

Recommended Bylaws for Local Assemblies

Recommended by
*The General Presbytery of
The General Council of the Assemblies of God*
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Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council Bylaws
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Preface

In response to an increasing demand for some practical rules of order to serve as a guide in the development and conducting of affairs of local assemblies, the General Council Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God has prepared this document titled "Recommended Bylaws for Local Assemblies." These provisions have been thought out carefully and should have full and careful consideration before adoption.

It is desirable that the form of organization for the church be kept as simple as possible. Boards should not be multiplied just to give offices to people.

It may not be desirable to elect any deacons for longer than 1 year. There is, however, a legal reason for the election of trustees for 3 years each: so that some trustees are always carried over each year and at no time do all trustees go out of office together. Their terms should, therefore, be staggered.

It would be well to impress upon the members of the church board at the time of their election that they have been chosen by the assembly to serve, rather than to rule. While they are entrusted with the responsibility of handling the routine business of the church, all major matters affecting the church should be passed on to the congregation as recommendations, permitting the assembly to make its own decisions. This rule is vital for the peace and harmony of the assembly life.

The pastor is the undershepherd, called of God, to minister to spiritual needs and to direct the activities of the church in accordance with its bylaws. He should be respected as the leader. In the event he is elected to serve for an indefinite time, he should not presume that indefinite means permanent. The term "indefinite" merely means that the door is left open for unlimited ministry under the blessing of God, which can be terminated by the decision of the pastor or the congregation.

The church board is chosen to assist the pastor. The final decision for all major action rests with the congregation in accordance with the provisions of the bylaws.

Instructions for Adopting Church Bylaws

Churches shall seek the help of district officials when planning for the adoption of new bylaws.

Arrangements should be made with the district superintendent or district presbyter to be present at a meeting for the adoption of the bylaws. Announcement of the date and purpose of the meeting should be made in public services on at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the date of the meeting, so that the constituents are notified to be present.

Copies of the bylaws should be made available to the constituents prior to the date of the meeting so all may be informed of the provisions to be adopted.

The district officer shall preside at this meeting and shall guide the church in its decisions, considering and adopting each article, one by one, and then finally adopting the new bylaws as a whole.

A careful record must be kept of all business meetings, including the election of the first trustees and their successors in office. This is very important, for this record is a legal requirement when church property is involved.

The General Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God

Note: While these recommended bylaws are designed to relate to the principal areas of normal church life and order, it is understood that they must be adapted to local situations.

**Recommended Bylaws for
Local Assemblies**

BYLAWS OF

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20____

Preamble

For the purpose of establishing and maintaining a place for the worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father; to provide for Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith, where the Holy Spirit may be honored according to our distinctive testimony; to assume our share of responsibility and the privilege of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ, by all available means, both at home and in foreign lands; we, the members of this assembly, do hereby recognize ourselves as a local assembly in fellowship with, and as a part of, the General Council of the Assemblies of God, and the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of the Assemblies of God; and that we do hereby adopt the following articles of church order and submit ourselves to be governed by them.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this assembly shall be _____

ARTICLE II. PREROGATIVES AND PURPOSES

The prerogatives and purposes of a General Council affiliated assembly shall be:

1. To Govern

This assembly shall have the right to govern itself and to conduct its own affairs according to the standard of the New Testament Scriptures and of the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council and the General Council of the Assemblies of God. This right shall specifically include such matters as the calling of a pastor, the election of the church board, and the discipline of its members and the conducting of its own services and church program.

2. To Acquire and Dispose

In connection therewith, or incidental thereto, this assembly shall have the right to purchase or acquire by gift, bequest or otherwise, either directly or as trustee, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of any real estate or chattels as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes, and to exercise all other

powers conferred upon it by its charter or by the applicable nonprofit corporation law of this state; all in accordance with its bylaws as the same may be hereafter amended.

3. To Worship, Fellowship, and Propagate

The purpose of this assembly shall be to establish and maintain a place for the worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, to provide for Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith, where the Holy Spirit may be honored according to our distinctive testimony, and to assume our share of responsibility and the privilege of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means, both at home and in foreign lands.

4. To Cooperate

This assembly shall cooperate with the District Council and the General Council to extend the work and kingdom of God throughout the world. It shall support the missionary program as agreed upon. It shall participate in District Council and General Council sessions through its chosen delegates and share in the support of the ministries of these bodies.

5. To Recognize

This assembly shall recognize that the District Council and the General Council have the authority and right to approve scriptural doctrine and conduct; also to disapprove unscriptural doctrine and conduct and to withdraw their certificates of membership if deemed necessary. See Article IX of the Bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God.

ARTICLE III. AFFILIATION

While maintaining its inherent rights to sovereignty in the conduct of its own affairs as herein set forth, this assembly shall voluntarily enter into full cooperative fellowship with assemblies of like precious faith, associated in the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of the Assemblies of God, and the General Council of the Assemblies of God, with headquarters in Springfield, Missouri; and shall share in the privileges and assume the responsibilities enjoined by that affiliation. Officers of the District Council and General Council shall be recognized and respected by the pastor and members of this assembly.

As a member of the General Council, this assembly has the right to request the assistance of both the General Council and the District Council in dealing with any of its problems, upon the request of the pastor, a majority of the church board, or a petition signed by at least twenty percent (20%) of the active voting members of the assembly. Only those members who have regularly attended services of, and supported, this assembly for a period of at least three consecutive months prior to signing the petition shall be counted.

It is understood and agreed that this assembly shall conform its standards of membership, qualifications for deacons, and requirements for a pastor to those standards set by the District Council and the General Council.

By its affiliation, the assembly—directors, officers, and members—agree that no provision of these Bylaws shall be inconsistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of both the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of the Assemblies of God and the General Council of the Assemblies of God as now in effect or hereafter amended.

ARTICLE IV. TENETS OF FAITH

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 Spirit (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 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 Spirit, 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 Spirit

Accordingly, therefore, there is **that** in the Father which constitutes Him **the Father** and not the Son; there is **that** in the Son which constitutes Him **the Son** and not the Father; and there is **that** in the Holy Spirit which constitutes Him **the Holy Spirit** and not either the Father or the Son. Wherefore the Father is the Begetter; the Son is the Begotten; and the Holy Spirit 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 Spirit 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 Father, as to authority. The Holy Spirit 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 Spirit. 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 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 Spirit 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 Spirit 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 Spirit, 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 Savior 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 Spirit

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit 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 Spirit 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 Spirit

The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit 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 Spirit 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 Spirit (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, to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, and to demonstrate His love and compassion for all the world, the 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).
- d. To be a people who demonstrate God's love and compassion for all the world (Psalm 112:9; Galatians 2:10; 6:10; James 1:27).

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 and care for the poor and needy of the world (Galatians 5:22-26; Matthew 25:37-40; Galatians 6:10; 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 fourfold purpose of leading the Church in: (1) evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20), (2) worship of God (John 4:23,24), (3) building a Body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11,16), and (4) meeting human need with ministries of love and compassion (Psalm 112:9; Galatians 2:10; 6:10; James 1:27).

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 and 22).

ARTICLE V. ORDINANCES

Section 1. Baptism in Water

The ordinance of baptism by immersion in water (Matthew 28:19) shall be administered to all who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls, and who give clear evidence of their salvation (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

Section 2. Holy Communion

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly as enjoined in the Scriptures (Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership Eligibility

Active voting membership in this assembly shall be open to all those who possess the following qualifications:

- a. A testimony to an experience of the "new birth."
- b. Having been baptized in water by immersion.
- c. Evidence of a consistent Christian life (Romans 6:4; 8:1-4; 13:13, 14 Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:1, 2, 15; 1 John 1:6,7).
- d. An indication of a willingness to contribute regularly to the financial support of the church of which he is to become a member.
- e. Acceptance of the Tenets of Faith as set forth in Article IV of these bylaws.
- f. Having reached at least 16 years of age.
- g. Having regularly attended services of, and supported, this assembly for a period of at least three consecutive months prior to the date of application for membership.
- h. Agreement to being governed by the bylaws of this assembly, and of the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of the Assemblies of God, as both may be amended from time to time.

Section 2. Procedure for Membership Recognition

Those individuals eligible for membership who shall desire to become members of this church shall make written application to the pastor or church board. The church board shall have the right and authority to determine the eligibility and acceptability of all applicants for membership by majority vote. Those approved for membership by the church board shall be received into the church publicly at any of its regular services, and their names thereupon added to the church membership roll. No applicant for membership shall be accepted as a member within 30 days before an annual business meeting or within 10 days before a special business meeting.

Section 3. Pastor and Spouse

By virtue of office the pastor shall be considered an active voting member of the church during his tenure. The pastor's spouse shall become an active voting member simultaneously with the pastor, subject to section 9 of this Article VI.

Section 4. Transfer Members

A member in good standing of another Assemblies of God church, who satisfies the standards for membership eligibility specified in Section 1 of this Article VI (other than the attendance and support requirements), may apply for membership by submitting a letter of transfer from the pastor of the other assembly, upon the approval of a majority of the church board.

Section 5. Junior Membership

Junior membership shall be available for young people under 16 years of age who give evidence of the new birth, meet the scriptural standards for membership as specified in these bylaws, and are approved by majority vote of the church board.

Section 6. Associate Members

The church board, at any regular or special meeting, may approve associate members by a majority vote. Eligibility for associate membership is available to any person who is a member in good standing of an Assemblies of God church in another community, who is in this community on a temporary basis, and who intends to return to his or her home church. Associate members shall be entitled to all the privileges of regular members, except that they shall not be eligible to vote and shall not be eligible for any of the offices described in Article VII of these bylaws.

Section 7. Honorary Members

The church board, at any regular or special meeting, may approve honorary members by a unanimous vote of the members present. Honorary membership is available to any member who has left the church indefinitely. Honorary membership recognition shall continue as long as the member maintains a consistent Christian life, remains sound in doctrine, and maintains a cooperative attitude toward the home assembly.

Section 8. Inactive Membership

Active voting members who shall without good cause absent themselves from the services of the assembly for a period of 3 consecutive months or more, or who cease to contribute of their means to its support for a period of 3 consecutive months, may be declared inactive members by a majority vote of the church board, and thereupon shall lose their voting privileges until they are restored to the fellowship, their standing to be settled by action of the assembly through its church board.

Section 9. Discipline

A. Grounds

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible (Matthew 16:19; 18:15-20; Luke 17:3; John 20:23; Acts 16:4; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 13:17). The purpose of discipline is to promote repentance and restoration through exposing sinful behavior. It is to be redemptive in nature as well as corrective. Any member of the assembly is subject to discipline on the basis of unscriptural conduct or doctrinal departure from the Tenets of Faith of this assembly, as determined in the sole discretion of the church board. The discipline of ministers who hold credentials with the Assemblies of God is administered by the District Council and General Council of the Assemblies of God.

B. Procedure

The assembly will follow the disciplinary procedure set forth in Matthew 18:15-20. This procedure consists generally of the following steps: (1) The pastor or a designated member of the church board discusses the charges with the member in an effort to resolve the matter privately; (2) if the first step does not resolve the matter, then the member shall meet with the pastor and church board or with a designated committee of the church board in an effort to resolve the matter privately; (3) if the first or second steps do not resolve the matter, then the member or the church board may submit the matter to the membership of the assembly in a special business meeting called for that purpose. Only active voting members of the church shall be permitted to attend such a special business meeting. The decision of a majority of the voting members present at such a meeting shall be final. A member found guilty may be dismissed from membership in the church (Matthew 18:17). However, lesser disciplinary sanctions may be imposed as appropriate, depending on the circumstances of each case.

C. Resignations

Members who are under discipline by this assembly forfeit and waive the right to resign from membership in this assembly. Resignations from membership are possible only by those members in good standing who are not under any disciplinary action.

ARTICLE VII. GOVERNMENT

Section 1. The Church Board

A. In General

The government of this assembly shall be vested in the church board which shall consist of the pastor and at least three deacons, to the extent that such authority is not limited by district supervision as provided for under the bylaws of the District Council.

B. Qualifications of Church Board Members

See qualifications for pastors and deacons below.

C. Duties of Church Board

- (1) The church board shall have general charge and management of the affairs, funds, and property of the assembly. The church board shall have the authority to carry out the purposes of the assembly according to its charter and these bylaws.
- (2) The church board shall act in the examination of applications for membership and in the administration of discipline.
- (3) For so long as the church is temporarily without a pastor, the remaining members of the church board shall be empowered to select a temporary chairman of the church board.
- (4) The church board shall elect a secretary from among its members.

- (5) The church board shall elect a treasurer from among the active voting members who meet the qualifications for such office.

Section 2. Officers

A. In General

There shall be a president, secretary, and treasurer. The pastor, by virtue of office, shall be the president and chairman of the church board. The offices of secretary and treasurer may be held simultaneously by the same individual.

B. Qualifications

(1) Pastor

The pastor shall be in good standing with both The General Council of the Assemblies of God and the District Council, holding a current fellowship card.

(2) Secretary

The secretary shall be an active voting member of this assembly for at least 1 year immediately preceding election to office, and shall be a member of the church board.

(3) Treasurer

The treasurer shall be an active voting member of this assembly for at least 1 year immediately preceding election to office, and shall currently support the church with tithes, and shall have a cooperative spirit, and shall be faithful in attendance at church services.

C. Duties of Officers

(1) Pastor

- (a) Shall be the spiritual overseer of the assembly and shall direct its activities.
- (b) Shall be recognized as a member of the church board, president of the assembly, and shall act as chairman of all the business meetings of the assembly and of the church board.
- (c) Shall provide for all services of the assembly and shall specifically arrange for all special meetings, conventions, and revival campaigns. No person shall be invited to speak or preach in the assembly without his approval.
- (d) Shall, as chairman of the church board, be chairman of the nominating committee for the selection of deacon nominees. The pastor shall privately interview those nominated, ascertaining their eligibility and availability to serve as deacons.
- (e) Should conduct a training class at least once a year on the responsibilities of the church board, deacons, trustees, secretary, treasurer, and other church leaders. Such a training course shall be based upon the scriptural directives for church leadership and the church bylaws.
- (f) Shall be an ex officio member of all committees.

(2) Secretary

- (a) Shall keep the minutes of the official meetings of the church board and of the annual and special business meetings of the assembly.
- (b) Shall keep a record of the membership of the assembly and perform any other clerical work necessary to the proper discharge of his duties.
- (c) Shall be the custodian of all legal documents.
- (d) Shall file such annual corporation reports with the secretary of state as may be required by state law.

(3) Treasurer

- (a) Shall be entrusted with all the finances of the assembly, subject to the supervision of the church board, and shall deposit all funds as a prudent investor would under the circumstances. All checks issued on behalf of the church must be signed by the treasurer and one additional officer authorized by the church board.
- (b) Shall keep an itemized account of receipts and disbursements, shall present a report for each regular meeting of the church board, and shall present an annual report to the assembly in its annual business meeting.
- (c) Shall assist the assembly in acquiring and maintaining available tax exemptions under state and local law.
- (d) Shall provide a record of all identified giving to each donor at least annually.
- (e) Shall be the custodian of all the financial records of the church.

Section 3. Deacons

The deacons shall be persons of mature Christian experience and knowledge, who shall be expected to meet the requirements set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6. Deacons shall be at least 23 years old, and shall have been members of the assembly for at least one year. They shall currently support the church with their tithes and offerings, have a cooperative spirit, and regularly attend church services. They shall not hold ministerial credentials.

Section 4. Trustees

Three trustees (who may be deacons or officers) shall be elected for the holding of church property, if required by law. Trustees must be active voting members of the assembly.

Section 5. Fiduciary Duties

The law imposes several fiduciary duties on officers, deacons, and trustees, including the duties of due care and diligence, loyalty, avoidance of self-dealing, expending designated contributions for the purposes specified, and not commingling personal and corporate funds.

Section 6. Temporary Church Board

Should irreconcilable differences arise between the pastor and other members of the church board, destroying the unity and the successful ministry of the local assembly, the District Executive Presbytery along with the sectional presbyter (the investigating committee), upon request from the pastor or a majority of the church board members, shall investigate such differences. Upon a two-thirds majority vote of the investigating committee they may declare the church under District supervision. The term "District supervision" means that the investigating committee has the authority to (1) suspend the constitution and bylaws of the church, (2) suspend the church board, (3) reclassify the church as a District Council affiliated church, and (4) appoint and establish a temporary church board invested with the authority to manage both the secular and ecclesiastical affairs of the church until such strife shall cease. If the pastor is also the sectional presbyter, the assistant sectional presbyter shall be a member of the investigating committee in his place.

NOTE: The following section 7 only pertains to General Council affiliated churches.

Section 7. Local Church Credential

This assembly may grant a local church credential to persons wishing to pursue ministerial recognition pursuant to guidelines established by the General Presbytery of The General Council of the Assemblies of God and the district council with which this assembly is affiliated. It is understood that this credential is to endorse ministry which is undertaken under the auspices of this church and implies no certification by the district council or the General Council, and is not transferable to other churches or ministries.

ARTICLE VIII. ELECTIONS, VACANCIES, AND REMOVALS

Section 1. Elections

A. Pastor

- (1) The District will provide candidates to the Church for election.
- (2) According to the District bylaws, the pastor shall be elected to serve for 4 years in the first term. He can be reelected by the majority vote in a vote of confidence for a similar term or longer as determined by the members. An indefinite period of time as may be determined at time of election.
- (3) Election shall be by secret ballot at the annual business meeting of the assembly or at a special business meeting called for that purpose.
- (4) A two-thirds majority vote of all votes cast shall be required to constitute an election. Where a pastor succeeds himself, only a majority vote is necessary.
- (5) In the event either the pastor or any other member or members of the assembly shall challenge the validity of an election, the validity of the election shall be arbitrated by the District Executive Presbytery, or any three persons of its choice, and its decision shall be final.

- (1) El Distrito proveerá candidatos a la Iglesia para su elección.

(2) De acuerdo al Reglamento Distrital, el Pastor será elegido para servir por cuatro años en su primer término pudiendo ser reelecto con un voto de confianza ganado por la mayoría del voto para un término semejante o de mayor plazo. Si los miembros lo determinan, podrán también darle tiempo indefinido.

(3) La elección se realizará por voto secreto durante una reunión convocada con este propósito la cual deberá ser anunciada con dos domingos consecutivos precedentes a la fecha de la elección

(4) El candidato que reciba la mayoría de los votos legales quedará electo.

B. Secretary

The secretary shall be elected by the church board from among its members. The term of office shall be one year, and the secretary may serve consecutive terms without limitation.

C. Treasurer

The treasurer shall be elected by the church board from among the active voting members of the assembly. The term of office shall be 1 year, and the treasurer may serve consecutive terms without limitation.

D. Deacons

Deacons shall be nominated by a nominating committee appointed by the church board (see Article VII, section 2C, paragraph [1][d]), and they shall be elected by a majority vote of those active voting members present at an annual business meeting of the assembly at which an election is to be conducted. Active voting members may recommend nominees to the nominating committee; however, nominations for deacon shall not be accepted from the floor during any business meeting without prior proof that the nominee meets the qualifications for a deacon. Deacons shall be elected for a 3-year term, and shall hold office until the annual business meeting at which their successor is elected. Deacons may not serve more than two consecutive 3-year terms. The terms of deacons shall be staggered appropriately.

E. Trustees

Trustees shall be nominated by a nominating committee appointed by the church board, and they shall be elected by a majority vote of those active voting members present at an annual business meeting of the assembly at which an election is to be conducted. Trustees shall be elected for a 3-year term, and shall hold office until the annual business meeting at which their successor is elected. Trustees may serve consecutive terms without limitation.

Section 2. Vacancies and Removals

A. Pastor

When a vacancy in the office of the pastor shall occur, a temporary replacement shall be arranged for by the church board until a pastor shall be chosen as prescribed in Article VIII, section 1A. The counsel of the district superintendent will be sought. When a pastor's credentials are withdrawn by the District or General Council, the pastor's term of office shall be automatically terminated. In the event a special business meeting is called by petition as provided in Article IX, Section 3, for the purpose of considering the status of the pastor, a majority vote of all voting members present and voting shall be required to remove a pastor from office before his term expires. Severance pay shall be governed by Article XI, section 3C.

B. Secretary and Treasurer

The offices of secretary and treasurer shall be vacant upon the expiration of the term of office, or upon the termination of the officer's active membership, whichever shall occur first.

C. Deacons

The office of deacon shall be vacant upon the expiration of the term of office, or upon the termination of a deacon's active membership, whichever shall occur first.

D. In General

Any office or position of leadership in the church (other than that of the pastor) may be terminated by a majority vote of the active members present and voting at a special business meeting called for the limited purpose of removal of such member from office or position of leadership which he holds.

E. Filling Vacancies

Any office or position of leadership in the church (other than that of pastor) may be filled by appointment of the church board for the unexpired term.

ARTICLE IX. MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings for Worship

Meetings for public worship shall be held on each Lord's Day and during the week as may be provided for under direction of the pastor or the church board if there is no pastor.

Section 2. Annual Business Meeting

There shall be an annual business meeting of the assembly, at which time the election of officers shall take place and the report of all officers shall be presented. This meeting shall be held on the _____ of each year. The time and place shall be announced by the pastor. Notice of the date, time, and place of each annual business meeting shall be announced from the pulpit during morning worship services on each of the two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting.

Section 3. Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings of the assembly may be called by the pastor, or by a majority of the church board, or by a petition signed by not less than twenty percent (20%) of the active voting members of the assembly. Only those active voting members who have regularly attended services of, and supported, this assembly for a period of at least 3 consecutive months prior to signing the petition shall be counted.

Petitions pertaining to the business affairs of the church shall be submitted to the pastor or the secretary of the church board.

A petition pertaining to the status of the pastor shall be directed to the district superintendent, who shall arrange for a special business meeting of the assembly.

No more than one petition on a given subject shall be recognized in any 12-month period. Notice of the date, time, place, and purpose of each special business meeting shall be announced from the pulpit during morning worship services on each of the two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting.

No business other than that specified in the notice of meeting shall be transacted at any special meeting of the assembly.

Section 4. Parliamentary Order

All business meetings of the church shall be governed by parliamentary procedure as set forth in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Revised*, in keeping with the spirit of Christian love and fellowship.

Section 5. Voting Constituency

A. Qualifying of Voters

The voting constituency at all business meetings of the assembly shall consist of all active voting members who are present and who are 16 years of age or older (Article VI, Section 1).

B. Transfer Members

Transfer members shall have voting privileges after 30 days of transfer of membership (Article VI, Section 4).

C. Members Under Process of Discipline

No member under the process of discipline shall be entitled to a vote until the process is completed (Article VI, Section 9).

Section 6. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of all members present at any duly called business meeting.

Section 7. Order of Business

The regular order of business for the annual business meeting of this assembly shall be as follows:

- a. Devotional
- b. Reading of previous minutes
- c. Report of treasurer
- d. Report of committees
- e. Unfinished business
- f. Election of officers
- g. New business
- h. Adjournment

Section 8. The Church Board

The church board shall meet monthly or at the call of the pastor for the transaction of business for the assembly, time and place to be announced by the pastor. A majority of the board members present shall constitute a quorum.

Section 9. Membership Roll

The church board shall review the list of active voting members at least annually, at the regularly scheduled meeting of the board immediately preceding the annual business meeting, and compile a current list of active voting members.

ARTICLE X. DEPARTMENTS

Section 1. In General

This assembly shall create and maintain such departments and suborganizations as may be necessary and advisable for the extension of its work including those mentioned in this Article. All such departments and organizations shall be subordinate to the assembly and shall contribute to the harmony and development of the whole. They shall be under the general supervision of the pastor and church board, and the pastor shall be an ex officio member of all committees or departments.

Section 2. Sunday School

The Sunday School shall be considered as that department of the church which particularly provides for the teaching ministry of the church and the spiritual care of the young of the flock. The church board shall appoint the superintendent of the Sunday School from among the members of the church, which appointment shall be submitted for ratification to the church as a whole. The pastor and the superintendent of the Sunday School shall have the

right to appoint all officers, teachers, and other workers of the Sunday School and, in consultation with the workers of the school, determine all policies and programs of the school.

Section 3. Youth Ministries

The young people of the assembly shall be organized into a Youth Department as soon as their number is sufficient. This organization shall elect its own officers, conduct its own services, and plan its own activities, subject to the authority of the church through the pastor and the church board.

Section 4. Men's and Women's Ministries

There shall be a Men's Ministries Department and Women's Ministries Department which shall be formed and made operable under the supervision of the pastor and church board.

ARTICLE XI. FINANCE

Section 1. In General

All funds for the maintenance of the assembly shall be provided by the voluntary contributions, tithes, and offerings of the members and friends of the organization. Offerings shall be accepted by the assembly at such times and in such ways as agreed upon by the church board and shall be administered by the treasurer under their direction (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Section 2. Handling of Offerings

All offerings shall be counted by at least two authorized persons before the funds are removed from the church building. An offering receipts form shall be signed in duplicate by those counting the offering, with one copy going to the treasurer and the other to the pastor. A record shall be kept of all receipts and disbursements of the local assembly and of all individual giving.

Section 3. Pastoral Remuneration

A. Regular Remuneration

The pastor shall be remunerated for his services by a salary or by other means agreed upon by the church board and himself. The church board shall review the pastor's remuneration at least annually.

B. Reimbursement for Expenses

The pastor shall be given consideration by the church board for expenses incurred by his attendance at District Councils, General Councils, and other District functions by reimbursement of such expenses, or by an offering to help defray such expenses, according to the ability of the church as determined by the church board.

C. Severance Pay

In the event a pastor is removed from office by a vote of the active voting membership of the church, or shall fail to be sustained by a vote of the active voting membership at the end of a term, he shall be given a minimum of 2 months regular or average remuneration as severance pay, except in the case of moral turpitude.

ARTICLE XII. PROPERTY

Section 1. Title

All property of the assembly shall be deeded to the assembly and held in its name or, if required by law, to trustees acting on behalf of the assembly and their successors in office. Should the assembly choose to do so, it may request the _____ District Council of the Assemblies of God to act as its trustee to hold title.

Section 2. Purchases and Sales of Property

All purchases of furnishings, equipment, and other items of tangible personal property, exceeding \$10,000 in cost, and all purchases and sales of real property shall be authorized by a vote of at least two-thirds of the voting membership who are in attendance at a regular or special meeting of the assembly.

Section 3. Discontinuation of Church Services

Should this assembly cease to maintain a weekly worship service for a period of 3 months under the direction of a leader duly authorized by and in good standing with the District Council, it shall be dissolved and its properties disposed of according to Article XII, section 4, of these bylaws.

Section 4. Disaffiliation

Title to all real property now owned or hereafter acquired by the assembly shall be held in trust as a place of divine worship in full cooperative fellowship and affiliation with The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri, and the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of the Assemblies of God. In the event that the assembly shall be divided over doctrinal or any other issues, or shall vote to disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God, all property of the assembly shall remain with those members, whatever their number, desiring continued affiliation with the Assemblies of God and adhering to its Statement of Fundamental Truths. The determination of which group of members desires continued affiliation with the Assemblies of God and adheres to its Statement of Fundamental Truths shall be arbitrated by the District Presbytery of the Texas Gulf Hispanic District Council of

the Assemblies of God, and its decision shall be final and binding. If all of the members of the assembly shall vote to disaffiliate from the Assemblies of God for doctrinal or any other reasons, then all of the property of such assembly shall revert to said District Council and shall be used by the District as an Assemblies of God church if possible, and if not possible, the District may sell the property and apply the proceeds in any manner consistent with its stated purposes.

Section 5. Dissolution

Upon the dissolution of the assembly, none of its funds or assets shall be distributed to any officer, deacon, trustee, or any other individual. The church board shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all of the liabilities of the assembly, dispose of all of the funds and assets of the assembly by conveying the same to the _____ District Council of the Assemblies of God, for the purposes of the assembly, and provided that said District Council at the time qualifies as an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law). Any such funds or assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, to such organization as said Court shall determine, which is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes.

ARTICLE XIII. ARBITRATION OF DISPUTES

Inasmuch as the Scriptures require Christians to take their disputes to the saints and not to the civil courts (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), all disputes which may arise (1) between any member of this church and the church itself, or (2) between any member of this church and any pastor, officer, director, employee, volunteer, or other worker of this church, shall be resolved by binding arbitration if efforts to mediate or conciliate the dispute have failed. Either party to the dispute may initiate the arbitration process by filing with the other party a written request for arbitration within a reasonable time after the dispute has arisen and efforts to mediate or conciliate have failed. In such a case, the member and the church shall each name an arbitrator, and the two so selected shall name a third. All arbitrators must be born-again, Spirit-filled believers who are members of an Assemblies of God church. The third arbitrator chosen by the other two shall disclose, before accepting the appointment, any financial or personal interest in the outcome of the arbitration, and any existing or past financial, professional, family, or social relationships which are likely to affect impartiality or which might reasonably create an appearance of partiality or bias. Either of the parties to the arbitration, on the basis of such disclosures, may disqualify such a candidate from serving as the third arbitrator. A third arbitrator who serves without objection from either party has a continuing duty to disclose relationships or interests which may impair his impartiality. Either party, regardless of the stage of the arbitration process, may on the basis of such disclosures disqualify such a person from further participation. The arbitration process shall not proceed until the third arbitrator is selected. The arbitrators shall appoint the time and place for the hearing and cause notification to the parties to be served personally or by registered mail not less than 30 days before the hearing. Appearance at the hearing waives such notice. The arbitrators may adjourn the hearing from time to time as necessary and, on request of a party and for good cause or upon their own motion, may postpone the hearing to a later date. The arbitrators may hear and determine the controversy upon the

evidence produced notwithstanding the failure of a party duly notified to appear. The parties are entitled to be heard, to present evidence material to the controversy, and to cross-examine witnesses appearing at the hearing. The hearing shall be conducted by all the arbitrators, but a majority of them may determine any question and render a final award. If during the course of the hearing an arbitrator for any reason ceases to act, he shall be replaced in the same manner in which he was originally selected. The arbitrators may in their absolute discretion admit as evidence any affidavit or declaration concerning the matters in dispute, a copy thereof having been given at least 5 days previously to the party against whom the same is offered, but the person whose evidence is so taken shall be subject to cross-examination by such party. The arbitrators shall have the power to order and direct what they shall deem necessary to be done by either of the parties relating to the matters in dispute. Cost of the arbitration shall be determined and assessed by the arbitrators. Any submission of a dispute to arbitration shall not be revoked by the death of any party to the dispute, and any award will be binding upon such person's heirs and successors. The decision of the arbitrators shall be binding on both parties, and both parties submit themselves to the personal jurisdiction of the civil courts in this state (including federal courts), as well as the courts of any other state which may have jurisdiction over any dispute contemplated by this Article, for the entry of a judgment confirming the arbitrators' award. The arbitration process is not a substitute for any disciplinary process set forth in the constitution or bylaws of the church, and shall in no way affect the authority of the church to investigate reports of misconduct, conduct hearings, or administer discipline. Any matter not provided for herein shall be governed by the provisions of the Uniform Arbitration Act. If a dispute may result in an award of monetary damages, then use of this arbitration procedure is conditioned on acceptance of the procedure by the liability insurer of the church, and the insurer's agreement to honor any arbitration award up to any applicable policy limits.

ARTICLE XIV.

AMENDMENTS

The bylaws may be amended at any regular or special business meeting of the assembly by a majority vote of the membership present, except as otherwise indicated herein. Articles III, XII, and XIV of these bylaws may be amended only by the affirmative vote of 100 percent (100%) of the active voting members present at any annual or special business meeting called for the purpose of amending these bylaws. Article IV of these bylaws is not subject to amendment, except to conform to any amendments made to the Statement of Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God. All amendments must be consistent with the constitution and bylaws of the District Council.