

S46. RELATIONSHIP OF LOCAL CHURCH TO THE INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(58th A., 1980, pp. 38, 39; [1994]).

1. The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A.) has a centralized (by legal definition "hierarchical") form of church government. The International General Assembly, the highest authority of the Church of God, governs the ownership of all church property, both real and personal. All property is held in trust for members composing said International General Assembly. The local churches, the names of which are officially registered with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A. are the results of the faithful services of the ministers and representatives of the International General Assembly; and these churches, when thus received by the representatives of the International General Assembly, then become and compose constituents of the International General Assembly. Therefore, the right of any local church as a whole to withdraw from the International General Assembly is not recognized and does not exist, but those members who prove disloyal to the government and teachings as promulgated from time to time by the International General Assembly, or who are otherwise disorderly, are to be dealt with as individuals.

2. The International General Assembly of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A.) is that organized body with full power and authority to designate the teachings, principles, and practices of all the local churches composing said Assembly.

3. The International General Assembly governs the operation (including ownership of all real and personal property) of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., at all structural levels: international, national, state/territorial, district, and local. The International General Assembly has vested in the office of the state overseer authority over the local churches. Some of his powers, all of which are more fully explained elsewhere in this book of *Minutes*, can be exercised to remove pastors, to appoint pastors, or a special Board of Trustees, which may be the State Board of Trustees, to hold title to local property.

4. A Local Board of Trustees shall hold title to, manage, and control, pursuant to the direction of the local congregation, all real estate owned by the local congregation by which they are selected, provided that all such property shall be used, managed, and

controlled for the sole and exclusive use and benefit of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A. In the event that the majority or all of the local church depart from the faith or discontinue fellowship with the organization, the state overseer shall at any time have power to appoint other trustees to hold the property for the Church of God.

5. Local churches, when they have been accepted into the Church of God, are therefore bound by the decisions of the International General Assembly in matters of doctrine, teaching, and polity.

S47. LOCAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(72nd A., 2008)

A Local Church Development Plan shall be implemented by the International Executive Committee, in conjunction with each respective state/regional overseer, for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of local churches in the fulfillment of their mission, through a plan designed to involve lay leadership, together with pastoral oversight, for church growth in the twenty-first century.

This shall be a standardized plan designed to meet the needs of local churches at each numerical level.

S48. MEMBERS (45th A., 1954, p. 27; 61st A., 1986, p. 54; 68th A., 2000, p. 83)

I. PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING MEMBERS INTO THE CHURCH

A. Church Membership

Church membership is Scriptural, and any person presenting himself as a prospective member is making a serious and far-reaching decision. It is the responsibility of the pastor to see that all persons making themselves available for membership are fully informed of the doctrine, teachings, government, and heritage of the Church of God. In keeping with this responsibility, the pastor shall inform all persons presenting themselves for membership through one or more of the following ways:

1. Counsel with prospective members privately concerning the membership requirements and their responsibilities to them.
2. Conduct special membership classes where prospective members are taught membership requirements.
3. Read and explain the membership requirements in a public meeting.

B. Procedure for Receiving Members

Following this [the foregoing] procedure, the minister shall invite prospective members to stand before the altar and face

the congregation. The minister shall then proceed by giving the following charge to the applicants as he stands before them.

1. *You realize in presenting yourself for membership that you are assuming a solemn obligation, and it is expected that you will always be true to your promise and faithfully fulfill and discharge your obligation as a loyal member.*

2. *Do you publicly confess and testify that you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior in the full pardon of your sins? (The applicant(s) will answer, I do.)*

3. *Are you willing to walk in the light of the Scripture as it shines upon your path? (I am.)*

4. *Are you willing to abide by and subscribe to the discipline of the Church of God as outlined by the Scripture and set forth in the Minutes of the International General Assembly? (I am.)*

5. *Are you willing to support the church with your attendance and temporal means to the best of your ability as the Lord prospers you? (I am.)*

6. *Do you agree to be subject to the counsel and admonition of those who are over you in the Lord? (I do.)*

7. *If there be any member who has a legal objection to any of these becoming members of the Church of God, the objector may now so state.*

8. *By the authority vested in me as a minister of the Church of God, I take great pleasure in welcoming you into this membership and extending to you the right hand of fellowship. May I encourage you to call for the services of your pastor when needed.*

9. *I have confidence that you will ever be a faithful member and a blessing to the church and that the church will be a blessing to you. I pray our fellowship will always be bound together with unbroken love. (The minister shall then pray.)*

C. Instructions

It would be well to have a musical background while the church gives the right hand of fellowship.

It is believed that friends of the church should be extended the privilege of bidding the new members Godspeed in like manner (45th A., 1954, p. 27).

II. LOCAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP (65th A., 1994, Item 4, p. 86)

We affirm the Scriptural pattern of elders and deacons (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 4:14; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:6-9) and every local congregation, in consultation with the state and territorial

overseers, is encouraged to implement this Scriptural pattern of leadership.

Further, the International Executive Committee shall make available quality resources to assist overseers and pastors in the implementation of this Scriptural pattern.

III. LOCAL CHURCH PART OF THE ASSEMBLY

1. The local churches, the names of which are officially registered with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., are the result of the faithful services of the ministers and representatives of the International General Assembly; and these churches, when thus received by the representatives of the International General Assembly, then became and composed a part of the International General Assembly. Therefore, the right of any local church as a whole to withdraw from the International General Assembly is not recognized and does not exist, but those members who prove disloyal to the government and teachings as promulgated from time to time by the International General Assembly, or who are otherwise disorderly, are to be dealt with as individuals (15th A., 1920, p. 50; 45th A., 1954, pp. 27, 28; 50th A., 1964, p. 54).

2. If a church is organized and they do not accept the teachings of the International General Assembly, they cannot be recognized by headquarters [at any level of church government] as a Church of God (15th A., 1920, p. 68).

IV. REQUIREMENTS OF MEMBERS

A. Exclusion for Nonattendance

Members should be excluded from the Church of God for nonattendance of the regular services of the church of which they are members, unless they have a good reason. Notice the question is only for continued nonattendance; this doesn't mean just for a few times missing service (20th A., 1925, p. 41).

B. Stand Against Gambling

Inasmuch as the Church of God believes gambling to be contrary to Christian principle and practice; and

Inasmuch as there has been a tendency to compromise among some states and churches, teaching that state lotteries, bingo games, games of chance, and so forth, are not contrary to present Christian moral standards; therefore

The Church of God continues its stated opposition to the evils of gambling and urges its people to exhibit by precept and example its belief in the high standards of holiness conduct required of all believers (50th A., 1964, p. 55).

C. Holy Living and Modesty

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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 like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Timothy 2:9).

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3, 4) (35th A., 1940, p. 31; 66th A., 1996, p. 61).

V. LOCAL CHURCH AND RETIRED MINISTERS (70th A., 2004 p. 58)

That each local church establish a program to "Adopt a Retired Church of God Minister," recognizing them on special days of their lives (i.e. birthdays, anniversaries, hospitalizations) and assisting them financially when they are invited to speak or on aforementioned occasions.

S49. MEMBERSHIP

I. TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

1. When a member in good standing moves from the vicinity of one church to another, a letter of recommendation should be given on request, in harmony with [the scripture] "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cen-chrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints" (Romans 16:1, 2) (1st A., 1906, Bk. Min, p. 18).

2. Inasmuch as we live in a mobile society which affects many of the constituents of the church, it is important that pastors and leaders show care and concern in assisting members in relocating, by making available to them information relative to the churches in the area to which they are moving.

3. A member's name should remain on the membership roll until an official request for transfer is received (64th A., 1992, p. 77).

4. Requests for transfers should be granted within two weeks, when requested by the proper authorities, providing no charges are pending. Transfers may be granted or members' transfers may be received at any regular church service (46th A., 1956, p. 24).

5. Inasmuch as the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa is a part of the Church of God in America, it should be understood that the transfer of membership between local churches of the respective countries is reciprocal; but in no case is it legal to retain local church membership in both countries (46th A., 1956, p. 23).

II. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP NOT PERMITTED

Inasmuch as the local Church of God membership is composed of Christians who have accepted the teachings, doctrines, and government of the Church of God, and who have been formally received into its fellowship; therefore, no local church has authority to set up or recognize an associate membership of Christians who, for some reason, have not been formally received into its fellowship (45th A., 1954, p. 28).

III. MEMBERSHIP ROLL

The pastor and church treasurer shall maintain an accurate, up-to-date membership roll, staying in contact with members who are unable to attend church regularly and members who are in the Armed Forces, encouraging them to attend and transfer their membership to a local Church of God or Ministry to the Military Center in the area where they are stationed (63rd A., 1990, p. 78).

IV. EXCLUDED MEMBERS

1. Individuals who have been excluded from any local church shall not be admitted to membership in any other local church until fellowship has been established in business session with the church from which they were excluded. And if the church has been disbanded where he/she was a member, his/her case must be passed on by the state overseer of the state where he/she was excluded and the district overseer where he/she now lives.

2. In case excluded members are put forward by those in authority, such as being used as Sunday school teachers, or otherwise given prominence in the church, especially over protest of the church that excluded them, such action shall be considered disloyalty and all those who do such should be dealt with accordingly (29th A., 1934, p. 56).

C. Duties and Responsibilities of the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall:

1. Receive and count all monies.
2. Prepare funds for deposit.

II. TITHING

1. All members and ministers of the Church of God shall pay tithes into the church where they are members.

Percentage of Tithes Paid Into the Local Church To Be Sent to International Office and State/Regional Office

Local church treasurers shall send a percentage of tithes paid into the local church to the International Office (secretary general) with their monthly report, and an equal amount to their State/Regional Office (state treasurer) with their monthly report as follows, with the remainder for the support of the pastor (72nd A., 2008; [2010]).

After September 1, 2014	5%	To International Office
	5%	To State/Regional Office

Note: For breakdown of percentage division of amount sent to the secretary general for International Office and World Missions, see page 84 in this book.

2. Surplus tithes are to be used for the benefit of the ministry as may be decided by the state overseer, pastor, and local church, and churches having surplus tithes are encouraged to sponsor a work in a new field within the state, or in some mission state or territory. Each new work in a mission state or territory, sponsored by a local church, shall be under the direction of the respective state overseer and local church sponsoring such work. A monthly report of the progress of the new work shall be furnished to the sponsoring church (33rd A., 1938, pp. 50, 51; 36th A., 1941, p. 48; 38th A., 1943, p. 30; 45th A., 1954, p. 29; [1986]).

III. CHURCH REPORTS (65th A., 1994, Item 6, pp. 86-88)

A. Consistency in Reporting

The principle of local churches giving a tithe of their tithe for worldwide ministry has been a part of Church of God practice from its earliest days. As a Scriptural principle (Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22; Malachi 3:10; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 9:6-9; 16:2; Hebrews 7:1-21) and an approved program of the International General Assembly,

tithing the tithe provides a way for each local church to have a part in contributing to the worldwide ministry of the church. Through faithfulness and consistency in this practice, the local church extends its ministry far beyond its own borders and releases God's blessing in the same way that a church member's practice of tithing brings blessings into his/her personal life.

Where there is delinquency in local church reporting (reports and/or finances), the following procedures are recommended:

1. When a church is two months delinquent in reporting, the state overseer shall meet personally with the pastor, relative to correcting the matter.
2. When the church is three months delinquent, a board of inquiry shall be appointed to investigate and make recommendations.
3. Should the delinquency continue, a state board shall be appointed to consider the filing of appropriate charges.
4. Where the foregoing investigation has proven fault on the part of a pastor, that he not be considered for any appointment or position until proper disposition has been made for payment of the delinquent funds.
5. Further, any pastor who is found at fault by an investigation committee, who has failed to send in his/her respective church reports for four (4) months or more, shall be subject to disciplinary action from his/her respective Administrative Bishop, up to revocation of credentials. The Administrative Bishop can make exceptions to this ruling on a case-by-case basis, and as is in compliance with the *Minutes* of the General Assembly, **S7. Section II, Paragraph 11**, under **Duties of the General Overseer**. The action of the Administrative Bishop must be approved by the general overseer of the Church of God (the Presiding Bishop) for final determination (77th A., 2018).

B. Accumulated Delinquent Funds

The state overseer is required to fully inform any pastoral candidate of the current financial condition of the prospective church prior to finalization of said candidate's appointment.