

# **Constitution of the Missionary Church**

Published September 2015  
as Revised and Authorized by the  
2015 General Conference

Denominational Office  
P.O. Box 9127  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46899-9127

Order from  
Church Services  
888 275-9094  
Printed in USA

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# CONSTITUTION

## PREAMBLE

The Missionary Church was organized in its present form as a result of the 1969 merger of the Missionary Church Association and the United Missionary Church. Both of these groups had their origins in revival movements that swept across North America in the late 19th century. Many of the earlier members were members of churches which had become caught up in a religion of form and tradition. The flames of revival sparked a renewed dynamic and vitality that was not welcomed by leaders of their former churches. And so, for their testimony, a number were excommunicated. Under God's leading, they came together through a series of mergers covering nearly one hundred years. The story of these years is recorded in *Merging Streams*.<sup>1</sup>

The Constitution and Manual of the Missionary Church will be better understood by the reader who recognizes that a singular commitment of our early leaders was to the position that the Scriptures were to be the primary source of doctrine and life. In addition to this commitment to be a biblical church, we recognize the contribution of John Wesley's emphasis on "the warmed heart"; A.B. Simpson's fourfold emphasis on Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King; the Anabaptist concepts of community and brotherhood; and the evangelical emphases of the lost estate of mankind and redemption through Jesus Christ. The Missionary Church, then, is a unique blend of the thought and life of a people who have sought to build their church according to the Scriptures and who have appreciated their historical roots.

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<sup>1</sup>Lageer, Eileen, *Merging Streams*, Bethel Publishing Company, 1979.

## **ARTICLE I – NAME**

This organization shall be known as the Missionary Church.

## **ARTICLE II – PURPOSE**

The Missionary Church, in obedience to Jesus Christ her Lord, is committed to being holy people of God in the world and to building His Church by worldwide evangelism, discipleship and multiplication of growing churches, all to the glory of God.

Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9-10

## **ARTICLE III – OBJECTIVES**

In order to fulfill its purpose, the objectives of the Missionary Church are the following:

- A. to call its churches to their mission;
- B. to train and equip leaders;
- C. to plant and assist new congregations at home and abroad;
- D. to promote community among God's people; and
- E. to serve as an administrative and communicative body.

(See Article IV.A.5.)

## **ARTICLE IV – ARTICLES OF FAITH AND PRACTICE**

### **A. ARTICLES OF FAITH**

#### **1. The Triune God**

- a. We believe that the one and only true God is Spirit: self-existent, infinite, personal, unchangeable, and eternal in His being; perfect in holiness, love, justice, goodness, wisdom, and truth; omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; Creator and Sustainer of all things, visible and invisible; both immanent and transcendent to creation; eternally existent in three persons, one in substance and co-equal in power and glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Gen.1:1; Ex. 3:14, 34:6; Deut. 6:4, 32:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 90:2, 103:8, 116:5, 147:5; Isa. 6:3, 40:28, 57:15; Jer. 23:23-24; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24, 14:16; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Col. 1:17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:2, 12 and 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 4:10-16

- b. We believe that the Father is begotten of none. He is the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of salvation, the Father of all who are born into newness of life through faith in Christ.

Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2; John 13:3, 16:28; Eph. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:2-3; 1 John 2:23, 3:1

- c. We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; in His eternal generation from the Father; in His incarnation by which He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, thus uniting the divine and human natures in their completeness into the one unique person of Jesus Christ; in His sinless life and miraculous works; in His vicarious death to make atonement for the sins of the world; in His

bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father; in His sovereign power and lordship; in His present mediatorial ministry as the believer's Advocate; in His second coming in power and glory.

Isa. 53:6; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 1:35; John 1:1,14,18; Acts 2:22, 24-32; Rom. 1:3-4, 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 1:19-22; Col. 3:4; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8, 4:15, 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:18, 2:22 and 24, 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2

- d. We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son, is one in substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternally God. His office and work is to reprove or convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; to regenerate those who repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; to sanctify, empower, teach, guide, and comfort the believer.

The Scriptures reveal the work of the Holy Spirit in the church to be that of uniting believers into the body of Christ, possessing it as the temple of God, equipping it with gifts and graces for service, giving it the body of inspired truth and imparting to it the spirit of illumination and guidance into all truth, and presiding over and guiding the church into the will of God.

Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:49; John 3:5-6, 14:16-18 and 26, 15:26, 16:7-14; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4, 13:2-4, 15:28; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:10-12, 6:19-20, 12:4-11, 12:13; 2 Cor. 6:16, 13:14; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 2:21-22; 2 Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:2, 1 John 2:20-27

## 2. The Bible

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God given by divine inspiration and is inerrant in the original manuscripts. The Bible today remains the unchanging authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. It is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses. (See Position Paper IX: "Biblical Inerrancy.")

Ps. 119:9, 89, 105; Matt. 24:35; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:21

## 3 Mankind

- a. Creation. We believe that the first man, Adam, was created by an immediate act of God and not by a process of evolution. Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of God, possessing personality and holiness; in their original state Adam and Eve enjoyed sweet fellowship with God, the purpose of their creation being that they might glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Because all people have been created in the likeness of God they are self-conscious personalities capable of free and rational choice.

Gen. 1:27; Eph. 1:5-6

- b. The Fall. We believe that our first parents did not remain in the happy state of their original creation, but, being deluded through the subtlety of Satan, voluntarily disobeyed the positive command of God, and thus were alienated from God and incurred upon themselves and their posterity the sentence of death both physical and spiritual. Even the earth was cursed because of Adam's sin. In consequence of this act of disobedience, the entire human race has become so corrupted that in every heart there is by nature that evil disposition which eventually leads to responsible acts of sin and to just condemnation. Also through the fall of Adam, people have become so completely ruined that they have neither will nor power to turn to God and if left to themselves would remain in their sin forever.

Gen. 3:13, 16-17; Isa. 64:6; Rom. 7:7ff.; 1 John 1:8

- c. His Redemption. We believe that God has provided redemption for everyone through the mediatorial work of Christ, who voluntarily offered Himself on Calvary as a perfect sacrifice for sin, the just suffering for the unjust, bearing sin's curse and tasting death for everyone.

John 10:17-18; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 1:15, 2:5-6; Tit. 2:11-12; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:18

#### 4. Salvation

We believe since all people are sinners and guilty before God and are dead in trespasses and sin and therefore are unable to save themselves, God has out of His infinite love given His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become their Savior.

Matt. 1:21; John 3:14-17, 6:44; Rom. 3:10-12, 19, 20, 23; Eph. 2:1-3, 8-9

- a. Repentance. We believe that genuine repentance is a necessary attitude and act of one's will that makes it possible for a holy and just God to forgive one's sins. As an attitude it involves a knowledge of, a change of mind toward, and a godly sorrow for sin; a proper reverence for God's holiness; and a surrender to God. As an act it means confessing and forsaking sin. Repentance is one's appropriate response to the grace of God in conviction. As a fruit of repentance, insofar as possible where sin has been committed against another, restitution should be made.

Ps. 51:3-4; Prov. 28:13; Isa. 6:1-5, 55:6-7; Matt. 3:2 and 8, 4:17; Luke 13:3, 15:18, 18:13, 19:8; John 16:8-11; Acts 11:18; Rom. 2:4, 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:25

- b. Faith. We believe faith must accompany repentance and is the act of the will whereby one embraces the promises of God and appropriates to oneself personally the provisions of God's grace. It is resting in the completeness and adequacy of the atoning merit of Christ's sacrifice as the sole ground and hope of salvation. Faith must be active throughout the life of the believer and must manifest itself in obedience and good works.

Acts 13:38-39, 16:31; Rom. 4:3, 5:1; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 11:6; James 2:17

- c. Justification and Regeneration. We believe that when the requirements of repentance and faith have been met, God justifies and regenerates the sinner. *Justification* is a judicial act absolving from guilt and punishment and restoring to divine favor. Justification has to do with the changing of the sinner's standing before God. *Regeneration* has to do with the changing of the sinner's nature through the impartation of divine life. Regeneration is a spiritual quickening, a new birth. This experience is witnessed to by the indwelling Holy Spirit who produces in the heart a desire to do the will of God.

John 3:3 and 5, 5:24; Acts 22:10; Rom. 5:1 and 9, 4:4-5, 8:16 and 33; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:4

- d. Sanctification and Filling with the Holy Spirit. We believe that sanctification is the work of God in making people holy. It is the will of God. It is provided in the atonement, and is experienced through faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word and the blood. While the divine work of making people holy begins at conversion, believers must surrender to the Holy Spirit's sanctifying power in their lives as they battle the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Furthermore, through a subsequent decisive experience, believers are to deny self, be purified in heart, and be filled with the Holy Spirit that they may be separated wholly unto God to serve Him in righteousness and holiness. Their progressive growth in Christ-likeness will be accelerated and deepened through continually submitting to His Lordship in every aspect of life until they are called to heaven.

Ps. 4:3; Matt. 16:24; John 17:17; Acts 15:8-9; Rom. 6:19 and 22, 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 2:20, 6:14; Eph. 5:26; Col. 3:3, 1 Thess. 4:3, 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 12:14, **13:12**; 1 Pet. 1:2 and 15-16; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 5:6

- e. Resurrection and Glorification. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, and that because He lives we too shall live. The Scriptures teach that at the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised and the living believers with them shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will be changed so that both will have literal, spiritual, and immortal bodies like unto Christ's own glorious body. Our glorification is God's final act in our salvation and will be realized when we see Him as He is.

1 Cor. 15:3-8 and 19-23; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 1 John 3:2

## 5. The Church

- a. We believe that the invisible and universal church is an organism composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been called out from the world, separated from sin, and vitally united by faith to Christ, its living Head and sovereign Lord.

1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15-16; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23

- b. We believe that the visible and local church is an organized body of believers in Christ who are voluntarily joined together, and who meet at regular times for teaching in the Word, fellowship of the saints, observance of the ordinances, administration of discipline, exercise in prayer, and participation in public worship and evangelism.

Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 2:42, 46, 47 and 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:1-4, 16:2

- c. We believe the characteristic marks of the members of the true church are faith in Jesus as the Son of God, love for God and for those of like faith, obedience to God's commandments, and victory over the world.

John 13:35; 1 John 3:14, 4:2, 5:1-5

- d. We believe the primary duties of the church consist of glorifying God and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, of building itself up in the most holy faith, and of preaching the Gospel in all the world as a witness to all men.

Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, 20:32; Eph. 1:5-6, 3:21, 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:11; Jude 20-21

## 6. The Last Things

- a. The Return of Christ. We believe that the second coming of Christ is the hope of the church and will be personal, bodily, visible, premillennial, and redemptive. His return, for which we must be constantly prepared, is a source of encouragement and consolation, a motive for pure and holy living, and an inspiration for ministry and mission. Christ will descend into the clouds, where His church, the waiting bride, will be caught up to meet Him. Subsequently, He will return to earth with His church to judge and rule the entire world.

Matt. 24:14, 36-51, 25:1-13; Mark 13:10, 32-37; Luke 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; Tit. 2:12-13; Heb. 9:28; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28-3:3; Rev. 1:7, 22:12-13.

- b. The Tribulation. We believe that in the final years of this present age an unprecedented time of intensified persecution and divine judgments will occur worldwide. This period of "great tribulation" will culminate with the coming of Christ who will triumph at the Battle of Armageddon, subdue evil and fully establish His kingdom on earth.

Matt.24:15-31; 1 Cor.15:24-25; 2 Thess.2:1-10; Rev.6:1-19:21

- c. The Millennium. We believe that after Christ returns with His church, He will reign on earth for a thousand years. During this period, Satan will be bound and Christ will demonstrate His sovereign power over evil by ruling the world in righteousness.

Ps.2:7-9, 98:9; Isa.9:3-7, 11:6-9; Dan.7:13-14; Rev. 20:1-6

- d. The Judgments. We believe that no condemnation awaits those in Christ who by faith were judged as sinners at the cross and have passed out of death into life. However, as children in the family of God, they are being disciplined and chastened during this lifetime as God conforms them to the image of His Son. Their lives and works will be judged for rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those without faith in Christ will appear before God for final judgment and condemnation at the Great White Throne.

Ps.96:13; Eccl.12:14; Matt.25:14-46; John 5:24; Rom.8:1, 29; 1 Cor.3:8-15, 4:2-5, 11:32; 2 Cor.5:10; 2 Tim.4:8; Heb.9:27, 12:5-8; Rev.20:11-15

- e. The Eternal State. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead to one of two eternal destinies— heaven or hell. Ultimately, all unbelievers will be justly sentenced to eternal conscious punishment in hell together with Satan and all his angels. All believers in Christ will live forever, experiencing eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Isa.65:17, 66:22; Dan.12:2; Matt.25:42, 46; Mark 9:42-48; John 5:28-29, 14:1-3; Eph. 1:3-14; Phil. 3:20-21; 2 Thess.1:8-9; 2 Pet.3:13; Rev.14:9-11, 20:10-15, 21:1-22:7

## B. ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

### 1. Ordinances

The Christian ordinances are two in number, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are the outward rites appointed by Christ to be administered in each local church, not as means of salvation, but as visible signs and seals of its reality.

- a. Baptism. We believe that baptism by water is the symbol of one's union by faith with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, and constitutes the public confession of these spiritual realities to the world and is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Baptism is therefore to be administered by immersion to those who have been born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who give evidence of the genuineness of their salvation.

Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38-41, 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21; compare Mark 16:16

- b. The Lord's Supper. We believe the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ Himself on the night of His betrayal. We believe that it is as a memorial of Christ's death, a center of communion and fellowship, a testimony to saving faith, and a visible seal of Christ's redemptive covenant. It is to be observed only by the children of God and consists in partaking of the consecrated emblems of bread and the fruit of the vine, which symbolize the death of Christ for the remission of our sins and our continual dependence upon Him for life and sustenance until He comes. While the Lord's Supper is open to all true believers regardless of denomination, each one is strongly exhorted to "examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."

Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-24

### 2. Divine Healing

In the redemptive work of Christ provision has been made for man's physical healing. This benefit may be realized by God's children on the basis of the conditions set forth in God's Word.

Gen. 3:16-19; Job 2:7; Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:16-17; Mark 6:13; Acts 10:38; James 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:24; compare Mark 16:17-18

### 3. The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is of divine origin. The Jewish Sabbath was obligatory upon those who lived under the Jewish economy. Desecration of this day invoked the wrath and judgment of God. In this present age the first day of the week has been set aside as the Lord's Day for rest and worship. This observance is commended to the followers of the Lord Jesus in commemoration of His glorious resurrection. The first day of the week has been kept as the Lord's Day by the church from apostolic times. It is imperative that with great care and godly fear we honor the Lord's Day.

John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; compare Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Num. 15:32-36



#### 4. Christian Stewardship

- a. God's ownership of all things creatively and redemptively is unquestioned in the Scriptures. Since we are saved by grace and the death of Christ provided our ransom, our whole being, body, soul, and spirit should be freely given to God, which is our reasonable service.
- b. Not only does God claim our love and devotion, but He has made us stewards of what we have in time, talent, and temporal goods. Since giving of our means to support the Lord's work is a scriptural injunction and an act of worship received and memorialized by our Lord, and since tithing antedates the Mosaic Law, was confirmed in the Law, and was approved by our Lord Jesus Christ, and since the New Testament clearly indicates that our giving is to be proportionate, believers are encouraged to adopt the system of tithing their income as a minimum expression of their stewardship. Our stewardship in material things is to be motivated by the spirit and example of our Lord who freely gave Himself for us all.

Gen. 14:20, 28:22; Mal. 3:8, 10; Matt. 23:23; Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:9, 9:6-7

#### 5. Dedication of Children

We believe that the Scriptures teach the divine concern for the well-being of little children and their commitment to God. We, therefore, heartily encourage the formal dedication of little children in a public service of the church.

1 Sam. 1:24-28; Matt. 19:13-15

#### 6. Marriage and the Home

- a. Marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God and is an indissoluble union of one husband (born male) and one wife (born female) until parted by death. Marriage, which is the foundation of the family and the Christian home, should only be entered into in the fear and will of God. Accordingly, a believer should not be united in holy matrimony with an unbeliever.

Gen. 2:24; Deut. 7:3; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:7, 39; 2 Cor. 6:14-17

- b. Ministers and parents have an obligation to teach the sanctity of marriage and to warn against believers being yoked with unbelievers. Ministers should not knowingly officiate at the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever.
- c. Ministers are forbidden from encouraging, blessing, or officiating same sex "marriages" or unions.

Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; Matt. 19:4,5; Rom. 1:26,27; 1 Cor. 6:9,10

- d. The home is a divinely ordained institution in which the husband is the head but serves its members by the law of love. Filial obedience is to be rendered by children in the spirit of mutual respect and love. The home is the most important institution in which to nurture children in the faith, and great care is to be exercised by pastors and parents in building homes that are genuinely and consistently Christian.

Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:4-6; Eph. 5:22 and 25, 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21

#### 7. Divorce

Divorce is viewed in the Scripture as contrary to God's will. Christians shall seek by forbearance and forgiveness to preserve the marriage bond.

Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:15-16; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-16

- a. Persons divorced and remarried who give evidence of being genuinely born again are eligible to be received into membership of the church.
- b. Divorce between members of the church is an occasion of great tragedy. Such conduct brings the teaching and reality of Christian reconciliation under reproach and offenders are to be disciplined.

The church board shall direct the deacons or a special commission to counsel with the offenders and recommend proper disciplinary action to the church board, giving consideration to appropriate aspects of Article XVII.B.3.

Care should be exercised that such action be as redemptive as possible for all parties involved.

- c. Ministers are to refrain from performing marriage ceremonies where one or both parties are divorced, except where adultery of the previous marriage partner is involved. Where such persons are recognized as living genuine Christian lives, and where there is good evidence that a true Christian marriage is intended, ministers are permitted at their discretion to solemnize the marriage.
- d. See Article XVI.E.2. on qualifications of ministers.

## 8. Practices and Conduct

The Scriptures clearly command that believers are not to be conformed to the worldview and lifestyle of the world of which they are a part, but, on the contrary, are to function as salt to prevent the spread of moral corruption and as light to dispel spiritual darkness. It is therefore imperative that they set high standards for their personal and collective life including the following:

- a. Their disposition and attitudes be characterized by godliness and the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control;
- b. Their social relationships bear witness to Christ, their entire conduct reflecting the spiritual ideals of Christianity rather than the world; they shall not marry unbelievers, shall not hold membership in oath-bound, secret societies and shall not compromise Christian principles in partnerships; and
- c. Their bodies be treated as temples of the Holy Spirit thus making it inconsistent with both Christian testimony and sound principles of health to injure their influence or bodies by the use of tobacco, intoxicating beverages, narcotics and other harmful products.

Isa. 5:22; 1 Cor. 6:12, 19-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 5:18-26; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:2-4

## 9. Attitude Toward Civil Government

We believe that civil government is ordained of God for the welfare of society to promote and protect the good and to restrain and punish evil. Therefore, we consider it the duty of Christians to pray for rulers and for those that are in authority over them and to give due loyalty, respect, and obedience to them. Christians are also encouraged to take an active interest in government at all levels. Where the demands of civil law would militate against the supreme law and will of God, Christians should “obey God rather than men.”

Dan. 4:17; Matt. 22:17-21; Acts 4:19, 5:29; Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14

## 10. Attitude Toward Strife and Military Service

- a. We believe that the teaching of Scripture enjoins believers to love their enemies, to do good to them that hate them, to overcome evil with good, and inasmuch as possible, live peaceably with everyone. Therefore, we conclude that it is not fitting for the Christian to promote strife between nations, classes, groups, or individuals.
- b. We recognize that sincere Christians have conscientious differences as to their understanding of the teaching of the Word of God with reference to their responsibility as Christian citizens to human government both in times of war and times of peace. We therefore exercise tolerance and understanding, and respect the individual conscience with regard to participation in war.
- c. We further urge upon all the responsibility of searching the Scriptures with open heart and mind that their position may truly be one of Christian conviction and not of expediency.
- d. Pastors are advised to instruct their churches and particularly their youth on the teaching of the Scriptures regarding war and its evils, and to seek to give guidance in the Word to those subject to call in the service of their country. Matt. 5:43-44; Rom. 12:18 and 20-21, 13:1-14

## 11. Oaths

We believe a Christian's life should be so transparent in its honesty and integrity that one's word can be fully trusted without the swearing of a formal oath. A judicial oath may be taken without violation of the Scriptures; however, affirmation is encouraged.

Ex. 20:7; Matt. 5:33-35, 37; Jas. 5:12; compare Rom. 1:9, 9:1-2; Heb. 6:13-18

## **ARTICLE V – CONSTITUENCY**

This organization is a religious denomination composed of all member churches, regional conferences, district conferences, and all agencies and institutions operated thereby or affiliated therewith. While the denomination operates as a mission agency in foreign fields and recognizes the universality of the body of Christ, yet it is committed to the policy of establishing indigenous churches. Accordingly, in those areas which are recognized as mission fields, it is expected that autonomous church bodies will be fully developed which will be fraternally related to the parent denomination.

## **ARTICLE VI – GENERAL CONFERENCE**

The General Conference is the representative body through which the denomination acts to carry out its objectives and to which are delegated the highest supervisory, legislative, judiciary, and policy-making powers.

### **A. MEETING**

The General Conference shall meet biennially at such time and place as the conference or General Oversight Council shall determine.

### **B. SPECIAL CONFERENCE**

A special General Conference may be called by the General Oversight Council or at the request of three or more regional or district conferences at such time and place as the General Oversight Council may designate, provided that sixty days' notice is given. The membership of a special General Conference shall be composed of those who were members of the previous regular General Conference.

### **C. COMPOSITION**

1. The General Conference shall be composed of the members of the General Oversight Council, Ministry Leadership Council, credentialed ministers, missionaries on home ministry assignment, the president of Bethel College, the Women's Ministries director, the Missionary Church Investment Foundation executive director, all full-time denominational, regional and district directors and coordinators and lay delegates from each organized church. Based on average attendance for primary worship service, each church shall have one lay delegate per 200 average attendees.

up to 200 in average attendance - one lay delegate

201 - 400 in average attendance - two lay delegates

401 - 600 in average attendance - three lay delegates, etc.

Lay delegates must be members of the local church they are representing.

2. The conference may extend the privilege of attendance and limited participation to conference appointed committees, fraternal delegates, visitors, and consultants.
3. Overseas national church representatives as they are able to attend will be recognized as fraternal delegates.

### **D. VOTING**

Voting shall be done by the members of the conference who are present in the meeting in which the vote is being taken. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.

## E. DUTIES

1. General Conference shall serve as the keeper of the organizational values and policies.
2. General Conference shall serve as the custodian of the Constitution, the bylaws, and all adopted position papers.
3. General Conference shall gather biennially (in session) to conduct all necessary denominational business, while focusing on the purpose, mission, and vision of the worldwide ministry of local Missionary Churches and the internal supporting organizational structures in which they participate. The major emphases of General Conference programs shall be inspiration, information, training, networking, and corporate action.
4. General Conference sessions shall be chaired by the denominational president. The moderator of the General Oversight Council shall serve as vice-chair.
5. General Conference shall elect three of the five denominational officers – the president, the vice president and the secretary – for four-year terms from candidates presented by the Nominating Committee. The elected shall not serve for more than three full terms consecutively. The terms of the president shall be staggered with the terms of the vice president and the secretary
6. General Conference shall elect all ten members of the General Oversight Council for four-year terms from candidates presented by the Nominating Committee. (In addition, the president, the vice president and the secretary shall serve as members by virtue of their office.) Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than two full terms consecutively.
7. General Conference shall elect all seven members of the Nominating Committee for six-year terms from three candidates presented by the General Oversight Council, and four candidates by the Ministry Leadership Council. Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than one full term consecutively.
8. General Conference shall elect all nine members of the Constitution Committee, for six-year terms from four candidates presented by the General Oversight Council, and five candidates by the Ministry Leadership Council. Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than one full term consecutively.
9. General Conference shall certify the conference roll, effect its organization and determine its rules of procedure.
10. General Conference shall elect members to denominational boards whose election is not otherwise provided for by this Constitution, elect the heads of auxiliary organizations and any other officers or committees whose election is not otherwise provided for. The General Conference shall have the power to recall its appointed or elected officers.
11. General Conference shall receive and approve the reports from the general officers on the activities of the denomination; receive and approve reports from the responsible officers of the regional and district conferences, the denominational administrators and auxiliary organizations; authorize the establishment of new departments, institutions and agencies; approve major policy decisions affecting any part of the denomination; consider recommendations from boards, general officers, or regional and district conferences; serve as the final arbiter in the interpretation of this Constitution and in the adjudication of problems of major consequence which have not been satisfactorily resolved on lower levels; and to transact all business not otherwise provided for.
12. It shall be the prerogative of the General Conference to effect amendments to this Constitution according to provisions made therefore, and to adopt necessary bylaws.

## **ARTICLE VII – OFFICERS**

### **A. GENERAL OFFICERS**

The general officers shall be president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and General Oversight Council moderator. No person may be elected to more than one office.

### **B. PRESIDENT**

The president shall be an ordained man elected for a four-year term, by the General Conference from candidates provided by the Nominating Committee. Terms for the president and secretary shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than three full terms. He must be a good listener; able to maximize the talents, skills, and effectiveness of others; proficient in communication; possessing a record of integrity; and capable of leading others in framing, implementing, and guiding a ministry vision for the Missionary Church. The president shall serve as Chairman of the Ministry Leadership Council and Chairman of the General Conference. He shall be a member ex-officio (voting) of all district and regional conferences and all denominational boards and committees.

### **C. VICE PRESIDENT**

The vice president shall be an ordained man elected for a four-year term by the General Conference and shall perform such duties as are delegated to him by the president. In case of the death, resignation, or removal of the president, the vice president shall become the president until the next General Conference.

### **D. SECRETARY**

The secretary shall be elected for a four-year term, by General Conference from candidates provided by the Nominating Committee. Terms for the president and secretary shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than three full terms. The secretary shall be the recording and the corresponding agent for denominational matters not handled by other general officers or departments; the secretary shall give notice of the time and place of the General Conference in the official periodical of the denomination and in such other ways as may be necessary; notify the members of the General Oversight Council of the time and place of its meetings; keep a permanent record of the proceedings of the General Conference and the General Oversight Council; notify all who are to be informed of actions of the General Conference or General Oversight Council unless otherwise provided for; prepare for printing such notices, announcements, minutes, etc., as are recommended for publication by the General Conference or the General Oversight Council; issue credential certificates for newly ordained or licensed ministers and missionaries as certified by the regional and district conferences; keep a permanent record of all licensed and ordained ministers and missionaries of the denomination; and perform such other functions as may be necessary.

### **E. GENERAL OVERSIGHT COUNCIL MODERATOR**

The General Oversight Council moderator shall be elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Oversight Council from among the members of the council other than the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. The term of the General Oversight Council moderator is for two years. The elected shall not serve for more than four full terms.

### **F. TREASURER**

The treasurer shall be elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Oversight Council from among its members. The term of the treasurer is two years. The elected shall not serve for more than four full terms consecutively.

This person shall have general oversight of the denomination's fiscal affairs and be the guardian of denominational assets. This person shall assist in the preparation of the annual revenue and expenditure budgets and oversee the borrowing and investing of funds. The treasurer shall serve as liaison with external auditors; report financial information to the controller, president, General Oversight Council; and submit an audited report to the General Conference.

## **ARTICLE VIII – GENERAL OVERSIGHT COUNCIL**

### **A. COMPOSITION**

1. The General Oversight Council shall be composed of thirteen members (ten members plus the president, vice president and secretary of the denomination), requiring a quorum of nine members. Seven of the thirteen shall be ordained ministers.
2. As a group of biblical elders, the General Oversight Council members shall be characterized by proven spiritual maturity, personal integrity, leadership expertise and experience, and a high level of commitment to the Missionary Church.
3. General Oversight Council members shall be elected for four-year terms by General Conference from candidates provided by the Nominating Committee. Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than two full terms consecutively.

### **B. DUTIES**

1. The General Oversight Council shall assume the role and responsibilities of General Conference and act in its stead when Conference is not in session.
2. Members of the General Oversight Council shall be the trustees of the denomination. They shall assume all fiduciary responsibilities for the denomination including such duties as denominational budget approval, matters of stewardship, and general economic oversight. The council shall be authorized to receive and to hold in trust monies, gifts, and legacies; acquire, loan or borrow money; purchase, sell, improve, convey or exchange real estate or other property such as stocks, bonds, mortgages, and other securities; issue annuity agreements; serve as the trustees for estates and gifts in conformity with the laws of the several states. Any two of the denominational officers are authorized to sign appropriate documents and negotiate loans.
3. The General Oversight Council shall make plans for the General Conference and appoint the necessary committees.
4. The General Oversight Council shall establish regional and previously existing district boundaries.
5. In the event of malfeasance in office or unworthy conduct by any official elected by the General Conference, the General Oversight Council shall have authority to make a judicious investigation of the case and to take such steps as are necessary.
6. The General Oversight Council is the final arbitrator in all appeals related to due process referred to it.
7. The General Oversight Council shall elect from among its members two of the four general officers – the General Oversight Council moderator and the treasurer. Terms are for two years, and both elections require a two-thirds majority vote. The elected shall not serve for more than four full terms consecutively.
8. The General Oversight Council shall ratify all nominees for election or appointment to the Ministry Leadership Council with the exception of the president.
9. The General Oversight Council shall ratify Ministry Leadership Council decisions regarding ministry policies, strategies, and organizational structures.
10. The General Oversight Council shall conduct an annual performance evaluation of the president.
11. If for any reason the president, vice president, secretary or a member of the General Oversight Council, nominating committee or constitution committee can no longer serve, the General Oversight Council is empowered to appoint an interim person until the next General Conference.

12. The General Oversight Council shall meet a minimum of three times per year. It is suggested that one of these meetings be a joint meeting with the Ministry Leadership Council, the other group of biblical elders, for prayer and consultation.

### **C. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The general officers shall constitute an Executive Committee to which the General Oversight Council may delegate authority and unfinished business. When a vacancy occurs during the biennium, a replacement may be appointed at the next meeting of the General Oversight Council. It shall have authority to transact emergency business and such other matters not deemed of sufficient cause for the calling of a meeting of the council. Such transactions shall be reported promptly to the other members of the General Oversight Council by sending them a copy of the minutes of the session. The actions, except those related to due process, shall be subject to the approval of the General Oversight Council at its next session.

## **ARTICLE IX – MINISTRY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

### **A. COMPOSITION**

1. The Ministry Leadership Council shall be composed of the president, director of U.S. Ministries, director of World Partners, regional and district directors, two representatives of World Partners, and a Bethel College representative (either the president or an appointed representative).

The director of U.S. Ministries and the director of World Partners shall be nominated by the president. In consultation with the director of World Partners, the World Partners representatives shall be nominated by the president. If the Bethel College president does not serve, the Bethel College representative shall be nominated by the president in consultation with the president of Bethel College. All nominations shall be presented to both the General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council for ratification.

2. The president shall serve as chairman of the Ministry Leadership Council.

### **B. DUTIES**

1. As a group of biblical elders, the Ministry Leadership Council shall carry primary responsibility for leading the Missionary Church toward fulfilling its purpose and mission – an effective, worldwide ministry of local Missionary Churches, assisted by the denominational supporting structures of which they are a part.
2. The Ministry Leadership Council shall be mandated with the responsibility for planning and guiding ministry strategy, ministry implementation, ministry resources support, and ministry structural support across the spectrum of the denomination. Working in concert with regional and district structures, the Ministry Leadership Council shall be given the latitude to propose and pilot new regional and district structures for the purpose of growth and expansion, subject to General Oversight Council ratification.
3. The Ministry Leadership Council shall frame, propose, and implement ministry vision plans for effective, worldwide Missionary Church outreach and growth.
4. The Ministry Leadership Council shall meet a minimum of four times per year to fulfill its denominational ministry leadership role and responsibilities. Since the Ministry Leadership Council shall serve as one group of biblical elders for the denomination, it is suggested that one of these meetings be a joint meeting with the General Oversight Council, the other group of biblical elders, for prayer and consultation.

5. The Ministry Leadership Council shall determine the supporting role and responsibilities of the denominational office and World Partners. The denominational office and World Partners structure and staff shall be determined by the president and managed by the respective director.
6. The Ministry Leadership Council shall assist the president in:
  - Convening regular input and listening opportunities within each region/district to help guide the work of the Ministry Leadership Council and the denominational office staff.
  - Convening regular input and listening opportunities with each of the Pastor Peer Networks to help guide the work of the Ministry Leadership Council and the denominational office staff.

## **ARTICLE X – NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

### **A. COMPOSITION**

The Nominating Committee shall be composed of seven members elected by General Conference for six-year terms from three candidates presented by the General Oversight Council, and four candidates presented by the Ministry Leadership Council. Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than one full term consecutively.

### **B. RECRUITING OF NOMINEES**

1. The Nominating Committee shall be called together by the moderator of the General Oversight Council for the sake of organizing itself. This meeting shall take place no later than one year prior to General Conference.
2. The Nominating Committee shall solicit potential nominees from every region, district, church, and key Bethel College personnel. Any member of the Missionary Church may suggest a name for nomination.
3. The Nominating Committee may approach people directly whom it deems suitable for the varied offices to be filled.
4. The Nominating Committee shall confer with the General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council on potential presidential nominees.

### **C. VETTING OF NOMINEES**

1. Nominees shall be vetted according to the following criteria:
  - Extensive dialogue and screening shall be based on the biblical qualifications of elders.
  - Nominees shall be from districts/regions and churches that actively support the Missionary Church.
  - Nominees shall be screened on the basis of leadership qualifications – call, character, involvement in missions, etc.
  - Screening shall also involve basic behavioral questions related to the role in which a nominee shall be asked to serve.
  - The Nominating Committee shall be encouraged to consider matters of regional representation in their nominee selections.
2. The Nominating Ballot
  - The nominating ballot shall be posted three months in advance of General Conference.
  - If there is a desire to nominate someone other than those listed on the ballot, one month shall be given to submit nominations.
  - The supporting signature of 25 registered conference delegates must accompany any nominee so submitted.



- The nominees submitted shall then be vetted according to the above process.
- If the Nominating Committee finds the person qualified, the name shall be added to the ballot.
- If the Nominating Committee finds the person not qualified, the nominator shall be notified.
- If the nominator persists in seeking to add the name to the ballot, the Nominating Committee shall have the option of submitting the name without recommendation.
- The final nominating ballot shall be posted one month before General Conference.

## **ARTICLE XI – CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**

### **A. COMPOSITION**

The Constitution Committee shall be composed of nine members elected by General Conference for six-year terms from four candidates presented by the General Oversight Council, and five candidates by the Ministry Leadership Council. Terms shall be staggered, but the elected shall not serve for more than one full term consecutively.

### **B. FUNCTION**

The Constitution Committee shall be responsible to review items referred to it by General Conference, the General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council. It shall consider suggestions for improvements to the Constitution or position papers. It shall review duly approved recommendations from regions and districts and seek to facilitate their consideration at General Conference. It has the authority to recommend amendments to the Constitution and Position Papers.

## **ARTICLE XII – DENOMINATIONAL DIRECTORS**

All denominational directors shall be nominated by the president and ratified by the General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council. Each director shall be directly accountable to the president. The General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council shall approve the number of directors and the specific job description for each director.

The General Oversight Council and the Ministry Leadership Council may, unless otherwise provided in this Constitution, appoint committees and approve necessary guidelines and bylaws to conduct the ministries of the various departments.

## **ARTICLE XIII – BETHEL COLLEGE**

- A. Bethel College shall exist as the college of the Missionary Church, Inc.
- B. The Bethel College Board of Trustees shall be self-perpetuating and legal ownership for all liabilities are vested in it. However, in the event of dissolution of the college, the net assets or liabilities shall accrue to the Missionary Church, Inc.
- C. At least one-half of the members of the Bethel College Board of Trustees shall be members in good standing of the Missionary Church. Additionally, the president of the Missionary Church, Inc. shall be a member ex officio of the college's board. All appointees of the Bethel College Board of Trustees shall affirm prior to each term of office the doctrinal statement of the college which shall conform to the Articles of Faith of the Missionary Church, Inc. The General Oversight Council or the General Conference of the Missionary Church, Inc. may by a two-thirds vote at any meeting remove any trustee of Bethel College.
- D. The president of Bethel College shall be a member in good standing of the Missionary Church. His election and periodic reappointment shall be ratified by the General Oversight Council of the Missionary Church, Inc. He shall report annually, or as often as requested, to the General Oversight Council and to each General Conference furnishing full operational reports.

## **ARTICLE XIV – AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

### **A. WOMEN'S MINISTRIES**

1. It shall be the function of Women's Ministries to assist in the home and overseas missionary activities of the denomination; to aid in the organizing and conducting of district, regional, and local ministries for spiritual edification and the promotion of such work as may be mutually agreed upon; to direct the efforts of the organization in keeping with the policies of the denomination and to correlate them with the respective departments.
2. A council, consisting of the denominational Women's Ministries director and the regional and district Women's Ministries directors, shall coordinate and give general direction to the activities of the organization. It shall serve as a policy-making and advisory body, basic policy to be subject to the approval of the Ministry Leadership Council. The council shall effect its own organization and it may devise bylaws governing its procedures subject to the approval of the Ministry Leadership Council.
3. A Women's Ministries director shall be appointed by the director of U. S. Ministries upon the recommendation of the Women's Ministries Council. This appointment shall be for a two-year term.
4. A report of the Women's Ministries Council shall be given to each General Conference.

### **B. MISSIONARY MEN INTERNATIONAL**

1. In fulfillment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), the purpose of Missionary Men International shall be to establish in every Missionary Church a ministry committed to winning, building, and equipping men for Jesus Christ; and to give active support to the home and foreign work of the denomination in keeping with the objectives and policies of the denomination and in correlation with respective divisions and departments.
2. The denominational director of U. S. Ministries or his appointee shall serve as liaison to the regional and district organizations.
3. A report of the Missionary Men International shall be given to each General Conference.

### **C. MISSIONARY CHURCH INVESTMENT FOUNDATION**

1. The Missionary Church Investment Foundation is an incorporated subsidiary of the Missionary Church, Inc., to support its activities and ministries and organized:
  - a. To create and administer a fund for the purpose of financing the construction or purchase of church buildings, equipment, parsonages and to finance other projects within the Missionary Church, Inc., including but not limited to schools, conference grounds, administrative buildings and homes for senior citizens, retired ministers, missionaries, their wives and husbands.
  - b. To receive and hold real estate, monies, gifts, and legacies; to receive, borrow and loan money, to purchase, hold, sell, improve, rent, convey, mortgage and exchange real estate and personal property including but not limited to stocks, bonds and securities; to issue and grant annuity agreements.
  - c. To make loans and issue certificates for the promotion of all aforesaid objects, all on such terms and conditions as the Board of Directors will authorize.
2. The affairs of the foundation shall be administered by a Board of Directors. The total membership of the Board of Directors shall be not less than 12 persons with no less than eight appointed by the General Oversight Council upon the recommendation of the Board of Directors of the Missionary Investment Foundation, Inc. Of the appointed members, no more than five shall be ministers. The members ex officio shall be the president,

the treasurer and one executive level director of the Missionary Church appointed by the General Oversight Council and the executive director of the foundation.

3. The executive director shall be recommended by the MCIF Board and approved annually by the General Oversight Council.
4. The foundation shall give an annual report to the General Oversight Council and report to each General Conference of the Missionary Church. Its executive director shall be a member ex officio of the General Conference.
5. The General Oversight Council may by a majority vote at any time recall any board member of the Missionary Church Investment Foundation.

## **ARTICLE XV – REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

Regional and district conferences shall be organized by the General Oversight Council to oversee ministries within designated geographic areas. District organizations in existence prior to July 2009 may continue to operate as districts and shall follow these guidelines.

### **A. JURISDICTION**

1. Each region shall be governed by a regional board and, if applicable, regional conference which shall function in accord with authority delegated to it by this Constitution and the General Conference.
2. Regions shall include all of the churches and districts within the territory assigned by the General Oversight Council.
3. Mission districts may be established by the regional board within its geographic area.

### **B. DUTIES**

1. Each region may establish bylaws and policies to govern its organization, officers and ministries in keeping with the Constitution of the Missionary Church.
2. It shall recommend the establishment of new districts within the region and the guidelines governing such per policies established by the General Oversight Council.
3. It shall conduct conferences and ministries in the region as needed. It shall implement and promote the ministries of the denomination.
4. It shall receive the reports of the regional director and other officers, pastors, workers, boards, and committees; and submit to the General Conference such reports as may be required.
5. It shall be the prerogative of the region to make recommendations to General Conference.

### **C. OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

1. Regional Director
  - a. The regional director shall be a man elected or affirmed for a term not to exceed four years as prescribed by the regional bylaws from among the ordained ministers of the Missionary Church.
  - b. The process of election or affirmation shall include conferring with the president on nominee(s) determination. The nominee(s) shall be ratified by the General Oversight Council and Ministry Leadership Council before the election or affirmation by the regional governing body.

- c. The regional director shall recruit and equip other catalytic leaders, motivate and empower pastors and leaders to fulfill the regional vision, oversee churches and credentialed individuals, and report to the regional conference.
- d. In case of necessity, he shall have the authority, in consultation with the regional board, to take such steps as are necessary in the change or transfer of ministers or to safeguard the region's churches and members.
- e. He shall submit to the General Conference a full report of the work of his region, including a summarized statistical report.

## 2. Other Officers

The region shall select other officers, committees and leadership deemed necessary for the accomplishing of the vision and mission of the region, to fulfill the requirements of the Constitution of the Missionary Church and to meet legal requirements in the state or states where it exists.

## 3. Regional Board

- a. The regional board shall be composed of the regional director and other officers and representatives as required by the regional bylaws.
- b. It shall approve new churches for membership in the Missionary Church and shall certify such to the denominational office. This responsibility shall be transferred to districts when fully organized. A certificate of membership in the denomination shall be issued by the proper denominational officers.
- c. It shall examine ministerial candidates and recommend the licensing and ordaining of ministers. It shall annually certify to the denominational office a list of all ordained and licensed ministers under the jurisdiction of the region. This responsibility shall be transferred to districts when fully organized.
- d. The regional board shall serve as a pastoral relations committee. It shall be the duty of this committee to assist in the selection of a pastor; to give due consideration to the preferences of churches and pastors and to resolve any conflicts and problems arising from pastoral selections in the highest interests of churches, pastors, and the denomination. Each region shall determine what constitutes a pastoral election and the term of service. It shall be the duty of the committee to take steps in cooperation with the respective church board to fill vacancies that may occur during the year. This responsibility shall be transferred to districts when fully organized.
- e. The regional board shall be the trustees of the region. It shall hold in trust all regional properties, and have authority to receive and hold in trust monies, gifts, and legacies; acquire, loan or borrow money; purchase, sell, improve, convey or exchange real estate or other property such as stocks, bonds, mortgages, and other securities, and serve as the trustees of estates and gifts in conformity with the civil laws of the several states and in keeping with authority delegated by the region.

## **ARTICLE XVI – DISTRICT CONFERENCES**

Districts within a region shall be recognized by the regional board in accordance with policies established by the Ministry Leadership Council and General Oversight Council.

### **A. JURISDICTION**

- 1. Each district shall be governed by an annual district conference and may establish bylaws and policies to govern its organization, officers and ministries in keeping with the constitution of the Missionary Church and its regional bylaws.

2. Districts shall include all of the churches and the district institutions within the territory assigned by the region.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

1. Meeting. Each district conference shall meet annually at such time and place as it may decide. It shall be presided over by the district director or his appointee.
2. Special Conferences. Special district conferences may be called by the district board.
3. Membership. The district conference shall be composed of all ordained and licensed ministers resident in the district; all conference officers; at least one lay delegate from each organized church and such additional lay representation as each conference shall determine; and members of standing conference committees at the discretion of the respective conferences.
4. Voting. Voting shall be done by the members of the conference who are present in the meeting in which the vote is being taken. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.

## **C. DUTIES**

1. The district conference shall elect or ratify a district director and other officers and committees as may be deemed advisable and in accordance with its bylaws.
2. It shall conduct conferences, camp meetings or conventions in the district as practicable, and it shall take such steps as are necessary to implement and to promote the ministries of the denomination.
3. It shall receive the reports of the district director and other officers, pastors, workers, boards, and committees; and submit to the General Conference such reports as may be required.
4. It shall be the prerogative of the district conference to make recommendations to General Conference.
5. It shall have authority to make bylaws for its government in accord with the Constitution and the acts of the General Conference.

## **D. OFFICERS**

1. District Director
  - a. The district director shall be a man elected for a term not to exceed four years by the district conference from among the ordained ministers of the Missionary Church.
  - b. The process of election or affirmation shall include conferring with the regional director on nominee(s) determination. The nominee(s) shall be ratified by the Regional Board before the election or affirmation.
  - c. The district director shall have supervision of all the churches and workers within his jurisdiction; arrange for conventions or conferences within the district; arrange for meetings in each church in the interests of denominational programs; emphasize the duties of churches to their pastors; and uphold this Constitution.
  - d. Between district conferences, he shall have the authority, in consultation with the district board, to take such steps as are necessary in the change or transfer of ministers or to safeguard the district's churches and members.
  - e. He shall annually submit a full report of the work of his district to the regional director.
  - f. The district director shall shepherd ministers in their personal spiritual growth, in their continued development of leadership skills, in their relationships with those whom they serve and in their ministry of developing devoted followers of Christ.

## 2. Other Officers

The district shall select other officers, committees and leadership deemed necessary for the accomplishing of the vision and mission of the district, to fulfill the requirements of the Constitution of the Missionary Church and to meet legal requirements in the state or states where it exists.

## 3. District Board

- a. The district board shall be composed of the district director and other officers and representatives as required by the district bylaws.
- b. It shall approve new churches for membership in the Missionary Church and shall certify such to the denominational office. A certificate of membership in the denomination shall be issued by the proper denominational officers.
- c. It shall examine ministerial candidates and recommend the licensing and ordaining of ministers and certify such to the denominational office which shall issue credentials. It shall annually certify to the denominational office a list of all ordained and licensed ministers under the jurisdiction of the region.
- d. The district board shall serve as a pastoral relations committee. It shall be the duty of this committee to assist in the selection of a pastor; to give due consideration to the preferences of churches and pastors and to resolve any conflicts and problems arising from pastoral selections in the highest interests of churches, pastors, and the denomination. Each district shall determine what constitutes a pastoral election and the term of service. It shall be the duty of the committee to take steps in cooperation with the church board concerned to fill vacancies that may occur during the year.
- e. The district board shall be the trustees of the district. It shall hold in trust all district properties, and have authority to receive and hold in trust monies, gifts, and legacies; acquire, loan or borrow money; purchase, sell, improve, convey or exchange real estate or other property such as stocks, bonds, mortgages, and other securities, and serve as the trustees of estates and gifts in conformity with the civil laws of the several states and in keeping with authority delegated by the district.

## E. MINISTERS

### 1. Definition

Ministers are men and women called of God to serve the church in an official leadership capacity who normally have special education for such a ministry, whose leadership roles are certified through licensure or ordination, and who receive financial remuneration for their services. This includes ministers such as pastors, evangelists, Christian education or youth ministers, chaplains, or persons directly involved in the theological training of people for ministry.

### 2. Qualifications

- a. Ministers shall meet the following biblical qualifications:
  - (1) spiritual maturity and Christian character as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-23 and by the qualities required for Christian leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9;
  - (2) gifts of leadership confirmed by the church of which they are members (Ephesians 4:11-14); and
  - (3) a servant spirit which enables them to submit to the authority of God as they lovingly exercise that authority in ministering to the people of God (John 13:1-17; 1 Cor.4:1-2; Phil.2:1-11).

- b. Ministers shall meet the following educational qualifications:
  - (1) a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
  - (2) additional education as set forth in the description of licensed and ordained ministers. (Note: Special consideration may be given after consultation with the candidate, the regional director or district director, and the president or his representative and approval of the regional or district board.)
- c. Ministers shall meet the following denominational qualifications:
  - (1) participation in and completion of a prescribed program of study in the history and polity of the Missionary Church;
  - (2) a commitment to hold and to teach the denominational "Articles of Faith and Practice;"
  - (3) a commitment to support the programs of the Missionary Church;
  - (4) a commitment to communicate by word and example a Christian worldview and lifestyle as reflected in the Missionary Church Constitution and Manual;
  - (5) membership in a local Missionary Church unless otherwise approved by the regional or district board due to extenuating circumstances; and
  - (6) all credentialed ministers are required to attend regional/district conference annually unless there are extenuating circumstances which are reported to and approved by the regional or district director prior to conference.
- d. It is the policy of the Missionary Church not to license or ordain a person who has been divorced, divorced and remarried, or married to a person who has been divorced. In cases where there are extenuating circumstances, application may be made to the regional board of district board and upon a 75% vote of that body, a recommendation may be sent to the General Oversight Council which shall appoint a special commission to thoroughly investigate the case and give approval or disapproval.

### 3. Ministerial Categories and Procedures for Credentials

#### a. Candidates for License

##### (1) Description

Candidates for license shall demonstrate readiness to pursue their studies with all diligence until completed; to prepare for ordination; and to give themselves wholly to the ministry in the Missionary Church, when educational and other requirements are completed.

##### (2) Procedure

It is recommended that interested persons begin the candidate process one year before they plan to seek license in order to allow sufficient time to fulfill requirements for license.

- (a) Establish membership in a local Missionary Church;
- (b) Counsel with their pastor and regional or district director as to the nature and condition of their call from God to the ministry;
- (c) Receive an official recommendation from the board of their local church; and

- (d) Submit a completed Application for Ministerial License Part I to the regional or district director for consideration by their regional or district board.

Applicants for the ministry living in an area where there is no Missionary Church shall comply with steps (b) and (d) immediately above.

Applicants for the ministry residing outside district conference boundaries may make application to the denominational office with licensing or ordination subject to the approval of the General Oversight Council.

(3) Rights

As long as ministerial candidates continue their status they shall have the right:

- (a) To preach the gospel;
- (b) To be a nonvoting member of the regional/district conference; and
- (c) To transfer from one region/district to another, subject to the policies and guidelines of the regions/districts.

(4) Duties

Persons having status as ministerial candidates shall be responsible to report annually to the regional board district board as to their progress in their studies.

b. Specialized Licensed Ministers

(1) Description

The term "specialized minister" is used to describe paid staff ministers employed by churches of the denomination who are not holding a regular license or ordination status. Individuals holding this license are not pursuing ordination and generally are employed to oversee specific areas of ministry in a local church. This designation does not include ministry support positions, such as secretarial or custodial staff.

This license is not transferable to another church or ministry.

(2) Qualifications

- (a) Applicants must have completed a minimum course of study consisting of at least one course in each of the following: Old Testament, New Testament, biblical or systematic theology, biblical interpretation, homiletics or communication, leadership, History and Polity of the Missionary Church and a minimum of 12 semester hours of college level work in their field of specialization.

In special circumstances and with the approval of the regional or district director, individuals with two or more years experience and 12 semester hours of college level work in their field of specialization may apply and, if approved by the regional or district board, be granted a specialized ministry license upon completion of the History and Polity of the Missionary Church course. Such individuals will be given three years to complete the additional required courses.

- (b) Persons holding this license must have served for a minimum of 12 months on a professional basis in the field of specialization.
- (c) Persons holding this license must be members of a Missionary Church.



(3) Procedure

- (a) Counsel with their senior pastor as to the nature of their gifts and proposed ministry;
- (b) Receive an official recommendation from their senior pastor and local church board;
- (c) Submit an application to the regional or district director; and
- (d) Be examined by the regional or district board.

(4) Renewal

A specialized ministry license is effective for one year only, and authority to carry on the office and work of a minister under such a license shall cease unless it is renewed annually by the regional/district conference. This license may be renewed by providing satisfactory service in a ministry assignment, including loyalty to and compliance with the rules of the Missionary Church and of the district, including the proper filing of reports. If specialized licensed ministers fail to file their annual report, unless such failure is due to illness, injury, or a similar emergency, their license shall not be renewed.

(5) Rights

As long as ministers qualify for and receive a specialized ministry license, under the supervision of a senior pastor they shall have the right:

- (a) To preach the gospel, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, to perform all parts of divine worship, and to solemnize the rite of matrimony wherever local laws will permit;
- (b) To serve in a ministry relationship under the supervision of a senior pastor within a local Missionary Church subject to the guidelines of the regional or district conference;
- (c) To be eligible for election to any office not restricted to ordained ministers or lay persons, and
- (d) To be voting members of the regional or district conference and General Conference.

(6) Duties

Specialized licensed ministers shall be responsible:

- (a) To devote themselves without reservation to the Christian ministry, following the leadership of the Holy Spirit;
- (b) To report annually to the regional or district conference and the denomination on the appropriate report form, and to the regional or district director as required;
- (c) To place their credentials on file voluntarily with their regional or district director if they cease to serve in an approved ministry; and
- (d) To surrender voluntarily their credentials if they are guilty of an offense which would disqualify them from service as a minister.

c. Licensed Ministers

(1) Description

Licensed ministers are those whose ministerial calling and gifts have been formally recognized by a regional or district conference, through the granting of a ministerial license, authorizing them for and appointing them to actual service in the ministry, subject to supervision and evaluation, as a step toward ordination.

(2) Procedure

- (a) Applicants must have completed a minimum course of study as approved by the Ministry Leadership Council; and
- (b) The applicant shall be reviewed and recommended by the regional or district board.

(3) Renewal

A ministerial license is effective for one year only, and authority to carry on the office and work of a minister under such a license shall cease unless it is renewed annually by the regional or district conference until such time as the holder of the license is ordained to the ministry. Ministers may be granted renewal of ministerial license by meeting the following requirements:

- (a) Satisfactory service under their previous appointment, including loyalty to and compliance with the rules of the Missionary Church and of the region or district, including the proper filing of reports. If licensed ministers fail to file their annual report, unless such failure is due to illness, injury, or a similar emergency, their license shall not be renewed; and
- (b) Confirmation through the annual report that they are pursuing the completion of the ordination study course. The ordination study course must be completed within seven years of service under a ministerial license.

(4) Rights

As long as ministers qualify for and receive a ministerial license, they shall have the right:

- (a) To preach the gospel, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, to perform all parts of divine worship, and to solemnize the rite of matrimony wherever local laws will permit;
- (b) To serve in a pastoral relationship with a local Missionary Church subject to the guidelines of the regional or district conference;
- (c) To be eligible for election to any office not restricted to ordained ministers or lay persons;
- (d) To be voting members of the regional or district conference and General Conference; and
- (e) To transfer from one region or district to another, subject to the policies and guidelines of the regions and districts.

(5) Duties

Persons holding a ministerial license shall be responsible:

- (a) To enroll in the ordination course of studies and to pursue it with all diligence until completed (See Educational Requirements for Credentialing);
- (b) To serve their region or district and denomination faithfully in whatever capacity they may be called;
- (c) To report annually to the regional or district conference and denomination on the appropriate report form, and to the regional or district director as required;
- (d) To place their credentials on file voluntarily with their regional or district director if they cease for a period of more than one year to serve in an approved ministry; and

- (e) To surrender voluntarily their credentials if they are guilty of an offense which would disqualify them from service as a licensed minister.

d. Ordained Ministers

(1) Description

Ordained ministers are ministers whose calling, gifts, and usefulness have been demonstrated and enhanced by proper training and experience, and who have been separated to the service of Christ by the regional or district conference and by the solemn act of ordination and thus have been fully invested with all the functions of the Christian ministry.

(2) Qualifications

Licensed ministers of the Missionary Church who have an abiding conviction of God's call to be ministers may be ordained as ministers by meeting the following requirements in order:

- (a) Satisfactory service for two years subsequent to completion of the ordination study course, except for those who have been under supervision and in approved ministry during the years spent completing said course of study. At least one of the years must have been in the Missionary Church within the region or district in which they are to be ordained;
- (b) Completion of the ordination course of studies or its equivalent;
- (c) Examination and recommendation by the regional or district board relative to their qualifications for the ministry and for ordination including their personal religious experience, ministerial call and evidence thereof, matters of education, doctrine, and practice, particularly their personal commitment without reservation to each of the Articles of Faith and Practice and their loyalty to the Missionary Church, and circumstances of personal, family, and business life which bear upon the ministry; and
- (d) Public service of ordination in which they shall witness to their Christian experience, affirm their conviction of a divine call to the ministry, their commitment to the doctrines and principles of the Missionary Church, and their loyalty to the Missionary Church, after which they shall be separated to the Christian ministry by the church through the laying on of hands.

(3) Rights

As long as ordained ministers maintain their spiritual life, moral character, and faithful ministry which first qualified them for ordination, and as long as they are neither under discipline nor expelled from the ministry, they shall have the right:

- (a) To preach the gospel and to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper, to perform all parts of divine worship, and to solemnize the rite of matrimony;
- (b) To be eligible for election to any office in the church for which ordained ministers are eligible;
- (c) To serve in a pastoral relationship with a local Missionary Church subject to the guidelines of the regional or district conference;
- (d) To be voting members of the regional or district conference and General Conference; and
- (e) To transfer from one region or district to another, subject to the policies and guidelines of the regions and districts.

(4) Duties

Ordained ministers shall be responsible:

- (a) To devote themselves without reservation to the Christian ministry, following the leadership of the Holy Spirit;
- (b) To report annually to the regional or district conference and the denomination on the appropriate report form, and to the regional or district director as required;
- (c) To place their credentials on file voluntarily with their regional or district director if they cease for a period of more than three years to serve in an approved ministry; and
- (d) To surrender voluntarily their credentials if they are guilty of an offense which would disqualify them from service as an ordained minister.

(5) Dual credentials

Ministers in the Missionary Church cannot hold credentials concurrently with the Missionary Church and any other denomination or credentialing body except to preserve pension or retirement benefits.

(6) Transfers from other denominations

If ministers having been ordained by another denomination desire to join a regional or district conference, they shall make application to the regional or district director, giving full particulars as to previous ordination, reasons for withdrawal and intention to join the church, and acquaintance and agreement with the Constitution as validated by an examination. This information shall be conveyed to the regional or district conference, which shall take one of the following courses:

- (a) recognize the previous ordination and accept the candidates at once as ordained ministers of the church.
- (b) provisionally recognize their previous ordination until such time as the district conference can fully recognize them as ordained ministers or advise their reordination;
- (c) delay action in view of further investigation; or
- (d) deny the application.

4. Licensed Lay Workers

All Christians are endowed with spiritual gifts according to the will of the Holy Spirit. The church recognizes that some lay people possess gifts which qualify them for acts of ministry which are such that necessitate formal recognition (i.e. hospital visitation, prison ministry, etc.). Therefore, the church recognizes the status of those licensed as lay workers.

a. Qualifications

Licensed lay workers must:

- (1) Be members of a local Missionary Church for at least two years;
- (2) Demonstrate spiritual maturity and Christian character;
- (3) Demonstrate a servant spirit and gifts appropriate to the area of ministry for which they are applying for recognition; and
- (4) Complete a course of studies that equips them for their area of ministry.

b. Procedure

- (1) Counsel with their pastor and regional or district director as to the nature of their gifts and proposed ministry;
- (2) Receive an official recommendation from their local church board;
- (3) Submit an application to the regional or district director; and
- (4) Be examined by the regional or district board.

c. Renewal

- (1) A lay worker's license is effective for one year only and authority to carry on the area of ministry shall cease unless it is renewed; and
- (2) Renewal may be granted if satisfactory service in the area of ministry is being rendered and all qualifications and duties continue to be fulfilled.

d. Rights

Licensed lay workers are given recognition to serve only in the area of ministry for which they are approved.

e. Duties

Licensed lay workers shall submit an appropriate annual report to their local church board and regional or district board.

5. Chaplains and Parachurch Workers

- a. Chaplains and parachurch workers shall conduct their personal lifestyle in a manner which upholds the doctrines and practices of the Missionary Church, and keep themselves above reproach in all matters of conduct and finance.
- b. They shall be accountable to the leadership structure and guidelines of the organization in which they serve.
- c. They shall make an annual report to the president of the Missionary Church.

6. Evangelists

- a. Definitions: Evangelists are persons gifted and called by God to proclaim the Gospel through itinerant preaching, sacred music, drama, or other specialized ministries focusing on winning people to Christ and discipling believers for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13).
  - (1) Missionary Church ministers duly credentialed by their regional or district conference, sensing God's call to a full-time evangelistic ministry, may be certified as either denominational, regional or district evangelists.
  - (2) It shall be their duty to do the work of evangelists and to give evidence of their ministry by proclaiming the Word and discharging all the duties of the ministry (2 Timothy 4:2-5).
  - (3) They shall uphold the doctrines and practices of the Missionary Church and keep themselves above reproach in all matters of conduct and finances.
  - (4) Regional, district and denominational evangelists are to minister within the structure of a board of directors or a local church board, who will give oversight, direction, support and accountability.

b. Classifications: Evangelists ministering in the Missionary Church will be classified as either regional, district or denominational evangelists.

(1) Criteria for Regional/District Evangelists

- (a) They must be members of a Missionary Church.
- (b) They must be credentialed by the Missionary Church.
- (c) They must make application to the regional or district director and be approved by the regional or district board for certification as regional/district evangelists.
- (d) Once approved, they shall report annually to the regional or district conference and the denomination on the appropriate report form and to the regional or district director and the president quarterly.

(2) Criteria for Denominational Evangelists

- (a) Regional/district evangelists and credentialed ministers living outside regional/district boundaries who spend at least fifty percent of their time in the ministry of evangelism, whose services are available to Missionary Churches, and who are not in full-time employment of another organization may apply to the president of the denomination for approval as denominational evangelists.
- (b) They must be approved, affirmed in their calling, and recommended by the region or district in which they live, or by the Executive Committee of the General Oversight Council if living outside of regional/district boundaries.
- (c) Approval for certification shall be made by the General Oversight Council upon recommendation by the president.
- (d) Once approved, they shall report annually to the regional or district conference, unless living outside regional/district boundaries, and to the denomination on the appropriate report form, and quarterly to the regional or district director, unless living outside district boundaries, and president.

(3) Qualifications for benefits to be received by regional, district and denominational evangelists are outlined in the policy manual of the Missionary Church.

7. Discipline of Ministers

All members in the church are expected to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in Scripture. Those who hold positions of ministerial leadership in the church are held to an even stricter accountability (James 3:1, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). Such conduct includes moral purity (1 Cor. 6:9-10), personal honesty (Eph. 4:25), and biblical fidelity (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Rom. 16:17-18). Ministers are to be consistent examples of authentic Christianity as they seek to emulate the character of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18). Furthermore, ministers shall promote the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 3:16-17) rather than seeking to divide it (Titus 3:10-11).

a. Purpose of Discipline. The church is commanded to discipline its members when they continue in open and habitual sin (Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). Church discipline has multiple purposes including the following:

- (1) Encouraging the sinning member to repent, thus restoring him/her to fellowship with Christ and the church (2 Cor. 2:6-11, 7:8-10; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).
- (2) Warning other members against such sin (1 Tim. 5:19-20).
- (3) Upholding and maintaining the moral purity and blameless testimony of the church (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

- b. **Process of Discipline.** No accusation shall be entertained against a minister unless it is brought by two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). Should any minister depart from the standard of Scripture and engage in conduct which conflicts with biblical principles of holiness, the steps of discipline outlined in Matt. 18:16-18; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10; and elsewhere in Scripture shall be followed.
- (1) The following steps shall be taken in the process of enforcing church discipline.
    - (a) Those making a formal accusation shall do so in writing to the minister, the minister's local church governing board and the regional or district director..
    - (b) If contacted, the local church governing board shall make a thorough review of the matter. If they deem a thorough investigation advisable, they shall contact the regional or district director within 24 hours of their decision.
    - (c) When contacted by the local church governing board, the regional or district director shall make a thorough investigation of the matter. If he determines guilt, he shall take appropriate steps of admonishment or discipline which may include temporary suspension from ministry.
    - (d) In the event no satisfactory adjustment is made, the regional or district director shall bring the matter to the attention of the regional or district board for appropriate action in consultation with the local church governing board. If the offense is of sufficient magnitude so as to call into question the moral purity and blameless testimony of the minister or church, the regional or district board may suspend the minister's credential. Action shall be taken by the regional or district board within three months.
  - (2) In the event that a credentialed person becomes separated from his/her spouse, in order to guard the integrity of the ministry and to deal redemptively with the persons involved, he/she will be given an immediate leave of absence from duties. Within the next eight weeks the following steps shall be completed to resolve the situation:
    - (a) A committee shall be appointed by the appropriate licensing board;
    - (b) This committee shall examine the case, attempt to effect a redemptive solution, and recommend appropriate action; and
    - (c) The appropriate licensing board shall take action.

1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5 and 4:12; Titus 1:7
  - (3) The entire process shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care and sensitivity (Gal. 6:1).
- c. **Removal of Disciplinary Status and Possible Reinstatement.** When repentance is evident and after a minimum period of suspension, during which time the disciplined minister demonstrates genuine intent to "walk in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:24-25), application may be made for removal of disciplinary status. In no case will the possibility of restoration to ministry be considered prior to removal of disciplinary status. Once disciplinary status is removed, application for reinstatement may be made, though in certain cases, restoration to ministry may not be possible.
- (1) "Minimum period of suspension" shall be defined as:
    - (a) In the case of sexual immorality (e.g., adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, etc.), two years
    - (b) In the case of other inappropriate sexual behavior, six months

- (c) In the case of other moral deviation, six months
  - (d) In the case of deviations from the doctrine and practices of the Missionary Church, six months.
- (2) This application must be made to the region or district which acted to suspend the credential previously.
  - (3) The entire process shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care and sensitivity (Gal. 6:1).
- d. Agreement of Ministers to Submit to the Process of Church Discipline. Every person who holds any credential with the Missionary Church explicitly consents to submit to the process of church discipline outlined above.
  - e. The Right of Appeal Under Due Process. A disciplined minister has the right, under this Constitution, to appeal a decision. This process is outlined in Article XVIII, "Due Process Procedure."

#### 8. Voluntary Surrender of Credentials

Any minister who voluntarily surrenders his credentials and seeks reinstatement of said credentials must do so within the jurisdiction of the region or district where the credentials were originally surrendered. In the event the minister has moved to another region or district, the regional or district board of the former region or district may refer the consideration to the new region or district.

#### 9. Inactive Ministers

Ordained ministers who have discontinued active ministry shall be put on an inactive list. After three years of such inactivity, the regional or district board shall recall the ministers' credentials, unless valid circumstances have caused such inactivity.

Unordained ministers who have discontinued active ministry shall have their credentials recalled by the regional or district board after one year of inactivity. They may still request to have their names on an available list.

Reinstatement to either ordained or licensed status is possible if ministers resume active service. They must make application to the regional or district board who will appoint a committee to interview them. The regional or district board will take final action upon the recommendation of this examining committee. Credentials will be restored if such action is favorable.

#### 10. Missionary Status

Licensed and ordained missionaries shall be members of the regional or district conference in which they hold local church membership during the time they are on active duty, on furlough, or on definite leave of absence. In all other cases, they are members of the regional or district conference in which they hold residence just as other licensed and ordained ministers. No missionary, regardless of status, can be a voting member of two regional or district conferences.

#### 11. Reporting

All ministers shall submit an annual report to their respective regional or district director. All missionaries shall submit their report to the director of World Partners.

#### 12. Retired Ministers

Retired ministers are encouraged to hold their membership in a Missionary Church in the locality in which they reside. When credentialed ministers in the Missionary Church retire, having completed at least 25 years of



approved ministry, they shall retain their credentials. In circumstances where an individual entered ministry later in life and was unable to complete 25 years of active ministry and was serving continuously until retirement, special consideration may be given by the regional or district board.

Ministers who are both retired and inactive may attend the regional or district conference and submit an annual report but are not required to do so.

## **ARTICLE XVII – LOCAL CHURCH**

### **A. MEMBER CHURCHES**

#### 1. Definition

- a. A Missionary Church, in the context of this Constitution, shall be a church which has adopted the Constitution of the Missionary Church, and which has been approved for membership by its regional or district board. These shall be regarded as organized churches.
- b. New churches not yet chartered shall be viewed as church plants. These will be regarded as unorganized churches.
- c. If membership in a local church falls below 15 baptized adult members (16 years or older), supervision and governance of that church shall revert to the regional or district board. This arrangement shall continue as long as the regional or district board deems necessary.

#### 2. Procedure for Chartering a Missionary Church

Churches desiring to be recognized as member churches of the Missionary Church shall follow this procedure:

- The pastoral leadership shall be duly credentialed by the denomination after being recommended and approved by the regional or district board.
- There shall be at least 15 baptized adults (16 years or older) in the church who are committed to the formation of a Missionary Church.
- The church shall be fully informed of and in agreement with the Missionary Church Articles of Faith and Practice.
- The church shall be informed of and agree to the responsibilities of a Missionary Church in proportionately contributing their share to the on-going ministries of their region or district and the denomination.
- The pastor and a steering committee shall serve as the examining committee to recommend applicants for charter membership.
- At a duly called meeting of the church, the approved applicants for charter membership shall by a 75% majority vote approve an action to join the Missionary Church agreeing to the responsibilities mentioned above.
- At a duly called meeting of the church, the regional or district director or his representative shall receive charter members and preside over the organization of the church.
- In addition to the pastor, the church shall be organized with the following officers: secretary, treasurer and at least one deacon or elder.
- The newly organized church shall submit an application for member church status to the regional or district board for approval as a member church.

3. Discipline

Any local church which fails to live up to the spirit of this Constitution, or which for other sufficient reason disturbs the fellowship of the denomination, shall be admonished by the regional or district director or by other persons appointed for the purpose by the regional or district board; and if the church fails to comply with the demands laid before it, it may, after full investigation and on recommendation of the regional or district conference by a two-thirds vote, have its charter removed by a two-thirds vote of the Ministry Leadership Council.

4. Fiscal Year

Each subsidiary of the Missionary Church, per federal law, is required to have the same fiscal year (January 1-December 31) as the Missionary Church, Inc.

5. Dissolution Clause

Each subsidiary of the Missionary Church is required to have a dissolution clause in its articles of incorporation and bylaws in compliance with federal 501(c)(3) non-profit regulations.

**B. MEMBERSHIP**

1. Definition

- a. Regular Membership. Regular members are persons who give clear testimony to and evidence of saving faith in Christ, have been subsequently baptized by immersion and have been examined and publicly received by a local Missionary Church. Candidates who as believers have been baptized in another manner may be admitted to membership if they are willing to be immersed as the Lord may lead.

Other requirements for membership in the Missionary Church shall be those set forth in Article IV.B.8.

Voting privileges are extended only to members 16 years of age or older.

- b. Dual Membership. The requirements for dual membership shall be the same as for regular membership and may be granted under the following conditions:
- (1) Members who are living in an area where there is no Missionary Church are permitted to become members of a church in the community where they are living and at the same time retain their membership in the Missionary Church home church, if it is acceptable to the receiving church and the home church. Ministers and licensed Christian workers who are serving outside the Missionary Church are permitted to become members of a church in that community upon approval of the regional or district board..
  - (2) Students and teachers at Bethel College and who attend or serve in a Missionary Church may be accepted for membership while retaining their membership in a home church.
  - (3) Members of or approved workers in non-Missionary Churches elsewhere, desiring membership in a Missionary Church, but whose membership should continue in a home church for reasons known and accepted by the local Missionary Church may be granted the privilege of dual membership.

2. Commitment

Members shall commit themselves to the pursuit of the Christian life in conformity to the statements of doctrine and lifestyle of the Missionary Church and the following Covenant of Membership:

## COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP

Having been led to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We covenant, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

- (1) To work together in Christian love; to join in mutual labors for the kingdom of Christ; to strive loyally for the advancement of this church in holiness, knowledge, and love; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines;
- (2) To contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God prospers us, to the support of this church and its worldwide ministries;
- (3) To maintain private devotions and family devotions where possible, to endeavor to bring early to a saving knowledge of Christ all over whom we have the care and influence, to walk circumspectly in the world, to be just in our dealings and faithful in our engagements;
- (4) To care for one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to take offense and always ready for reconciliation; and
- (5) To witness faithfully to the saving and keeping power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so that in every way we bring lost men and women to a saving knowledge of Him.

### 3. Discipline of Members

All members of Christ's church are expected to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in Scripture. Such conduct includes moral purity, personal honesty, and biblical fidelity. Members are to be consistent examples of authentic Christianity as they seek to emulate the character of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, members shall promote the unity of the church rather than seeking to divide it.

Rom 8:28-29, 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:3 and 25, 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:4-17; Tit. 3:10-11

a. Purpose of Discipline. The church is commanded to discipline its members when they continue in open and habitual sin. Church discipline has multiple purposes including the following:

- (1) Encouraging the sinning members to repent, thus restoring him/her to fellowship with Christ and the church.
- (2) Warning other members against such sin.
- (3) Upholding and maintaining the moral purity and blameless testimony of the church.

Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-11, 7:8-10; 1 Tim. 5:19-20; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15

b. Process of Discipline. Should any member depart from the standard of Scripture and engage in conduct which conflicts with biblical principles of holiness, the steps of discipline outlined in Scripture shall be followed. Hence, some or all of the following steps shall be taken in the process of enforcing church discipline:

- (1) Private reproof of the sinning member.
- (2) Reproof before two or three witnesses.
- (3) Public reproof before the church.

- (4) Termination of membership and possible disassociation and severance of fellowship.

The entire process of church discipline outlined above shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care and sensitivity.

Matt. 18:16-18; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Gal. 6:1; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Tit. 3:10

- c. Enactment of Discipline. It is hoped that the preliminary steps of discipline outlined in sections b.(1), (2) and (3) above will result in repentance on the part of the sinning member. However, if there is no indication of repentance after these steps are taken, the sinning person's membership shall be terminated in accordance with section b.(4) above. Such termination of membership shall be decided by the Governing Board after due consideration and prayer. The reason for termination shall be stated in a pastoral letter and delivered to the terminated member.
- d. Agreement of Members to Submit to the Process of Church Discipline. Every person who makes application for membership or who maintains membership in a local Missionary Church explicitly consents to submit to the process of church discipline outlined above in section 3.a, b and c.

#### 4. Inactive Members

A member failing to share in the fellowship and responsibilities of his/her church for a period of one year without just cause shall, after due personal counsel, forfeit his/her membership.

#### 5. Transfer of Membership

Members in good standing moving from one locality to another where there is a Missionary Church shall at their request be given letters of transfer. In case of a pastor moving from one Missionary Church to another, the memberships of the pastor and such members of his family as accompany him and are members in good standing in the Missionary Church from which they move shall automatically transfer to the new church of which he becomes pastor.

### C. LOCAL CONFERENCE

#### 1. