's office as required by the General Council.

C. Election of General Presbyters

1. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Secretary-Treasurer shall serve as General Presbyters. The Assistant Superintendent shall be an ordained pastor of a church in our District.
2. A two-thirds majority of all ballots cast shall constitute an election.

D. Election of Sectional Officers.

1. The Sectional Officers are to be elected by the Sectional Councils. Each officer is to be voted on separately, beginning with the presbyter.
2. The voting constituency shall consist of the qualified ministers and one duly appointed delegate from each church of the section.
3. A Two-thirds majority of all ballots cast shall be necessary to constitute an election.
4. In the event of a vacancy, the District Superintendent shall make the necessary appointments in harmony with the ministers of the section and the respective department.
5. The term of office for all Sectional Officers shall be four years beginning 30 days after election.

ARTICLE V - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1. DUTIES OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

- A.** He shall be the President of the Corporation in all its legal matters, and shall be a member of all committees.
- B.** The District Superintendent shall be a full-time officer.
- C.** He shall preside at the meetings of the District Presbytery and of the Executive Presbytery.
- D.** He shall preside at the meetings of the District Council.
- E.** He shall have personal supervision of all the work of the District with the cooperation of the District Presbytery.
- F.** He shall supervise the work in the District Office.
- G.** He shall administer discipline in all cases, when requested to do so by the District Presbytery.
- H.** He shall sign all District credentials requiring his signature.
- I.** He shall perform any other function customary for the presiding officer, or such as may be directed by the District Council or Presbytery.

SECTION 2. DUTIES OF ASSISTANT DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

- A.** He shall be the Vice-President of the Corporation.

- B.** He shall be a member of the Executive Presbytery.
- C.** He shall assist the Superintendent.
- D.** If for any reason the office of Superintendent is vacated, the Assistant Superintendent shall immediately assume the office. However, if he declines, the Presbytery Board shall call for a special District Council to fill the vacancy as provided for in Article X, Meetings, Section 2 of the Constitution.
- E.** The administration and business of District World Missions shall be under the directorship of the Assistant District Superintendent who shall serve as the District World Missions Director.
- F.** The District World Missions Director shall be responsible for assisting missionaries and pastors in planning missions services and shall promote and encourage the support of World Missions.

SECTION 3. DUTIES OF SECRETARY-TREASURER

- A.** He shall be the Secretary-Treasurer of the Corporation.
- B.** He shall be a member of the Executive Presbytery.
- C.** He shall be a full-time officer.
- D.** He shall keep true records of the proceedings of the District Council and meetings of the District Presbytery and shall publish same as approved and directed by the District Presbytery.

- E.** He shall be custodian of the corporation seal of the District Council.
- F.** He shall be authorized to sign all official and legal documents and to perform such other functions as are customary or as may be directed by the District Presbytery.
- G.** He shall keep an accurate, itemized record of all receipts and disbursements, issuing a quarterly statement to all District ministers and churches, conducting the work of his office according to accepted business methods.
- H.** He shall publish a District paper, *The Assemblies of God Advocate*. The intervals of issues published annually shall be determined by the Presbytery Board.
- I.** He shall be the editor of the District paper in consultation with the district Superintendent.
- J.** He shall sign all District credentials issued or those requiring his signature.
- K.** He shall have the financial records audited annually by a public accountant, and shall publish the audit in the "Annual Report" book.
- L.** He shall be bonded for an amount to be determined by the District Presbytery.
- M.** He shall maintain a record of all Ordained ministers, Licensed ministers, and Certified Ministers in the District.

- N. He shall edit the Year Book and place it on the secure website as a downloadable electronic file, no later than sixty days after the District Council. He shall obtain the Executive Presbytery's approval of the District Council minutes before being posted.

SECTION 4. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

- A. The Executive Officers shall be trustees of the District Corporation. They shall be empowered to transact all legal business as authorized by the District Presbytery.
- B. The Executive Presbytery shall have the oversight of each department of the District during the interim of the District Council sessions, acting for the fellowship in all matters affecting the interest of the District Council as may be delegated to them by the District Presbytery.
- C. The Executive Presbytery shall provide for its own meetings,

* * *

Presbytery.

(Note: Each District Officer shall be responsible for the maintenance of the parsonage furnished him by the District. He shall also be responsible for maintaining attractive grounds around his parsonage. Bills for work done on the parsonages shall be presented to the Secretary-Treasurer for payment.)

ARTICLE - XV - PUBLICATIONS

SECTION 1. COMMUNICATION OF DISTRICT NEWS AND EVENTS

The District Office shall publish the news and advertise the events of the District in a manner and by any means that best serves the churches and ministers of the District.

SECTION 2. DISTRICT YEAR BOOK

The District Year Book shall include the District Constitution and Bylaws, policies of departments, essential resolution from the General Council Constitution and Bylaws, recommended Constitution and Bylaws for the Local Assembly and current minutes of the District Council edited in compliance with Bylaws Article V, Section 3, Paragraph N, and shall be available at the secure website and be accessible to the churches and constituents of the District.

SECTION 3. FINANCIAL REPORT

There shall be an annual report printed and placed in the hands of all ministers and delegates at the District Council.

SECTION 4. DISTRICT DIRECTORY

A. A current District Directory shall be maintained on the District Website and accessible to the churches and constituents of the District.

- B.** Should any church or minister request a printed Directory one shall be furnished for a nominal cost of printing and postage.

ARTICLE - XVI - MINISTRY

SECTION 1. MINISTRY DESCRIBED

Christ's gifts to the Church include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11), exhorters, administrators, leaders, and helpers (Romans 12:7, 8). We understand God's call to these ministry gifts is totally within His sovereign discretion without regard to gender, race, disability, or national origin.

Three classifications of ministry are recognized and transferable among all Assemblies of God districts: the ordained minister, the licensed minister, and the certified minister.

All ordained, licensed, and certified ministers holding current ministerial credentials are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church, and those holding a local church credential as provided below.

A fourth classification of ministry, a local church credential, may be provided by a local General Council affiliated church under basic guidelines adopted by the General Presbytery and such additional guidelines adopted by the district council. The local church credential shall be non-transferable (limited to the issuing local church) and shall be limited to 2 years, unless the credential is solely required for active and ongoing local ministry in a prison, hospital, or

institution (renewable by the local church for an additional 2 years). A person holding a local church credential can perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church if authorized in writing by the senior pastor of the local church issuing the credential.

SECTION 2. BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

The following qualifications pertain to all applicants for ministerial recognition:

- A. Salvation.** Testimony to having experienced the new birth (John 3:5).
- B. Baptism in the Holy Spirit.** Testimony to having received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues according to Acts 2:4. The Spirit-filled life will enable him to fulfill the threefold mission of the church (Constitution Article V, paragraph 10).
- C. Evidence of call.** Clear evidence of a divine call to the ministry, evidenced by a personal conviction, confirmed by the work of the Spirit and the testimony of fellow ministers.
- D. Christian character.** A blameless Christian life and a good report of those who are without (Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:7)
- E. Doctrine position.** A thorough understanding of and agreement with our doctrinal position as contained in the Statement of Fundamental Truths.
- F. Assemblies of God Polity.** A satisfactory working knowledge of the principles, practices, and purposes

of the Fellowship through a study of the General Council and District Council constitution and Bylaws.

G. Voluntary cooperation and commitment to the Fellowship. An active loyalty to our constitutional agreements, a cooperative spirit, and a readiness to seek and receive the counsel of older mature Christians and those in positions of authority.

By voluntary it is meant that, upon learning the principles, doctrines, and practices of the Assemblies of God, and by seeing the benefits to be derived from being associated with such an organization, persons of their own free choice decide to become members, thus subscribing to all that for which the organization stands.

For the minister, by cooperation, it is meant, to the best of one's ability, complying with all decisions setting forth and defining duties and responsibilities incumbent upon members of the organization. It includes active participation and respect for the will of the majority expressed through constitutional processes.

Hence, for the minister, voluntary cooperation means that when the minister decides to become a cooperating member of the Assemblies of God, this cooperation and participation thereby becomes obligatory and not optional.

H. Commitment to the Fellowship. An active loyalty to our constitutional agreements, a cooperative spirit, and a readiness to seek and

receive the counsel of older mature Christians and those in positions of authority.

I. Basic educational requirements. Any level of formal academic achievement (diploma or degree) shall not be a requirement for credentials; however, credential applicants shall meet the following criteria:

1. All applicants are required to be interviewed by the District Credentials Committee and, in preparation for the interview, pass a standard exam approved by the General Presbytery whereby they demonstrate knowledge of the Bible, Assemblies of God doctrines, and ministerial practices.
2. Exceptions to the above, regarding all applicants meeting the Credential Committee, may be made for those applicants who are in school or college and because of distance, schooling obligation or other valid reasons are unable to attend the scheduled Credential Committee meeting. They may meet the Executive Presbytery for the exam and interview provided they have met all other credentialing requirements. This provision shall also apply to the spouses of Foreign Missionaries.
3. Successfully complete equivalent training to that indicated in paragraph (3) below, preferably, in an endorsed Assemblies of God post secondary school; or in a seminary, college, Bible college or school approved by the District Credentials Committee consistent with criteria

established by the General Council Credentials Committee; or

4. Successfully complete courses prescribed by the general Presbytery offered in correspondence through the Global University of the Assemblies of God; or pass the final examination in the prescribed courses, or
5. Be recommended by a District Credentials Committee as qualifying for credentials through self-study and ministerial experience. Such candidates shall have a proven and fruitful ministry of substantial duration. Requests from a district for such a candidate shall be presented to the General Council Credentials Committee and may be granted on a case by case basis.

J. Mandatory screening. All applicants for ministerial credentials shall be screened through a designated screening agency established by the General Council Executive Presbytery. Said screening shall be done by the district council prior to the submission of the application to the office of the general secretary.

K. Marriage status. We disapprove of any married persons holding ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God or District Councils granting credentials to such, if either minister or spouse has a former spouse living unless the divorce occurred prior to conversion, except as hereinafter provided.

L. Ecclesiastical annulments and marriage dissolutions- The General Council Executive Presbytery shall have the authority to determine

whether an applicant qualifies for an ecclesiastical annulment. In such cases there must be clear and satisfactory evidence of deception, fraud, or other conditions which have a profound impact preventing the creation of a valid marriage union, unknown at the time of marriage by the applicant. The General Council Executive Presbytery shall have the authority to determine whether an applicant qualifies regarding a former marriage when the termination of that marriage is consistent with the scriptural position of the Fellowship relating to the granting or holding of ministerial credentials; or if a former marriage ended prior to conversion. In those cases involving pre-conversion divorce they shall be decided on an individual basis just as those that deal with ecclesiastical annulments. Appeals from the decisions of the General Council Executive Presbytery may be made to the General Presbytery.

M. Eligibility of women. The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the ministry of the Word (Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; I Corinthians 11:5). Women who meet the qualifications for ministerial credentials are eligible for whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant and have the right to administer the ordinances of the church and are eligible to serve in all levels of church ministry, and/or district and General Council leadership.

