

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH AND PASTOR**

The following "Code of Ethics for the Local Church and Pastor" were approved by the Commission on Church and Pastor Relations and adopted by the Conference, as recorded in the 1972 Journal, pages 69-72.

### **A. THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Acknowledging our basic loyalty to God through Christ we pledge the following:

1. We will follow approved procedures such as are set forth in the Constitution, and other available actions, instructions and suggestions provided by both the Allegheny Region Conference and the General Conference of the Churches of God when seeking a pastor and we will conduct all negotiations with integrity, curiosity and orderly procedure.
2. We will not discriminate in the selection of qualified leadership in regards to age, race, or sex.
3. We will recognize our responsibility of providing our pastors with adequate compensation including expense funds, pension provisions, medical insurance, adequate housing, and all possible encouragement to continuing educational opportunities.
4. We will provide our pastor with the necessary facilities for his work and respect his study hours.
5. We will recognize our pastor's need for physical and spiritual renewal, by respecting his right to a day for himself each week, an adequate vacation period, and likewise enabling him to attend the annual Summer Seminar and other such helpful conferences and workshops.
6. We will respect the time and talents of the pastor's family and require no more rigid standard of conduct for his wife and children than we set for ourselves.
7. We will recognize the freedom of the pulpit, acknowledging our pastor's right to speak the truth of God as he understands it.
8. We will seek to support the present pastor, not comparing him to, nor belittling previous leadership.
9. We will call on our pastor for weddings, funerals, and other pastoral services and only with his concurrence and under unusual circumstances, will we request him to invite other ministers to share in such services.
10. We will recognize the call, ordination and the educational preparation of our pastor, will pray for him, encourage and support him as he seeks to lead us in our common task, and as he participates in other related enterprises of the Kingdom as a part of the ministry of this church.
11. We will inform our pastor of illness and other special needs that would require his pastoral services.
12. When multiple staff exists, we will observe these same principles in relation to all members of our staff.

### **B. THE PASTOR**

Striving to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, I pledge the following:

1. I will constantly prepare myself physically, mentally and spiritually for the task to which God has called me.
2. I will hold sacred all confidences shared with me.
3. I will speak the truth with conviction and in love as revealed to me in the Word of God and in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord.
4. I will place service to Christ above personal recognition, and the welfare of the church above personal desires.

5. I will exercise positive leadership, recognizing at all times the democratic process in administering our church program.
6. I will exercise the freedom of the pulpit responsibly and respect the freedom of the pew.
7. I will seek to regard all persons with equal love and concern and undertake impartially to the need of all.
8. I will exercise confidence in those elected to share leadership responsibility with me, and will assist in the training of such leaders.
9. I will remain open to constructive criticism and will be receptive to suggestions intended to strengthen our common ministry.
10. I will not use my influence to alienate this church from the Allegheny Region Conference nor from the General Conference of the Churches of God, and will immediately resign when I cease to hold to the practices and principles commonly held by the Churches of God, General Conference.
11. I will refuse to enter into competition with my fellow pastors in order to secure a pulpit or place of honor.
12. I will, when the termination of my pastoral relationship becomes necessary, continue to serve and strengthen the church until the time of my departure.
13. I will, upon my departure, sever my pastoral relations with this church, recognizing that all pastoral functions should henceforth rightfully be conducted by my successor.
14. I will, upon my retirement, use special care in supporting my pastor, and unless requested by him, will refrain from engaging in any ministerial or pastoral functions within that church fellowship.
15. I will, upon my retirement or on becoming inactive, refrain from holding any type of office within the church such as Elder, Chairman of the Board, Deacon, Trustee or any other voting office.
16. I will, when visiting on a former charge or in any other pastor's field of labor, call upon the pastor and do nothing in any way to hinder his ministry.
17. I will make no comments to my congregation nor to individual members that would reflect unfairly upon the character and work of a minister, nor will I speak in a derogatory manner relative to any of the interest of neither the Allegheny Region Conference nor the General Conference of the Churches of God.
18. I will act at all times in a manner that will reflect creditably with my high calling. Realizing that boisterous or noisy behavior leaves a bad impression and can only bring disrepute to the one who practices it, and also places the Ministry in a bad light, I will carefully guard against such conduct.
19. If and when by virtue of my office or by action of the church, I am designated as chairman of the official board, I shall be careful not to give the impression that either this office nor my position as pastor gives me authority to act contrary to the expressed will of the body.
20. As pastor I will constantly use my influence to affect a harmonious relationship between the congregation and the official board and other established leaders.
21. As pastor I will bring to the attention of the proper persons as necessary, such matters as are necessary to assure a spirit of cooperation between the local congregation and the Conference. This will include matters of benevolences and other finances. With the cooperation of the delegates to Conference, I will make certain that all important items from conference and matters relative to financial obligations shall be presented to the proper local church officials and to the church membership.
22. As pastor I will accept the responsibility of seeing that all communications channeled through my office, intended

for the church, shall be brought to the proper attention of such officials to whom they are intended. This refers mainly to such as are properly approved by the Allegheny Region Conference and the General Conference.

### **C. THE PASTOR AND THE PEOPLE**

Recognizing that we have this common ministry by the gift of God, we pledge the following:

1. We will cooperate in the creation of an effective ministry - one that will renew and strengthen each member, to the end that we may faithfully witness in every area of life.
2. We will accept our responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of our community and constituency, and strive to live up to the standards of citizenship consistent with Christian principles.
3. We will be sensitive to the moral and ethical soundness of every project we are asked to support.
4. We will honor our financial obligations and endeavor to maintain a high credit standing in our community.
5. We will welcome all who seek membership in our church without regard to economic or social status, race or nationality.
6. We will encourage understanding and harmony among the various denominations and will give evidence of our sincerity through participation in appropriate cooperative endeavors.
7. We will respect the claim of other churches to the loyalty of their people.
8. We will provide for periodic constructive evaluation of the life and ministry of our church fellowship.
9. We will in the event of emerging problems between us, seek promptly an amicable solution in a spirit of mutual respect and Christian understanding, and will seek guidance from our Pastoral Guidance Commission or District Advisor or Conference Superintendent.
10. We will, when it seems necessary and advisable, terminate the pastoral relationship in a spirit of Christian understanding and love.
11. We will recognize our relationship and responsibility to our denomination and through time, talent, and money seek to give generous support to its World-Wide Missions programs.

ADOPTED by the Allegheny Region Conference in Session August 10, 1972

For additional information see "Ministerial Ethics" in the General Conference [Minister's Resource Manual](#).

**DISCIPLINE  
AND  
PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING CONTROVERSIES**

The Church belongs to Jesus Christ, but unlike the Master of people, it is imperfect. Occasions do arise when disciplinary measures must be taken against its various members, pastors and churches. It should be remembered that the power which has been given to the Church through the Holy Spirit is to be used for building up, and not for tearing down; for perfecting and not for destroying. Therefore, when needs arise which involve discipline in the church, the underlying attitude should be love and mercy, not wrath and vengeance. The purpose of any disciplinary measure is to resolve the disagreement and bring unity and peace to the church in order that it may grow in accord with God's admonition. For even as the early disciples were "of one accord," (Acts 2:1 KJV) so must we strive for that oneness if we are to emulate Christ in the world today.

As Christians, persons committed to the Scriptures, we take seriously the biblical injunctions to practice Christian love and forgiveness. Matthew 5:23-34 (TEV) counsels: "...if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God." Matthew 18:15-16 (TEV) counsels: "If your brother sins against you, go to him and show him his fault. But do it privately, just between yourselves. If he listens to you, you have won your brother back. But if he will not listen to you, take one or two persons with you, so that every accusation may be upheld by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Grievances that cannot be resolved between parties involved shall be referred to the conference superintendent, the president of the conference or Chairperson of Pastoral Guidance Commission who may refer the issue to the Conference Administrative Council to appoint a Hearing Council.

Charges brought against a local church, pastor or conference official are not items to be considered lightly. One must acknowledge that whenever complaints are made against such persons or bodies, there is a danger of schism. The grounds for filing a grievance, therefore, must be clear.

It is to be noted that the purpose of church doctrine and polity is to promote unity in the church. When a church, pastor or conference official ceases to be in harmony with the doctrine, customs and polity of the Churches of God or when a pastor ceases to be in harmony with his/her ordination vows, then a grievance may be filed against the church, pastor or conference official.

These procedures for resolving grievances in the Churches of God, General Conference are prayerfully submitted with these thoughts in mind.

**GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

**I. Procedure for Filing a Grievance**

A grievance should be dealt with at the primary level where the grievance has occurred. Additional persons should not be involved unless resolution cannot be achieved. In the event resolution is not possible and a recommendation is made by one of the aforementioned officials that a hearing council be established, the grievances shall be sent in writing to the Conference official first contacted.

**II. Procedures for Processing Grievances**

After the grievance(s) has been received by the appropriate conference official, it is their responsibility to inform, in writing, the ones the grievance(s) has been filed against, stating clearly the charges. The grievancee then has fifteen days in which to respond in writing to the charges to the conference official. The conference official will determine whether the situation is of such nature to warrant establishment of a hearing council.

**III. Establishment of a Hearing Council**

A hearing council is to be comprised of five members, all members of the Churches of God. Three members are to be laity, two are to be clergy. The hearing council would not be considered a standing committee but selected for each

individual situation. Members of this council must be non-partisan to the situation. No one can serve on the council who is a member or plays a part in the local church filing the grievance nor can anyone serve who is employed in a conference staff position. The council is to be appointed by the Conference Administrative Council with the chief purpose being to achieve an unbiased, objective third party status.

#### IV. Procedure of the Hearing Council

The hearing council selects a chairperson. Each council member should have copies of all correspondence. The chairperson is responsible for specifying date and location of the initial hearing.

Expenses for the hearing council will be the responsibility of the local conference.

The hearing is to be conducted in an orderly fashion with the chairperson responsible for maintaining an atmosphere becoming to Christians. The chairperson may rule a person out of order and expel the offender from the hearings. Additional meetings may be set, insuring that both parties are allowed to speak and all are satisfied they have had opportunity to express themselves.

The hearing council will then meet in a private session to discuss the situation. The discussion should enter on how the gospel of Christ can best be exercised. After reaching a decision, the hearing council will meet with both parties to inform them of that decision. The decision of the hearing council will be final. The hearing council will then send to the Conference Administrative Council a written report of the proceedings and outcome. The report is to be kept on file in the conference office.

An appeal of the hearing council decision can be made first to the Allegheny Region Conference Administrative Council. An appeal of ARC Administrative Council decision can be made to the General Conference Administrative Council. Grievances between local church members shall be resolved within the local church following the same four (4) steps of the Grievance Procedure above. Charges are referred to the local pastor, president of church council or head elder. The Conference Superintendent or Chairperson of the Pastoral Guidance Commission may be contacted for counsel as needed. In cases where there are conflicts interest between parties involved or non-partisan to the situation the Allegheny Region Conference may be called upon to help resolve the grievance.

(Adopted from the General Conference Ministers Resource Manual)