N. Ministers from other organizations. If a minister from another reputable body desires to

affiliate with the Assemblies of God; the credentials committees of both the General Council and the district councils are under no obligation to accept the applicant's previous ministerial status, but will judge each candidate on his or her own merits as to the level of credentials to be granted. Such applicants shall be required to:

1. Conform to Assemblies of God criteria for recognition.
2. Complete an application for ministerial recognition.
3. Submit a letter of recommendation from a neighboring Assemblies of God minister or the sectional presbyter for the applicant's area.
4. Submit a recommendation from the body with which the minister was formerly affiliated. If such is not available, letter of recommendation should be sought from three reputable ordained ministers who are familiar with the applicant's ministry, two of whom should be with the applicant's former credentialing body.
5. Take the credential examination.
6. Complete such courses as may be prescribed by the General Presbytery for ministers transferring from other credentialing bodies.
7. Meet with the district credentials committee for an oral interview.

8. Be recommended by the district credentials committee for action by the General Council Credentials Committee.
9. All previously ordained ministers so approved shall receive recognition as ordained Assemblies of God ministers with the laying on of hands by the district presbytery. All other applicants so approved shall receive the appropriate level of credential recognition.
10. Ministers who receive Assemblies of God recognition shall relinquish their ministerial credentials with any other organization, unless an exception is granted by the General Council Credentials Committee upon recommendation of a district council credentials committee for a minister serving as a missionary in this country who holds a credential with a member body of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.

SECTION 3. SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS

- A. Residency requirements of applicants.** Applicants for all credentials must be residents of or hold credentials in the district where they make application and appear before its credentials committee.
- B. Local church credential.** A local church credential shall be administered by the local church pursuant to basic guidelines adopted by the General Presbytery and such additional guidelines adopted by the district council. It shall be non-transferable (limited to the issuing local church).

C. Certified minister

1. *General requirements.* They shall show promise of usefulness in the gospel work. They shall devote full or part time to Christian ministry and, at the discretion of the district credentials committees, may remain under the supervision of a pastor or a ministry coach or mentor. They shall show evidence of a divine call and be actively engaged in some aspect of ministry and proclamation of the gospel, except in case of ill health or advanced age.
2. *Pastoral requirements.* In the event a certified minister is serving in a position as the pastor; he or she shall be expected to advance to the ministry license level within 2 years of acceptance of the pastorate. This shall not apply to any minister who has reached the age of 65 or older, or whose certificate has been issued on a provisional basis. Any exceptions shall be at the discretion of the District Credentials Committee.
3. *Exception for provisional issuance.* A Certificate of Ministry may be issued on a provisional basis to a person who has not met all the credentialing requirements but who is deemed by the District Credential Committee to be essential to the continuity of a church or a ministry. The reason for such a provisional issuance must be ministry driven, and the justification for its use is terminated when the minister ceases to be involved in the ministry for which it was initially granted unless the

minister accepts another qualifying assignment.
Other limitations are:

- a. The ministry certificate on a provisional basis will be issued for one (1) year and shall not be renewed more than two times.
- b. A person who has been granted the Certificate of Ministry on a provisional basis must meet the qualifications for a ministry certificate within a 3-year period.

D. Licensed minister. Qualifications for license shall include clear evidence of a divine call, character and preparation suitable for that calling, practical ministry experience, and an evident purpose to devote one's life in service to the proclamation of the gospel.

E. Ordained minister. Qualifications for ordination are outlined in the New Testament (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). In addition:

1. Applicants must be 23 years of age or older.
2. They must have met all the requirements in making application and in completing the prescribed application form.
3. No person may be ordained to the ministry until he or she has shown evidence of a divine call and has held a ministry license and has been actively engaged in ministry and proclamation of the gospel for at least 2 full consecutive years immediately prior thereto.

4. *Residency requirements of applicants.* Applicants must be residents of or hold credentials in the district where they make application and appear before its credentials committee. District councils are required to refrain from approving any applicant for ordination who may have been licensed in another district, until such licensed minister shall have been a member of the district in which he or she is seeking ordination at least 1 year. Applicants who have not been a member of the district where they apply for ordination for 2 full consecutive years must meet the requirements and secure the endorsement of the officers of the district in which they were previously licensed, as well as the district of their residence.
5. *Exceptions to requirements.* The General Council Credentials Committee, upon request by a district credentials committee and where exceptional circumstances exist, may waive the requirements for an applicant holding a ministry license for 2 full consecutive years or being a member of the district in which he or she is seeking ordination for at least 1 year.
6. In order to maintain active status, ordained ministers shall be engaged in viable ministry and proclamation of the gospel except for cases of disability, retirement, or other valid circumstances as determined by the general secretary.

SECTION 4. ACTION OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

The General Council Credentials Committee delegates to the district councils the authority to examine, approve, and recommend candidates who qualify as Certified minister Licensed ministers, and Ordained ministers. Final approval and issuance of the ministerial credential shall be made by the General Council Credentials Committee. All ordination services, with the laying on of hands, shall take place under the auspices of the district councils.

SECTION 5. CERTIFICATES

The General Council Credentials Committee is authorized to issue Ordination Certificates, Licenses to Preach and Certificates of Ministry, together with the accompanying annual fellowship card, to all properly qualified and approved applicants.

SECTION 6. OFFICIAL LIST

- A. Active ministers.** The official list of all Mississippi District credential holders shall be compiled by the Mississippi District and published for the convenience of the Fellowship, with the understanding it is not to be used for purposes of solicitation. This official list shall be revised annually and shall contain the names of those who are engaged in active ministry and whose credentials have been renewed by the issuance of the fellowship card for the current year.
- B. Inactive or disabled ministers.** All credentialed ministers who shall withdraw from active ministry

or shall cease to engage in pastoral, evangelistic, or other full-time ministry shall be expected to notify the District office, which shall inform the general secretary who shall then be authorized to transfer the names of such persons to the inactive list, unless the district of which said person is a member specifically requests otherwise by letter.

1. Definition. All ministers who have not been actively engaged in viable ministry and proclamation of the gospel over a period of 1 year shall have their names placed upon the inactive list for the following year.
2. Removal of inactive ministers from ministerial list. When a minister is inactive for 2 or more consecutive years, his or her name shall be eliminated from the ministerial list unless the Credentials Committee of the district of which said person is a member specifically requests otherwise by letter.
3. Exceptions. This shall not apply to those whose inactivity has been caused by the infirmity, or those engaged in other aspect of full-time ministry such as Headquarters or district workers, educators, ministers of music, ministers of youth, and ministers of Christian education; or those who have reached the age of 60 years; or those ministers who have had 25 years of approved service as credentialed ministers, or those whose spouse is disabled or has retired, giving them little opportunity for public ministry.

4. Ministers with disabilities. Ministers with permanent disability or illness which prevents them from engaging in active ministry, shall be indicated as disabled.

C. Restoration to active status. Should the minister at any time return to active ministry, his or her name may be restored to the active list upon application bearing endorsement by the district officary.

SECTION 7. SENIOR MINISTERS

In respect and honor to those ministers who have given years of service to the Fellowship, senior status shall automatically be given to all credential holders who have reached the age of 65, whether or not they continue in full-time ministry.

A. Terminology

1. The term senior-active shall be used for credential holders who continue to serve more than half-time in the ministry.
2. The term senior-semiretired shall be used for credential holders who continue to be active, but for half-time or less.
3. The term senior-retired shall be used for those who have ceased to engage in any regular appointed ministry.

B. Application for retired category. Senior-semiretired or senior-retired status shall be granted only to those ministers who filed a request for such status with their district office. The district

secretary shall forward annually to the general secretary a list of those ministers who have made these requests.

C. Guidelines

1. Reports. Senior-active and senior-semiretired ministers shall continue to file their annual reports and pay the General Council portion of their tithes in the regular manner. Senior retired ministers shall file an abbreviated report to maintain a correct address file for mail and insurance purposes.
2. Sources of income. These designations and guidelines shall apply regardless of whether the senior minister's income is from his ministry, from retirement plans or social Security payments, or from investments or other employment.
3. Designation in publications. No distinguishing mark shall accompany the listing of senior active in the official publications of the Assemblies of God, but may be so indicated in the working lists used for insurance and retirement purposes. Senior-semiretired and senior-retired ministers shall have this status indicated in the Official List of Assemblies of God Ministers.
4. Support of General Council Headquarters. Senior-active and senior-semi retired ministers shall continue to designate the required amount of support to the General Council Headquarters

as set forth in General Council Bylaws Article VII, Section 10, paragraph f.

5. Senior-retired ministers shall be free to distribute as they desire the portion of their tithes previously paid to the General Council.

D. Limitations of this Section 7

1. For General Council usage only. The definitions and decisions included in Section 7 apply only to General Council usage and are not binding upon the various districts, nor to the official legislation under which, their members serve.
2. Other financial responsibility not circumvented. No part of Section 7 is intended to modify the responsibility of ministers to their districts, nor to terminate the Biblical responsibility for tithing.

SECTION 8. MINISTERIAL RELATIONS

A. Amenability. All certified, licensed, and ordained ministers shall be amendable to both the district council and The General Council of the Assemblies of God in matters of doctrine and discipline. (See GC Bylaws Article X.) All local church credential holders shall be amenable to their local church under guidelines established by the General Presbytery and district council in matters of doctrine and discipline. (See GC Bylaws Article VII Sect. 1).

B. Affiliation with district of residence. All credential holders shall be expected to affiliate with

the District Council within the boundaries of which they reside and work in cooperation with the same.

1. Exception. Minister who resides in one district but pastors a church located in another district, he shall be required to be a member of the district in which the church is located.
2. Nationally appointed U.S. Missionaries. Nationally appointed U.S. missionaries shall become members of the district in which they serve and shall be listed on the ministerial roster of that district by the office of the general secretary. They may also retain honorary membership in their home district, be listed as a missionary under national appointment in the home district's yearbook, and be extended voice and vote in their home district while on official furlough.
3. Church-planting ministries. Ministers who serve in a trans-district ministry related to church planting efforts may do so provided:
 - a. They have a scope of ministry which reaches beyond district boundaries; and
 - b. Both districts agree to the assignment; and
 - c. If the assignment involves a language group, they follow the guidelines provided by the Executive Presbytery of the General Council and adhere to these bylaw governing inter-district relations. (See General Council Bylaws Article V, Section 6.)

- d. Church planters holding credentials may obtain affiliation with the district they intend to serve and retain honorary membership in their home district, be listed in the district's yearbook, and be extended voice and vote in their home district for such time as they serve in another district. The financial responsibilities shall be the same as those of a nationally appointed home missionary. (See General Council Bylaws Article VII, Section 8, paragraph c, subparagraph (3).

- C. Offices in the local church.** We recommend that all ministers (Ordained, Licensed, Certified Ministers) of the Mississippi District Council refrain from holding offices in the local church as deacons, trustees, or other lay official positions.
- D. Engagement of ministers.** We recommend that all our pastors and affiliated assemblies refrain from engaging any minister who is not endorsed by the Council, until they have communicated with the District Superintendent or District Secretary.
- E. Performing Ceremonies and Church Ordinances.** All ordained, licensed, and certified ministers holding current ministerial credentials are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (Sacerdotal functions) of the church.
- F. Secret orders.** All ministers must refrain from identifying themselves with any secret orders.
- G. Declaration against worldliness.** In order to strengthen the hands of our pastors and evangelists

in holding up Bible standards against popular sins, we as a body unitedly declare ourselves against all forms of worldliness, particularly against modern immodesty and extremity in dress and we all agree as pastors, evangelists, Ordained, Licensed, Certified Ministers, Christian education superintendents, and teachers, to speak the same things and voice ourselves against all forms of popular sins.

H. Ministerial courtesy. All local ministers of the Assemblies of God church shall be expected to abide by rules of ministerial courtesy as stated in these Bylaws.

I. Cooperation with other districts. Ministers shall be expected to cooperate with other district councils in which they may labor temporarily. It is recommended as a standard of proper practice that all ministers conform to the financial policy of the district with which they are affiliated with the following exceptions.

1. *Financial Responsibilities for Foreign Missionaries.* Foreign missionaries will be obligated to pay \$25 per month to their home district when resident in the US. and \$10 per month when resident on their fields.
2. *Financial Responsibility of Chaplains.* All chaplains, military and institutional, will be obligated to their home district in the amount of 10 percent of their tithes from income earned from the chaplaincy. All chaplains are also encouraged to make voluntary contributions to

the district in which they fulfill their assignments.

3. *Financial Responsibility of nationally appointed or approved home missionaries.* Nationally appointed or approved home missionaries shall contribute 25 percent of their tithe to their member district where they serve and 25 percent of their tithes to their home district if they are listed as honorary members. Missionaries who minister in their home district shall contribute a minimum of 50 percent of their tithe to that district.

SECTION 9. TRANSFER OF CREDENTIALS

A. Certificate of transfer. When a member minister takes up residence in another district, a certificate of transfer shall be issued within 60 days by the district of which he/she is a member, unless there are definite charges pending against the minister. The certificate of transfer shall be accepted by the district into which the minister moves. Exceptions may be made for the following:

1. Ministers moving to serve at the Assemblies of God headquarters.
2. Those who have attained the age of 60 and are no longer engaged in active ministry and those who have attained the age of 65 and are not pastoring a church.
3. Those who are in Armed Forces currently on active duty.

4. Those who are serving on the staffs of schools affiliated with the General Council and district council or nonaffiliated schools acceptable to the General Council and the district council in which the school is located.
5. Those who are appointed home missionaries or foreign missionaries who are on furlough or on temporary assignment in the United States and reside in a district other than their home district.
6. Ministers having membership in one district and a mailing address only in another district.
7. Students in schools outside their home districts.
8. Those who are serving in a non-Assemblies of God institution providing:
 - a. They have a regular scope of ministry which reaches beyond district boundaries.
 - b. Both districts agree to the exception.
 - c. The institution is acceptable to both districts.
9. Church planters involved in trans-district ministry.

B. Transfers from Assemblies of God World Fellowships. A minister holding ordination (or equivalent) with a member group of the Assemblies of God World Fellowship may transfer his or her ordination to The General Council of the Assemblies of God if the following criteria are met:

1. A letter of recommendation from the executive committee of the national church or equivalent letter of recommendation.
2. A course on history and polity of U.S. church.
3. A completed ministerial application.

C. Transcript. In order to assist a member who is transferring into another district, a transcript giving helpful information concerning his/her spouse should accompany the certificate of transfer.

SECTION 10. CREDENTIAL RENEWALS AND REINSTATEMENT

A. Terminology

1. Renewed. The term renewed shall apply to all ministers who have met the annual deadline for renewal including those who are delinquent but who renew by January 15.
2. Reinstated. The term reinstated shall apply to the persons whose names have been deleted from the official ministerial list, who upon application, are approved for restoration of credentials.

B. Expiration date. All fellowship certificates are valid only until December 31 of each year and must be renewed annually. The renewing of credentials is the responsibility of the individual minister. Ministers who do not receive an annual renewal form by December 1, should notify their district office.

- C. Grace period until January 15.** All who have not renewed their fellowship certificates by mail postmarked on or before December 31 shall be considered delinquent. They shall be required to pay a late fee of \$50 up until January 15, to be divided equally between the District and General Council offices.
- D. Reinstatement of lapsed Minister.** Ministers whose renewal applications are not postmarked by January 16 shall be recorded as lapsed as of December 31. They must make application for reinstatement and pay a nonrefundable fee of \$100, to be divided equally between the District and the General Council. These ministers shall not be subject to the minimal time-lapse required of those whose credentials have been terminated for other causes.
- E. Reinstatement of other than dismissed minister.** When a minister who is a member of our Fellowship is removed from our rolls for any cause, except failure to renew and dismissal, and shall apply for reinstatement, he or she shall not be eligible for reinstatement until at least 6 months have elapsed after his or her name has been stricken from our list of ministers. The application must be made in the District where the minister resides and be accompanied with a nonrefundable fee of \$100 to be divided between the District and the General Council. (See General Council Bylaws Article X, Section 12. paragraph b, for reinstatement of dismissed minister.) The District of residence shall seek a letter of clearance from the

District that processed the termination and upon receipt of the clearance, may add its endorsement and forward the application, together with the letter of clearance, to the General Council Credentials Committee for its action.

F. Support of Headquarters. The work of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, in its program of developing the spirit of cooperation and fellowship in U.S. and world missions fields, incurs considerable expense, including the financial support of the executive officers and offices.

Credentialed ministers should recognize their obligation to contribute from their tithes or as an offering the amount designated by the General Council for their particular level of credential for the support of General Council operations. All who can are strongly urged to give more than the suggested amount, either personally or through the assemblies they pastor.

Compliance with the above requirements shall be a prerequisite for renewal of credentials of all active ministers. If their contributions are in arrears, they shall be given opportunity to meet this deficit with their renewal.

The general treasurer's office shall submit to the respective district offices a semiannual report of ministers' contributions for the support of Headquarters. Each district shall make this information available to its ministers by any of the following methods:

1. Collectively, through district publications.

2. Individually, through personal letters.
3. Through any other media selected by the district.

The district shall carefully analyze the annual report of each minister and, in their knowledge of local situations, determine if he or she has been voluntarily cooperating with the General Council financial program.

SECTION 11. NONDISCIPLINARY CREDENTIAL TERMINATIONS

A. On the Initiative of the minister.

1. Lapsed. Ministers who do not renew their credentials shall be listed as lapsed, provided there is no cause for disciplinary action. Their names shall be published as lapsed in the *Assemblies of God Minister*, hereinafter referred to as the minister's letter.
2. Resigned. Ministers who elect to remove themselves from the Fellowship shall submit a letter of resignation to the district with which they are affiliated. If there is no cause for disciplinary action, their resignation shall become effective after having been approved by both the District Council and General Council credentials committees. Their termination shall be listed in the minister's letter as resigned.

B. On the initiative of the district. (See General Council Bylaws Article X, Section 4.)

1. Inactive. When a minister becomes inactive for 2 consecutive years, according to the stipulations set forth in Bylaws Article VII, Section 6, paragraph b, his or her name shall be published as inactive in the minister's letter.
2. Not renewed. If in the opinion of the credentials committees a minister's credentials should not be renewed, short of disciplinary action, the minister's name shall be published as not renewed in the minister's letter.

C. As a result of affiliation with another church organization. In the event a minister shall identify with another organization granting ministerial credentials, and shall have received such credentials, his or her credentials with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be terminated. An investigation shall be made to determine the proper category of termination.

D. Surrender of Credentials. In all cases the minister shall be requested to surrender his or her credential (Certificate of Ordination, License to Preach, Certificate of Ministry) and current fellowship card to the District Office. The District shall forward these to the office of the General Secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Refusal to surrender his or her credential and current fellowship card shall be considered insubordination and may result in placing a charge against the minister.

SECTION 12. MINISTERIAL STATUS CHANGES

All changes in a minister's status are to be reported immediately to his or her District Office, which in turn is to report this information to the office of the General Secretary of the General Council, on the Ministerial Status Report form provided by that office.

SECTION 13. PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS

Assemblies of God ministers are encouraged to respect as sacred and confidential information confided to them while they are functioning in their ministerial capacities as spiritual counselors and are encouraged not to disclose such confidential information except with the permission of the confidant, to prevent the commission of a crime, or if required by law.

GENERAL COUNCIL BYLAWS

(pages 50-72 in District Bylaws)

ARTICLE VIII. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

SECTION 1. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Marriage was established by God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18, 21-25) and confirmed by Jesus Christ to be a permanent relationship between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-6). Because marriage is not only a commitment to a spouse, but also

** * **

*accreditation status less than that of our
appropriately corresponding Assemblies of*

God institutions (whether our institute, regional university, or seminary levels).

- (2) *Attribution by the General Council. No media, ministry, department, arm, or employee of the General Council shall list, attribute, or promote for any person, any degree or title conferred by an institution or organization having, at the time of conferral, a formal accreditations status less than that of our appropriately corresponding Assemblies of God institutions (whether our institute, regional university, or seminary levels).*
- (3) *Attribution by local churches. We strongly encourage our ministers, boards, and churches to take great care to ensure that all ministers and church employees have actually earned the legitimately accredited education, training, and certification, as defined above, which they claim by their titles or degrees (such as counselor, therapist, doctor, and so on).*
- (4) *Attribution accepted. All previously earned or conferred degrees prior to August 2007, from any institution whatsoever shall be fully accepted and grandfathered in.*

b. Intentional failure to comply. *Intentional refusal to comply with this ethical standard for educational credentials constitutes perpetrating a fraud upon the church and the world,*

personally and in the good name of the Assemblies of God, and the General Council disapproves of such practices.

ARTICLE X - DISCIPLINE

SECTION 1. THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The aims of discipline are that God may be honored, that the purity and welfare of the ministry may be maintained, and that those under discipline may be brought to repentance and restoration.

Discipline is to be administered for the restoration of the minister, while fully providing for the protection of the spiritual welfare of our local assemblies. It is to be redemptive in nature as well as corrective, and is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy.

SECTION 2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DISTRICT AND GENERAL COUNCIL CREDENTIALS COMMITTEES

The Executive Presbytery of the General Council is the Credentials Committee of the General Council of the Assemblies of God. (GC Constitution Article X, Sections 4 and 6). It shall have the final authority in matters of doctrine and the personal conduct of all certified, licensed and ordained ministers. District actions related to the termination of credentials or the remedial discipline of rehabilitation are to be in the form of recommendations to the General Council Credentials Committee. All references to the discipline of ministers

within this article of the bylaws relate solely to certified, licensed, and ordained ministers.

SECTION 3. CAUSES OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Violations of Assemblies of God principles as stated in these Constitution and Bylaws may give cause for disciplinary action by the credentials committees. Among such causes for action shall be:

- a. Moral failure involving sexual misconduct.*
- b. Moral failure involving pornography.*
- c. Any moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct.*
- d. General inefficiency in the ministry.*
- e. A failure to respect our Pentecostal testimony correctly.*
- f. A contentious or non-cooperative spirit.*
- g. An assumption of dictatorial authority over an assembly.*
- h. An arbitrary rejection of district counsel.*
- i. A declared open change in doctrinal views.*
- j. Immoral, unethical, or illegal practices related to personal, church, or ministry finances.*
- k. A marriage in violation of our stand on marriage and divorce. (See Bylaws Article IX, B, Section 5, paragraphs d and e.)*

- l. Violations of ministerial courtesy. (See Bylaws Article IX, B, Section 8.)*
- m. Ministry without prior approval in a non-Assemblies of God church. (See Bylaws Article IX, B, Section 9.)*
- n. An improper attitude toward those dismissed from the Fellowship. (See Bylaws Article IX, B, section 10.)*

Notwithstanding the above, when more than 7 years have elapsed from an occurrence that is cause for disciplinary action, a district credentials committee may recommend to the General Council Credentials Committee that no discipline be administered when, in view of all the circumstances, it would appear that such discipline would only serve as punitive in nature rather than rehabilitative. In all such cases, final determination shall be made by the General Council Credentials Committee.

SECTION 4. RIGHT OF INITIATIVE

- a. Authority. Occasions sometimes arise which make it necessary to deal with ministers who for some reason seem to have reached the place where, in the opinion of the leaders, endorsement can no longer be given. Credentials committees which have the authority to ordain ministers and to recommend them for credentials also have the right to withdraw their approval and to recommend the recall of credentials.*
- b. Prior right of district. The officers of the district in which an alleged offense is reported to*

have occurred shall be recognized as having the prior right of initiative in matters of discipline.

- c. **Responsibility of district of affiliation.** If the district in which an alleged offense is reported to have occurred for some reason cannot take action, the General Council Credentials Committee shall refer the matter, together with the facts and supporting instruments, to the district with which the minister is affiliated.*
- d. **Responsibility of General Council Credentials Committee.** In the event a district falls to take action within 90 days after a matter has been referred to it, it shall be the responsibility of the General Council Credentials Committee to see that action is initiated.*

SECTION 5. INVESTIGATION OF REPORTS OR COMPLAINTS OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OR CONFESSIONS OF VIOLATIONS OF ASSEMBLIES OF GOD PRINCIPLES

- a. **Within the Districts of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.** Reports or complaints of alleged violations of Assemblies of God principles (Bylaws, Article X, Section 3) or confessions of such by a minister shall be investigated. The superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is reported to have occurred, or an appointed representative, shall conduct the investigation to determine their source and validity. It is the responsibility of the district superintendent to safeguard the church, the minister, the district, and the Fellowship. In*

the event such reports or complaints against a minister are filed with, the General Council Credentials Committee, they shall be referred to the district in which the offense occurred for investigation. A copy shall be sent to the district with which the minister is affiliated.

- (1) Interview with complainants. The persons involved shall be interviewed to ascertain the facts in the case and the reasons underlying the persistence of the reports or complaints.*
- (2) Interview with accused minister. The accused minister shall be given an opportunity to be interviewed to discuss the complaints received in the hope that the matter can be resolved.*
- (3) Signed complaints. In the event the investigation so warrants, a signed complaint shall be filed with the district office by each complainant describing the alleged offense.*
- (4) Conditions for ministry during investigation. Conditions of continuing ministry may be subject to restriction during the time of investigation at the discretion of the appropriate district officers on the basis of evidence at hand and the nature of the alleged offense. Such conditions are subject to review in 3-month intervals until such investigation has been completed resulting in either*

clearing the person of the allegations or filing formal charges.

b. *Outside United States.* *In case the alleged misconduct occurs outside the United States in an area under the general oversight of Assemblies of God World Missions, that division shall take the initiative to file complete data with the district of the minister's affiliation. Any hearing or trial affecting that individual's ministerial credentials shall be held in the district of the minister's affiliation. Assemblies of God World Missions shall convey all information available to the said district as follows:*

- (1) Report to district of affiliation. At the earliest date after Assemblies of God World Missions receives a report of misconduct, such report shall be conveyed by telephone and by letter to the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated.*
- (2) Confidential file. A confidential file shall be submitted to the superintendent, conveying all information as it becomes available to the division. A final complete file shall be prepared under the direction of the field director of the field involved and shall be presented to the district superintendent for use in any action the district may take.*
- (3) Additional information. When in the judgment of Assemblies of God World*

Missions or the district involved, basic information is lacking (which information may be available at the site of the alleged misconduct), arrangements may be made for the gathering of such.

SECTION 6. PREPARATION AND FILING OF CHARGES

If after due investigation it is determined that charges should be made, proper charges shall be prepared and filed in the district office. If no one appears to sign the charges, the district officers making the investigation may file charges based on the evidence in their possession. The person against whom charges have been filed shall be informed in writing by certified mail, at the last address furnished to the district, of the charges made in keeping with Bylaws, Article x, Section 3.

SECTION 7. DISTRICT HEARING AND DISCIPLINE

- a. **District hearing.** In the event the reports or complaints cannot be dealt with privately to the satisfaction of all concerned, the superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is said to have occurred, or the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated, shall arrange for a hearing by the district credentials committee for the accused minister. The minister shall be required to appear at the hearing in the hope the matter can be resolved.*
- b. **Forfeiture of rights of accused.** A hearing shall not be considered as final disposition of the*

case until the accused be present and be allowed all rights and privileges granted herein. However, an accused member may be found guilty of charges and disciplined for failure to appear at the hearing, or if proof is found of willful neglect to take advantage of rights and privileges provided in these Bylaws.

* * *

Committee. The minister shall be apprised officially of this right at the time notification is given to the minister of the decision of the General Council Credentials Committee. The appeal is to be sent to the office of the general superintendent, and should include any new or exculpatory information not previously considered, with copies sent to the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation and any other districts involved.

b. Consideration of appeal by the General Council Credentials Committee. *The General Council Credentials Committee may respond to the appeal in one of the following ways:*

- (1) Remanding of case to the district. If in the judgment of the General Council Credentials Committee, justice has not been served, the case shall be remanded to the district presbytery for review and reconsideration. The district shall report the results of its review to the General Council Credentials Committee for final disposition.*

(2) *Denial of appeal.*

- (a) *Forfeiture of right of appeal. No appeal shall be granted by remanding the case to the district presbytery if proof is found of willful neglect on the part of the accused to take advantage of available rights and privileges during the district hearing (see Section 5, 6, & 7 of this Article).*
- (b) *Insufficient grounds. The General Council Credentials Committee shall have the prerogative to determine whether there is sufficient cause to grant an appeal, and remand the case to the district.*

c. *Right of appeal to the General Presbytery.*

- (1) *A disciplined minister whose appeal has been denied by the General Council Credentials Committee may appeal to the General Presbytery. An accused minister shall have 30 days from the date notification of the General Council Credentials Committee's decision was mailed to appeal to the General Presbytery. The appeal is to be sent to the office of the general superintendent, and must include new exculpatory information, with copies sent to the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation and any other districts*

involved. The decision of the General Presbytery shall be final.

- (2) *A district may appeal a decision of the Executive Presbytery to the General Presbytery. The decision of the General Presbytery shall be final.*

SECTION 11. PUBLICATION OF DISMISSAL

No publication of a dismissed minister's name shall be made until the district has been advised by the office of the general secretary that such has been authorized by the General Council Credentials Committee. An additional 30 days from the date of the notification shall be given the dismissed minister to exercise the right of appeal.

SECTION 12. REINSTATEMENT OF CREDENTIALS

- a. Authorization.** *Application for reinstatement may be made through the district council within which territory the applicant resides. The application shall be considered subject to the approval of the district in which the termination was made.*
- b. Minimal time-lapse for dismissed ministers.** *The minimal time-lapse required before a minister who has been dismissed is eligible for reinstatement shall be 1 year, except it shall be 2 years for a minister who has been dismissed because of charges as stated in Bylaws, Article X, Section 3, paragraph a. The time-lapse shall be computed from the date of the district presbytery*

action as it appears on the ministerial status report filed with the General Council Credentials Committee. (See Bylaws, Article VII, Section 10, for other renewals and reinstatements.)

- c. **Rehabilitation obligatory.** When a minister has been dismissed from our Fellowship and applies for reinstatement, he or she shall comply with the procedures for rehabilitation outlined in Section 8, paragraph c, of this Article.*
- d. **Option to refer to General Presbytery.** The General Council Credentials Committee may also hold the reinstatement of a minister's credentials in abeyance until the next session of the General Presbytery in order that the General Presbytery may have the opportunity to review the case, in which event the matter of reinstatement of such minister may be left entirely with that body.*
- e. **Reinstatement fee.** When applying for reinstatement the minister must include a \$100 reinstatement fee with the*

* * *

SECTION 2. CHANGES IN BOUNDARY LINES

Proposed changes in sectional boundary lines shall be endorsed by the District Presbytery and submitted to the constituency thirty days prior to the date at which the proposed change is to be voted upon.

SECTION 3. SECTIONAL COUNCILS

- A.** The Sectional Councils shall be held within the boundary lines of each section on uneven years.
- B.** Each officer is to be voted on separately, beginning with the Presbyter.

ARTICLE XIX--LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

SECTION 1. GENERAL COUNCIL AFFILIATED

It will be the responsibility of the district presbytery to determine when an assembly has reached a state of growth, stability, and maturity qualifying it for affiliation with the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Qualifications shall include a minimum acting voting membership of 20 persons. In cases where there are fewer than 20 voting members, an exception may be granted by the District, in compliance with General Presbytery policy, and provided that the church has demonstrated the capacity for self-governance. The assembly shall have matured to a point where a sufficient number of qualified persons are available for the offices called for in its constitution and bylaws.

The procedure for affiliation shall be:

- A.** A church desiring affiliation shall forward its request to the office of the district in which it is located. The district council shall provide an approved application form and procedural instructions.
- B.** The meeting in which an assembly shall be set in order shall be presided over by an officer of the district who shall assist the assembly in the

adoption of a constitution and bylaws acceptable to the district.

- C. An existing, mature church that desires to affiliate with The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall apply to the office of the district council for guidance and assistance.
- D. Upon approval by the district presbytery, the application for affiliation shall be forwarded to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Recognition of affiliation shall occur upon receipt by the assembly of an official Certificate of Affiliation issued by the general secretary.

SECTION 2. ANNUAL REPORT FROM ASSEMBLIES

Each church of the Assemblies of God is requested to keep a current record of its membership and to report this information annually, on forms provided, to the office of the district secretary and the General Council secretary.

SECTION 3. SAFEGUARDING THE ASSEMBLIES

- A. Pastors and leaders of assemblies should make proper investigation of persons who seek to gain entrance to teach, minister, or pastor. Use of the platform should be denied until spiritual integrity and reliability have been determined. It is recommended that Assemblies of God churches use Assemblies of God ministers since the use of non-Assemblies of God ministers may bring confusion and problems detrimental to the Fellowship.

- B. No minister dismissed by the Assemblies of God may be allowed to pastor or have ministry in an Assemblies of God church. Pastors and district officials should maintain an exchange of information regarding dismissed ministers known to be seeking ministry in our assemblies.

SECTION 4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHURCHES, DISTRICT COUNCILS, AND THE GENERAL COUNCIL

- A. Nature. General Council affiliated churches are deemed to be sovereign, autonomous, self-governing, and self-determining bodies which have, by their sovereign, self-determining action in making application for and receiving recognition as a General Council affiliated church, entered into an agreement with the Fellowship to be amenable to the General Council and district council in matters of doctrine and conduct. (See GC Constitution Article XI, Sect. 1, d.)
- B. Relationships. *Cooperative Fellowship* describes both the relationship that exists between local churches and their relationships with the district councils and the General Council.
- C. Organizational assistance. The services of both the General Council and district council are available to assist the General Council affiliated church in dealing with any of its problems, either internal or external, when requested by the pastor or a majority of the official board of the church or a petition signed by 30 percent of the voting members.

D. Preservation of affiliation. In the event the termination of affiliation with the General Council of the Assemblies of God is under consideration by an affiliated assembly, the pastor or board shall invite the district officers to participate in a specially called business meeting for the express purpose of giving the district officers the opportunity to present the case for continued General Council affiliation. Final disposition of the matter may then proceed in accordance with the constitution and bylaws of the local church.

E. District Supervision

1. An assembly may be declared under District Supervision due to existing confusion therein, inability to govern itself, unable to secure or retain a pastor, danger of property loss, division of membership, imposed leadership, unscriptural teachings or practice, or divisive conditions.
2. The District Supervision is understood to be an emergency action to safeguard and preserve the church and its rightful and scriptural activities until the adverse condition is corrected.

SECTION 5. GUIDELINES FOR MINIMAL MEMBERSHIP FOR GENERAL COUNCIL AFFILIATED ASSEMBLIES

If a General Council affiliated church is unable to meet any of the criteria for affiliation as set forth in the Constitution, Article XI, Section 3, a, it shall seek the assistance of the district officers for help in maintaining the minimal requirement for General

Council affiliation. The district may use any means prescribed by its bylaws to assist the church in returning to a position of strength. If the minimal requirements have not been attained, the church shall revert to district affiliated status until the minimal requirements for General Council affiliation have been attained or an exception has been granted in accordance with Article XI, Section 3., Paragraph B., 3.

SECTION 6. DISTRICT AFFILIATED CHURCHES

A. Procedure to Become District Affiliated.

1. Local groups desiring recognition and affiliation as members of the Mississippi District Council may apply to the District through the Presbyter of the section in which they are located.
2. The Superintendent or Sectional Presbyter, or someone they may appoint, shall conduct a business meeting with the group to determine its qualifications for District affiliation.
3. The group may be received into the Mississippi District Council of the Assemblies of God fellowship (by the Superintendent and Sectional Committee) if it meets the requirements in doctrine, practice, cooperation and Bylaws, and agrees to be governed thereby. Refusal to accept the group may be determined by the Superintendent and Sectional Committee.
4. A New Church Opened Form, furnished by the District Office, shall be completed at the time the group is accepted into the District Council fellowship.

5. Assistance shall be given to the church by the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter for the selection of church officers, a pastor, and other business matters, as needed.

B. Rights and Privileges

1. A District affiliated church shall have the right to own its own property, elect its official board and officers, call its pastor, and such like important matters. However, this liberty shall in no wise be used to flaunt or contradict the General Council or District Council Constitution and Bylaws, or standard of doctrine and practice, or lower the same, or violate the spirit of fellowship in the Council.
2. The District affiliated assembly may have representation at the District Council, and Sectional Council meetings, by one lay delegate. Such delegate shall be able to interpret and represent the desires of his/her assembly, and shall be entitled to full speaking and voting privileges at the Council. Such delegate shall be furnished a letter of authorization by his/her assembly, as its representative in the Council.
3. District Council affiliated assemblies shall be encouraged to proceed to the status of sovereign General Council affiliated assemblies.
4. A District affiliated church shall not have the right to sell its own property without written consent of the District Executive Presbytery.

C. District Supervised

1. An assembly may be declared under District Supervision due to existing confusion therein, ineligibility to govern itself, unable to secure or retain a pastor, danger of property loss, division of membership, imposed leadership, unscriptural teachings or practice, or divisive conditions.
2. The District Supervision is understood to be an emergency action to safeguard and preserve the church and its rightful and scriptural activities until the adverse condition is corrected.

SECTION 7. PARENT AFFILIATED CHURCHES (PAC)

- A. All sovereign churches desiring multiple meeting sites which result in distinct congregations from the Parent congregation shall complete all necessary paperwork (applications) required by the General and/or District Councils.
- B. If the PAC is approved it becomes the sole responsibility (legal, financial and organizational) of the Parent Church and reported by the Parent Church in its Annual Church Ministries Report (ACMR).
- C. The PAC shall have no delegate recognized at the District Council nor will credentialed staff unless their credential is registered with the Mississippi District.

**SECTION 8. DISTRICT SUPERVISED
CHURCHES/POLICY FOR DISTRICT
SUPERVISED CHURCHES**

A. Defined

1. An assembly that is subject to the District Officiary for guidance and supervision in all matters, including its transactions, legal or otherwise, elections or appointments and operational affairs. It shall not have the authority to sell, lease, rent, alter or dispose of any church property, real or chattel, without the written consent of the District Superintendent.
2. When a church is declared under District Supervision the Official Board of the Assembly and all offices and positions are thereby vacated, with the exception of the pastorate, and the District recommended "Constitution and bylaws for local churches" shall become the governing document.
3. The assembly shall not conduct any business such as the election of officers, Members may be received as approved by the District Superintendent and sectional committee.

B. Reasons for District Supervision

1. An assembly may be declared under District Supervision due to existing confusion therein, inability to govern itself, unable to secure or retain a pastor, danger of property loss, division of membership, imposed leadership,

unscriptural teachings or practice, or divisive conditions.

2. The District Supervision is understood to be an emergency action to safeguard and preserve the church and its rightful and scriptural activities until the adverse condition is corrected.

C. Declarations of District Supervision

1. The declaration of District Supervision may be made in person by the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyterian of the section in which the church is located, or by a letter to the pastor, church secretary, or official board from the District Superintendent.
2. The pastor, majority of church board, or 30% of membership of the assembly may make request to the District Superintendent or Sectional Presbyterian for District Supervision for its protection or any good and valid reason, such as prevailing conditions as stated in section 7, B, I.
3. There shall be a proper investigation by the sectional committee who shall make a recommendation to the District Superintendent as to what action if any should be taken. It is recommended that any investigation utilizing polls, surveys, etc., not include an expression of the congregation's desire regarding District Supervision.
4. In case of an emergency, a church may be declared under District Supervision by the District Superintendent, if in the course of a

business meeting, or at any time a state of confusion or conditions exist, so as to interrupt, interfere with, or to make difficult, the progress of the meeting. The Sectional Presbyter shall be informed when a church is placed under District Supervision by emergency action.

D. Procedures for District Supervision

1. The proper channel of communication is through the Presbyter, who shall keep the Superintendent informed and seek the Superintendent's recommendations.
2. Any specific course of action shall have the unanimous agreement of the participating sectional officers and the District Superintendent. Should a unanimous agreement not be possible the other members of the Executive Presbyters shall be consulted, and a majority vote of the participating sectional officers and Executive Presbytery shall prevail. In the event of a tie vote, a majority decision of the Executive Presbytery shall prevail.

E. Appointments

1. The District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter shall interview and appoint the pastor.
 - a. The office of pastor during District Supervision shall not be vacated except by resignation or majority vote of the sectional committee and District Superintendent. In the event of moral failure or violation of

ministerial ethics, the applicable District and General Council Bylaws shall apply.

- b. Votes of confidence or other expressions regarding the pastor shall not be permitted during District Supervision.
2. There shall be no official board. A steering committee may be appointed by the District Superintendent from names selected by the sectional committee at the discretion of the Superintendent, the congregation may express itself in the selection of committee members from nominees presented by the sectional committee.
3. All other officers shall meet the qualifications for office as set forth in the recommended Constitution and Bylaws for local churches and shall be selected in the manner described in item 2 above.

F. Reporting and Pastor Amenability

1. The pastor shall submit a written report monthly, on the church status financially, attendance, etc., to the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyterian on the form furnished by the District Office.
2. The pastor is amenable to the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyterian in all matters of the church's operation.
3. The pastor shall clear any proposed new courses of action, programs, or changes with the

sectional committee. If the plans are of major consequence, the sectional committee shall consult with the Superintendent through the Presbyter.

G. Rights and Privileges

1. The pastor or official board shall have the right to appeal the action of District Supervision to the District Executive Presbytery and District Presbytery Board.
2. The District Supervised church may have representation at the District Council and Sectional Council meetings by one lay delegate. Such delegate shall be able to interpret and represent the desires of his/her assembly and shall be entitled to full speaking and voting privileges at the Council. Such delegate shall be furnished a letter of authorization by his/her assembly as its representative in the Council.

H. Transition from District Supervision

1. When conditions for which cause the assembly was placed under District Supervision have been corrected as determined by the Sectional Committee and District Superintendent and the requirements and qualifications of the District Council Constitution and Bylaws are met, the assembly may be allowed to return to its former status of sovereignty or District Affiliation.
2. The return of the assembly to the desired status may be initiated by the District Superintendent, Sectional Committee, pastor, or church.

SECTION 9. GOVERNMENT

- A.** (See Constitution Article XI, Section 3 E. See also Recommended Constitution and Bylaws in this book.)
- B.** Optional Church Governance Models that have been approved by the District Presbytery Board are available.

SECTION 10. NEW ASSEMBLIES

- A.** The planting of new churches shall be a priority goal of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Resources at all levels shall be aligned to accomplish this purpose. Initiative for establishing new churches and the oversight of those churches may emanate from local assemblies, sections, and district councils. District presbyteries, sectional committees, or the authorities within a district charged with the responsibility of approving new churches shall not prohibit the planting of new churches unless a compelling reason exists. If it is determined that a compelling reason exists, a minister or local church desiring to plant the church shall have the right to appeal to their district presbytery or authorities within a district charged with the responsibility of approving new churches, and the decision of the district may be appealed to the General Council Executive Presbytery whose decision shall be final.
- B.** All ministers desiring to begin new churches shall be required to consult the Home Missions Director and Sectional Committee of that respective Section. He is to work in accord with all concerned. Failure

to abide by this policy may affect the standing of the minister in the District. (See Article XVII, Section 2. Home Missions)

SECTION 11. ASSEMBLIES RESULTING FROM A DIVISION

- A. Status of assembly.** When efforts to maintain unity and harmony in an assembly have failed, and a division results in a new congregation being formed, the district should exercise strong and wise leadership in ascertaining the facts and seek to preserve Assemblies of God adherents for the Fellowship. Within the bounds of ethical principles, sound doctrine, and district policy, all districts should seek to retain any meritorious group within the Assemblies of God.
- B. Status of minister.** Circumstances in each case will determine whether the minister should be disciplined or denied ministry in either the original church or the dissident group, or even residency in the area where the division occurred. If a minister is guilty of inappropriate conduct resulting in a division, the district presbytery shall deal appropriately with the minister as provided in Article X, Section 3, of the General Council Bylaws.

SECTION 12. TRANSFER OF LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- A. Letter of introduction.** It is recommended that members request a letter of introduction from the church of which they are a member to be sent by mail to the church with which they desire to affiliate.

B. Acknowledgment of transfer. It is recommended that the receiving church shall give an acknowledgment of transfer to the former church.

SECTION 13. CHURCH PROPERTY

A. Deeds

1. The following form may be used in deeding church property to the Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God in conformity with District Constitution and Bylaws.

WARRANTY DEED

FOR AND IN CONSIDERATION of the sum of Ten Dollars (\$10.00), cash in hand paid, and other good, legal and valuable considerations, the receipt and sufficiency of all of which is hereby acknowledged, I/we _____ hereby sell, convey and warrant unto MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNCIL ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, a Mississippi non-profit corporation, the following land and property lying and being situated in _____ County, Mississippi, and being more particularly described as follows:
(legal description)

There is excepted from the warranty hereof all protective covenants, easements and prior mineral reservations of record.

WITNESS the signature(s) of the Grantor(s), this the _____ day of _____, 20____.
(Signature)

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

COUNTY OF _____

Personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority in and for the aforesaid jurisdiction, the within named _____ who acknowledge that _____ he/she/they signed and delivered the above and foregoing Warranty Deed on the day and year therein mentioned for the purposes therein expressed.

WITNESS MY HAND and official seal of office, this the _____ day of _____, 20____

My Commission Expires:
Notary Public

2. The following form may be used in deeding church property to the local Assembly of God in conformity with District Constitution and Bylaws

WARRANTY DEED

FOR AND IN CONSIDERATION of the sum of Ten Dollars (\$10.00), cash in hand paid, and other good, legal and valuable considerations, the receipt and sufficiency of all of which is hereby acknowledged,

I/we _____ (names)

hereby sell, convey and warrant unto _____ and _____ Trustees for _____
(name of church)

_____ Mississippi, and their successors in office, (in trust nevertheless, for the use and benefit of such local church and of the Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God), the following land and property lying and being situated in _____ County, Mississippi, and being more particularly described as follows:

(Legal Description)

The property described shall be used for worship, according to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God, within the State of Mississippi. In the event said property should cease to be used for such purposes due to lack of membership, or in the event the congregation should sever its affiliation with the Assemblies of God organization, the members of the District Presbytery of said Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God organization shall become successor trustees (with all powers under the right Uniform Trustees' Powers Act of Mississippi) and shall have the right to use and hold said property and dispose of same for the furtherance of the Gospel within the District.

Excepted from the warranty hereof are all restrictive covenants, right-of-ways, easements and mineral reservations of record pertaining to said property.

WITNESS the signature(s) of the Grantor(s), this the ____ day of _____, 20_, A.D.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF _____

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THIS DAY PERSONALLY appeared before me, the undersigned authority in and for the State and County aforesaid _____ and _____ who acknowledged that he signed, executed and delivered the above and foregoing instrument of writing on the day and year therein mentioned.

APPENDIX G

**APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION
AS A GENERAL COUNCIL AFFILIATED
CHURCH WITH THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF
THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD**

[Dated November 7, 1988]

Whereas, The Gulf Coast Worship Center,

Located in the City of Long Beach, County of Harrison
and State of Mississippi, has in a duly called meeting
held this 7th day of November, 1988, declared its
intention to share in the privileges extended to General
Council Affiliated Churches, and for the purpose of
cooperating with other Assemblies of like precious faith
in assuming the responsibilities incidental thereto, as
set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of the General
Council, and the Constitution and Bylaws of the
Assemblies of God District Council, we whose names
appear on the assembly membership records as
members in good standing, do hereby make application
to the Executive Presbytery of The General Council of
the Assemblies of God for recognition as a General
Council Affiliated Assembly.

Location of Church Simmons and 28th St.

Street or Rural Route

Mailing Address for Church P.O. Box 624, Long Beach,
Ms. 39560 Church Phone 868-9500

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Number of Members 97 Attendance Sunday Morning
Service 250

Attendance Sunday Night Service 200

Status of this church prior to this action:

District Affiliated Church ☒ Independent ☐ Other ☐

In latter case state previous affiliation _____

Name of Pastor Eugene H. Hassler

Address of Pastor 2006 W. 2nd St., Long Beach, Ms.
39560

Status of Pastor: Ordained X Licensed ____ Christian
Worker ____

Name of Church Secretary Clara Young

Name of Deacons

George L. Young, Ronald Weatherly and Wallace Cook
(at least three men required)

Name of Trustees

Charles Benefield, E.L. McKay and Robert Anderson
(at least three required)

Name of Sunday School Superintendent N/A

/s/ Eugene H. Hassler

Signature of Pastor

/s/ Clara Young

Signature of Church Secretary

/s/ Walter L. [illegible]

Signature of Presiding Officer

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Endorsement by
Mississippi District Council

/s/ Walter L. [illegible]

Signed by Superintendent or ~~Secretary (strike out one)~~

*NOTE: This application form should be filled out in triplicate. Two Copies are to be sent to the District Office for endorsement accompanied by a fee of \$5.00 to cover the cost of processing application and issuing of a certificate of affiliation. The third copy is to be retained for the permanent records of the church. The District Office shall forward one copy, together with the \$5.00 fee, to the office of the General Secretary, which shall issue a certificate of affiliation and the official letter of affiliation. These should be preserved as a part of the permanent records of the church. Names of the charter members should be listed on the reverse side of this application.

(over)

General Council Form No. AA—11.75

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ROSTER

<u>Audrey Allen</u>	<u>Eugene Gervais</u>
<u>Bobby Anderson</u>	<u>Ida Gervais</u>
<u>Robert Anderson</u>	<u>Helen Giadrosich</u>
<u>Emma Atkinson</u>	<u>Rev. Eugene H. Hassler</u>
<u>Blanche Ashe</u>	<u>Billy Hassler</u>
<u>Betty Jo Baker</u>	<u>Joyce Hassler</u>
<u>David B. Baker</u>	<u>Carolyn Leigh Hosch</u>
<u>Patricia Barnett</u>	<u>Wm. Carl Hosch, Jr.</u>
<u>Charles W. Benefield</u>	<u>Darla Kinsey</u>
<u>Wanda Lee Benefield</u>	<u>Jesse L. Kinsey</u>
<u>Barbara Boughton</u>	<u>John P. Kinsey</u>
<u>Joseph A. Boughton</u>	<u>Irene Kinsey</u>
<u>Katie Ruth Bottin</u>	<u>Lewis E. Kinsey</u>
<u>Ethelyn Brady</u>	<u>Melvina L. Kinsey</u>
<u>Charlotte Ann Bryson</u>	<u>Michelle L. Kinsey</u>
<u>Larry Dale Bryson</u>	<u>Richard W. Kinsey</u>
<u>Larry Dale Bryson</u>	<u>Bobbie Ladner</u>
<u>Mavis Irene Byrd</u>	<u>James Alvin Landess</u>
<u>Cathy Carr</u>	<u>Ruth Landess</u>
<u>Nancy Chatman</u>	<u>Steve Landess</u>

Wallace Cook

Sylvia Landess

Carolyn Damiens

Ruth Latimer

Marcy Ann Derby

Gladys M. Lawton

Paleen Dyess

Deanna M. Little

Fred Fayard

Thomas W. Little

Mary Fayard

Patrick McCaffrey

Mildred Frieze

Sarah McCaffrey

Alfred E. Garrett

Billy Clyde McDaniel

Barbara J. Garrett

Della Melbia McDaniel

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APPENDIX H

**THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD
1445 BOONVILLE AVENUE
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI 65802**

JOSEPH R. FLOWER	TELEPHONE
GENERAL SECRETARY	(417) 862-2781

December 2, 1988

Gulf Coast Worship Center
Long Beach, Mississippi

Dear Friends:

Greetings in the name of Christ our Lord!

In view of the action taken by your congregation at the meeting held November 7, 1988, we hereby officially recognize the Gulf Coast Worship Center, Long Beach, Mississippi, as one of the local assemblies duly affiliated in the cooperative fellowship of THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD.

It is recognized that the local assembly has the right of representation in all District meetings. It is also to be understood that this action on the part of the church, with this accompanying official recognition, gives to the local assembly the right of representation in all General Council meetings, and it is urged that the congregation send its pastor and one delegate to such meetings.

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May the Lord bless and prosper you in Him.

/s/ Joseph R. Flower

Joseph R. Flower, General Secretary

This letter to be attached
to and become a part of
your records.

APPENDIX I

**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF HINDS**

[Filed May 15, 2020]

AFFIDAVIT OF DEREK YOUNGBLOOD

This date personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority at law in and for the jurisdiction aforesaid, the within named Derek Youngblood, who being by me first duly sworn according to law states on oath:

1. I am over the age of majority, understand and believe in the obligation of an oath and am fully competent in all respects to give testimony under oath. I offer the following testimony based on my own first-hand knowledge.

2. I have as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God since June 8, 2008.

3. The Assemblies of God is a hierarchal religious organization with three levels of governance: General Council (highest authority); District Council (regional authority); and local assemblies (local authority depending on organizational status).

4. As Secretary/Treasurer, I am the custodian of all records of the District Council and General Council documents governing the District.

5. I served as a delegate to the 56th Session of the General Council Assemblies of God held on August 3-7, 2015. The document attached as Exhibit "E" to the Amended Complaint filed in this action is a true and correct copy of the Constitution and Bylaws adopted at that session, effective on March 16, 2017.

6. Historic forms and documents in the files such as "New Churches Opened" forms and similar documents are kept by the District Council in the ordinary course of business and relied upon to provide an accurate history of the assemblies in the District.

7. Historic file briefs and memos prepared by previous District officials are kept by the District Council in the ordinary course of business and relied upon to provide an accurate history of the assemblies in the District.

8. In my capacity as District Council Secretary/Treasury, I send a "Yearbook" to each assembly in the District every year. These Yearbooks include a full copy of the District's Constitution and Bylaws. A bylaw change in 2015 resulted in the Constitution and Bylaws being posted on the District website rather than in printed form. Since that change, I have posted a current accurate version of the District's Constitution and Bylaws on the website within 60 days following the annual meeting of the District Council.

9. Exhibit "1" to my affidavit is a true and correct copy of the District's Constitution and Bylaws as of March 16, 2017.

10. As a General Council affiliated assembly, Gulf Coast Worship Center was entitled to send a delegate to District and General Council sessions. According to the records kept by the District, Gulf Coast Worship Center received monetary assistance from the District Council of \$15,500.00 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to assist the assembly in recovering from damages it incurred.

11. I was present for a meeting with Kevin Beachy on February 15, 2017 wherein he stated that he would not renew his pastor credentials. Knowing that this decision had implications for the church, I and the District Superintendent reminded Mr. Beachy that any attempt to disaffiliate required that the district be given the opportunity to speak at a properly-noticed meeting of the congregation in order to argue against disaffiliation.

12. Exhibit "F" to the Amended Complaint is a true and correct copy of a letter I wrote and sent to Kevin Beachy on January 12, 2017.

13. The District was not provided notice of the March 19, 2017 meeting conducted by Beachy and others.

/s/ Derek Youngblood
Derek Youngblood

SWORN TO AND SCRIBED before me, this the 15th
day of May, 2020.

[NOTARY SEAL]

/s/ Virginia A. Sisk
Notary Public

APPENDIX J

MSAG
lead | assist | build | resource

Bob Wilburn
District Superintendent

March 16, 2017

Rev. Kevin Beachy
Gulf Coast Worship Center
PO Box 624
Long Beach, MS 39560

Dear Kevin,

This letter is a follow-up to our conversation yesterday, March 15, 2017, in which you informed me that your Board of Elders has determined to pursue a course of action to disaffiliated Gulf Coast Worship Center from its parent organization, the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

Kevin, based on your church's original agreement as a sovereign church to be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of the General and District Council, this decision sets in motion actions dictated by these documents that you will need to consider. In that you entered a mutual agreement with the Assemblies of God, disaffiliation is not your decision alone, but one that involves the District as the local representative of the parent organization. The Constitution requires that

the Representatives of the district be allowed to address your congregation to state its case for continued affiliation. This would need to be announced for two weeks as any official meeting would.

It is not our desire to be contentious where this matter is concerned, but this church's history is connected to the Assemblies of God; its founders were Assembly of God people; the church has been assisted financially by the Assemblies of God. For over 30 years, this church existed without any thought of existence apart from the Assemblies of God. Your decision would silence that voice in the community, and we would virtually have to start at ground zero to begin another work in the area.

Lastly, your personal decision to not renew your credential has undermined the basis of your church's sovereignty (General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 1,a, (6)). This letter serves notice that we hereby reclassify you as a District Supervised assembly and under the guidance of the District Council.

Please contact my office at your earliest convenience to set a date for our visit. Again, our desire is to work this matter out in the spirit of Christian charity. May the Lord grant us all His wisdom and help.

With warmest regards,

/s/ Bob Wilburn
Bob Wilburn

BW/tty

Cc: Jeff Fillmore
Darrell Worley

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Mississippi Assemblies of God
5360 I-55 S. Frontage Road
P.O. Box. 720309
Byram, MS 39272
(601) 373-1943 ext 13
(601) 371-0486 fax
bob.wilburn@msdistrictag.com

APPENDIX K

MSAG
lead | assist | build | resource

Bob Wilburn
District Superintendent

May 31, 2017

Rev. Kevin Beachy
Gulf Coast Worship Center
PO Box 624
Long Beach, MS 39560

Dear Kevin,

Gulf Coast Worship Center was reclassified as a District Supervised Assembly on March 16, 2017, under Article XIX, Section 6, of the District Council Bylaws. In accordance with the provisions set forth for District Supervised Assemblies (Article XIX, Section 8 of the District Council Bylaws), I am asking that you immediately give notice in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws for Local Assemblies specified by the District Council Bylaws of a special called business meeting for the congregation of Gulf Coast Worship Center. You should announce the following agenda:

- I. Announce and explain that Gulf Coast Worship Center was reclassified as a District Supervised Assembly under the District

Council Constitution and Bylaws and as a District Affiliated Assembly under General Council Constitution and Bylaws and in accordance therewith all offices and positions other than Pastor were vacated, that the Constitution and Bylaws for Local Assemblies specified by the District Council Bylaws is now the governing document of Gulf Coast Worship Center and that Gulf Coast Worship Center operates under the authority of the Sectional Committee, District Superintendent and District Presbytery.

- II. Announce that actions taken at the 3/19/17 annual business meeting are null and void due to reclassification of the Assembly and lack of consent by District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter.
- III. Announce District Officer's investigation and Sectional Committee's investigation.
- IV. Announce approval by the District Presbytery of the removal of the Pastor and the appointment of a new Pastor, based on unanimous approval of Section Committee and District Superintendent.
- V. Announce appointment of new Pastor.
- VI. Provide opportunity for any members not desiring to remain as members of Gulf Coast Worship Center to sign a list of resigning members of Gulf Coast Worship Center.

- VII. Provide opportunity for resigning members to stay or depart the meeting at their discretion.
- VIII. Announce that Gulf Coast Worship Center shall not conduct any business without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter.
- IX. Announce intent of Mississippi District Council to avoid the loss of the Assembly as a ministry in the area and to restore the Assembly to sovereignty and confirm the willingness of Mississippi District Council to take all necessary steps to complete the restoration of Gulf Coast Worship Center.

I am asking that you respond to this request at the next available opportunity and to report to me no later than Monday June 12, 2017 as to when the congregational meeting will be held so that the District officers may be in attendance to conduct the meeting.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bob Wilburn
Bob Wilburn
District Superintendent

BW/tty Mississippi Assemblies of God
5360 I-55 S. Frontage Road
P.O. Box. 720309
Byram, MS 39272
(601) 373-1943 ext 2
(601) 371-0486 fax
bwilburn@msaog.org

APPENDIX L

MALCOLM F. JONES

Attorney at Law
P. O. Box 908
Gulfport, MS 39502

October 10, 2017

Hon. Lisa A. Reppeto
Jones Walker
P. O. Box 427
Jackson, MS 39205

RE: Gulf Coast Church

In regard to the above subject and confirming our telephone conversation on September 29, 2017, please be advised that after the service on this past Sunday the Board of Directors/Trustees spoke to the congregation through a spokesman concerning the AG District Council's demand to hold a Special Business Meeting on October 1, 2017, to notify the congregation for the purposes you outlined in the Notice attached to your email to me dated September 8, 2017. The Board's spokesman also advised the congregation that they did not accept the District Council's position that our Church had previously been lawfully placed under "District Supervision" because none of the basis outlined in the Bylaws existed at the time the AG attempted to declare its decision in this regard. There certainly was no direct communication with the Board prior to such declaration. The Board's spokesman also

advised that it was their position that the Directors/Trustees' positions had not been vacated due to the unilateral actions of Pastor Beachy. The Board advised that the Church continued to maintain its status as General Council Affiliated Church because our Church never lost its status as a "sovereign, autonomous, self-governing and self-determining body".

The Board of Trustees also notified the congregation that they believed our Board and Church had previously called a lawful business meeting of the Church congregation on March 19, 2017 and that at that time the requisite number of the active members present and voting decided to and did disaffiliate from the Assembly of God General and District Council. Initially, the Board thought that the District Superintendant and the AG District leadership wanted to come to another business meeting and address the congregation "for the express purpose of giving the district officers the opportunity to present the case for the continued General Council affiliation" as outlined in the Bylaws. However, the position expressed by you as legal counsel for the District Council has consistently been that our local Church Board had no authority to act and our Church congregation as a General Council Affiliated Church has forfeited its sovereign authority to disaffiliate from the AG General/District Council. Your client's position has been clear that the AG District Council has taken over and a new pastor that we do not know has been appointed with no input from our Church Board or congregation.

Based upon the overwhelming support of the congregation and based upon much prayer with serious and thoughtful consideration of their actions and consequences the Board and the Church Congregation have decided that they do not wish to hold another business meeting to reconsider its decision of disaffiliation. This decision is based in part upon the position of the District Council that the Church has given up its most important right of self-governance by its Board members that they know and elected. The Board and the Church have also decided that they declined the District Council's demand to hold a special business meeting on October 1, 2017, for the District Council to introduce a new pastor, which our Church does not accept.

I have recently spoken to each Board member about this matter and they have informed me that have each communicated with the active members of our Church about this decision to disaffiliate. The Board has informed me both individually and as group that they are unified in their position in this regard.

Through much prayer we were hoping for a resolution of this matter that would not amount to disagreement with the General and District Council so that the spiritual comfort and growth of our congregation would not be distracted or diminished during these difficult times we face in society today. Nevertheless, this is the path our Board and congregation believe our God and Savior have placed us upon and we earnestly believe we must follow. I hope the AG District Council leadership will consider this as spiritual leaders in making their decision as to how to next proceed.

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Sincerely,

/s/ Malcolm F. Jones

Malcolm F. Jones

APPENDIX M

**IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HARRISON
COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

CAUSE NO. 17-cv-02624-CB

[Filed November 20, 2019]

MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNSEL)
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD)
PLAINTIFF)
)
v.)
)
KEVIN BEACHY, LESTER PAUL BENNETT;)
KRIS WILLIAMS; RICHARD (RICK))
FORTICH; EDDIE KINSEY; ANDRE MULET;)
JAMES PAGAN; and JOHN DOES 1-20)
DEFENDANTS)

**AMENDED PETITION FOR
DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God files this Second Amended Petition for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief and in support of the same would show:

Parties

1. Mississippi District Council Assemblies of God (the “District”) is a non-profit corporation formed under the laws of Mississippi, in good standing and authorized to conduct business in the State of Mississippi.

2. Kevin Beachy (“Beachy”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 13251 Tyler Lane, Gulfport, Mississippi 39503-9606, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

3. Lester Paul Bennett (“Bennett”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 1121 John Evans Drive, Gulfport, Mississippi 39507-3658, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

4. Kris Williams (“Williams”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 218 South 24th Avenue, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401-6028, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

5. Richard (Rick) Fortich (“Fortich”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 1819 24th Avenue, Gulfport, Mississippi 39501-2974, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

6. Eddie Kinsey (“Kinsey”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 2101 24th Avenue, Gulfport, Mississippi

39501-4602, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

7. Andre Mulet (“Mulet”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 612 Charleston Lane, Long Beach, Mississippi 39560-3911, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

8. James Pagan (“Pagan”) is an adult resident of Mississippi and may be served with process of this court at 7 Linda Lane, Long Beach, Mississippi 39560-4015, or such other place in the State of Mississippi in which he may be found.

9. John Does 1-20 are individuals whose identities as of this date unknown to the Plaintiff.

Jurisdiction

10. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to Miss. Const. Art. 6 §§ 159, 160 and Miss. Code Ann. § 9-5-81 because this action seeks injunctive relief and enforcement of a real property lease.

11. Venue is appropriate in this action pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 11-5-1 because one or more of the defendants reside in Harrison County, Mississippi. .

12. This court has personal jurisdiction over the Defendants because all are residents of the state of Mississippi.

Facts

13. On June 7, 1955, the District filed its Articles of Incorporation in the office of the Mississippi

Secretary of State stating its corporate purpose to “create and function as Mississippi District Council of the Assemblies of God consisting of all ministers holding accredited fellowship certificates with the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri, and having their credentials registered with the District Secretary, and all ministers holding accredited licenses and exhorters certificates with the Assemblies of God, Mississippi District, and all Assemblies officially affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and/or the Assemblies of God, Mississippi District.”

14. Gulf Coast Worship Center (“GCWC”) is a non-profit corporation formed under the laws of Mississippi.

15. On November 28, 1998, GCWC applied for affiliation with the General Council Assemblies of God. A true and correct copy of the application is attached as Exhibit A.

16. On December 2, 1988, the General Council of the Assemblies of God officially recognized GCWC as one of the local assemblies duly affiliated in the cooperative fellowship of the General Council Assemblies of God. A true and correct copy of the letter recognizing official affiliation is attached as Exhibit B.

17. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Worship Center, adopted on May 17, 1987, acknowledge the affiliation with the General Council Assemblies of God and acknowledge that all property is held in trust for the benefit of the District and the General Council Assemblies of God. Article 5, Section 5 of these bylaws

provides that “[i]n the event that the assembly ceases to function as a church body, the said property, real or chattel, shall revert to the Mississippi District Council of the Assemblies of God. The Mississippi District Council of the Assemblies of God shall have full authority to use or dispose of the property at it’s [sic] discretion.” This is consistent with the Worship Center’s Articles of Incorporation, filed in the Office of the Secretary of State on August 6, 1996, which reiterates that *all* property of the Worship Center is held in trust for the benefit of the District and General Council Assemblies of God and requires that all Worship Center assets be transferred to the District upon dissolution.

18. On August 6, 1996, GCWC filed its Articles of Incorporation in the office of the Mississippi Secretary of State which also references its affiliation to the District. A true and correct copy of the Articles of Incorporation filed with the office of the Mississippi Secretary of State is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

19. The Constitution of the District recognizes that the District is associated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District’s relationship is governed by the General Council of the Assemblies of God Constitution, Article X. A true and correct copy of the District’s Constitution and Bylaws is attached hereto as Exhibit D.

20. The Constitution of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Article X, grants the District supervision over local assemblies within the District’s territory. A true and correct copy of the Constitution

and Bylaws for the General Council of the Assemblies of God is attached hereto as Exhibit E.

21. In January 2017, Beachy, then pastor of GCWC, failed to timely renew his credentials as an ordained minister under the principles of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

22. In early 2017, Teresa Youngblood of the District, repeatedly contacted Beachy regarding his failure to renew his credentials. Beachy confirmed that he did not intend to renew his credentials as an ordained minister under the principles of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

23. On January 12, 2017, as a result of his response to the District's inquiry, the District placed Beachy under investigation pursuant to General Council of the Assemblies of God Bylaws Article VII, Section 12; General Council of the Assemblies of God Bylaws Article X, Section 3(e),(h), and (i), Section 5.

24. Beachy was advised, via letter dated January 12, 2017, that he was under investigation as a result of his failure to comply with renewing his credentials. A copy of the letter dated January 12, 2017 is attached hereto as Exhibit F. As a result of Beachy's refusal to renew his credentials and disavowal of scriptural teachings and practices as adopted by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, the District Superintendent ultimately placed GCWC under District Supervision pursuant to Article XIX, Section 8B of the District Bylaws, which provides: "an assembly may be declared under District Supervision due to existing confusion therein, inability to govern

itself, unable to secure or retain a pastor, danger or property loss, division of membership, imposed leadership, unscriptural teachings or practice, or divisive conditions.”

25. On February 15, 2017, District officers met with Beachy in order to seek reconciliation. Beachy refused reconciliation, and advised the District officers that church members were considering disaffiliation from the General Council Assemblies of God.

26. On March 15, 2017, Beachy spoke with the District Superintendent and again stated that the Defendants intended to pursue disaffiliation. In a letter dated March 16, 2017, the District Superintendent noted that GCWC’s agreement with the Assemblies of God requires the involvement of the District Council in any decision to disaffiliate. Specifically, the District Superintendent stated that “[t]he Constitution requires that the Representatives of the district be allowed to address your congregation to state its case for continued affiliation. This would need to be announced for two weeks as any official meeting would.” The letter went on to inform that GCWC had been placed under District supervision as a result of Beachy’s decision not to renew his credentials.

27. Prior to GCWC being placed under District Supervision, Defendants Bennett, Williams, Fortich, Kinsey Mulet, Pagan, together with Beachy, collectively served as the Official Board of GCWC (the “Former Board”).

28. The District Superintendent’s March 16, 2017, letter served as notice that, pursuant to

Article XIX, Section 8C of the District Bylaws, that GCWC was under District Supervision. A true and correct copy of the letter dated March 16, 2017 is attached hereto as Exhibit G.

29. On March 16, 2017, contemporaneously with declaring GCWC under District Supervision, the Official Board of GCWC and all offices and positions were thereby vacated, with the exception of the pastorate by operation of Article XIX, Section 8A of the District Bylaws. As of March 16, 2017, the recommended "Constitution and bylaws for local churches" stated within the District Bylaws became the governing document as provided by Article XIX, Section 8A of the District Bylaws.

30. On March 16, 2017, GCWC also became subject to the District Officiary for guidance and supervision in all matters, including its transactions, legal or otherwise, elections or appointments and operational affairs. Under the District's Bylaws, specifically Article XIX, Section 8, a District Supervised assembly is not permitted to conduct any business without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter and any specific course of action shall have the unanimous agreement of the participating sectional officers and District Superintendent.

31. On March 19, 2017, in violation of the GCWC Constitution and Bylaws, District Constitution and Bylaws and General Council Assemblies of God Constitution and Bylaws, the Former Board held a business meeting in which a vote was held to

disaffiliate with the General Council of the Assemblies of God and to adopt a new Constitution and Bylaws.

32. On April 4, 2017, the Sectional Committee of the District unanimously resolved that the District Presbyter and Executive Presbyter could use any and all means to prevent the disaffiliation of the Gulf Coast Worship Center, including the appointment of a new pastor to serve GCWC. A true and correct copy of the minutes of the April 4, 2017 Sectional Committee meeting are attached as Exhibit H.

33. On May 31, 2017, pursuant to Article XIX, Section 8 of the District Bylaws, the District Superintendent mailed a letter to Beachy requesting that he call a special business meeting of the congregation of the GCWC to inform the congregation of the following: (i) that the Constitution and Bylaws for local churches provided within the District Council Bylaws is now the governing document of the Gulf Coast Worship Center; (ii) that the Gulf Coast Worship Center operates under the authority of the Sectional Committee, District Superintendent and District Presbytery; (iii) that the actions taken at the March 19, 2017, business meeting were void due to lack of consent by the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter as required by Article XIX, Section 8A of the District Bylaws; (iv) the results of the investigation pertaining to the removal of Beachy and the appointment of a new pastor, and (v) that current members who wished to follow Beachy could resign from the Gulf Coast Worship Center. A true and correct copy of the letter dated May 31, 2017 is attached hereto as Exhibit I.

34. On June 15, 2017, an attorney retained by the Defendants requested information from the District pertaining to the District's declaration of GCWC as under District Supervision. Council for the District complied and responded via letters on July 7, 2017 and August 3, 2017. True and correct copies of the letters dated June 15, 2017, July 7, 2017 and August 3, 2017 are attached, collectively, as Exhibit J. Despite being provided detailed explanations and copies of relevant documents, the Defendants repeatedly sought further information in the form of a meeting or telephone conference. However, when provided these opportunities, the Defendants failed to participate.

35. On September 8, 2017, the District provided Defendants with a Notice of Special Business Meeting requesting that a meeting be called and held on October 1, 2017 at 12:00 p.m., and instructed that proper notice be provided to the congregation by reading the Notice of Special Business Meeting from the pulpit during morning worship services on Sunday, September 17, 2017 and Sunday, September 24, 2017.

36. On October 10, 2017, the Defendants, through Council, informed the District that the requested meeting would not be held and that the Defendants would not recognize District supervision or the authority of the District Officiary. Moreover, the Defendants have made clear that they will continue to refuse the District's requests and will continue to refuse to comply with the GCWC Constitution and Bylaws, the District Constitution and Bylaws and the General Council Assemblies of God Constitution and

Bylaws. A copy of the October 10, 2017, letter is attached as Exhibit K.

COUNT I
Declaratory Relief

37. The District adopts and incorporates by reference all allegations of fact set forth above.

38. On March 16, 2017, the District classified GCWC as District Supervised assembly. Under the District's Bylaws, specifically Article XIX, Section 8, a District Supervised assembly is not permitted to conduct any business without the consent of the District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter and any specific course of action shall have the unanimous agreement of the participating sectional officers and District Superintendent. On March 19, 2017, the Defendants conducted a business meeting at which a vote was taken to disaffiliate with the District and to adopt a new Constitution and Bylaws despite the fact that, by then, GCWC was classified as a District Supervised assembly. The District Superintendent and Sectional Presbyter were neither informed nor consented to the meeting. The participating sectional officers and District Superintendent did not unanimously agree to the March 19, 2017 meeting or any actions taken therein. Accordingly, the vote to disaffiliate and to adopt a new Constitution and Bylaws is void.

39. On April 4, 2017, the Sectional Committee of the District unanimously resolved that the District Presbyter and Executive Presbyter could use any and all means to prevent the disaffiliation of the Gulf Coast

Worship Center, including the appointment of a new pastor to serve GCWC.

40. The Worship Center's Charter, Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation express the Worship Center's intent to create a trust in favor of the District and the General Council Assemblies of God in all property.

41. In light of the foregoing, the District seeks a declaration from the Court that: (i) the meeting held on March 19, 2017 and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (ii) that GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) that all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements were intended to be held in trust and are under the control of the District Council.

COUNT II
Injunction

42. The District adopts and incorporates by reference all allegations of fact and law set forth above.

43. The Defendants' actions have effectively prevented the District from supervising GCWC and from installing an interim pastor in accordance with the GCWC Constitution and Bylaws, District Constitution and Bylaws and General Council Assemblies of God Constitution and Bylaws.

44. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law to remove Defendant Beachy from the pulpit and install interim pastor Harmon absent injunctive relief.

45. The longer the Defendants are able to disregard the GCWC Constitution and Bylaws and the

District Constitution and Bylaws the more damage will be done to the relationship between the District and GCWC's congregation.

FOR THESE REASONS, the Plaintiff asks the Court to enter a declaration that: (i) the meeting held on March 19, 2017 and the actions taken at said meeting are void; (ii) GCWC has been under District supervision since March 16, 2017; and (iii) all GCWC personal property, real property, and improvements are under the control of the District Council. The Plaintiff further asks for an injunction barring the Defendants from claiming any position of authority or, in any way, preventing District supervision of the GCWC.

This, the 20th day of November, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

**MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT COUNCIL
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD**

By Its Attorneys,
JONES WALKER LLP

By: /s/ Lisa A. Reppeto
LISA A. REPPETO

Lisa A. Reppeto (MSB No. 99978)
Andrew S. Harris (MSB No. 104289)
Amber L. Kipfmiller (MSB No. 105758)
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aharris@joneswalker.com
akipfmiller@joneswalker.com

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day caused to be electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of Court using the MEC system, which shall send notification of such filing to all counsel of record.

Malcolm F. Jones
P.O. Box 908
Gulfport, MS 39571
(228) 863-3095
cityattorney@pass-christian.com

This, the 20th day of November, 2019.

/s/ Lisa A. Reppeto
LISA A. REPPETO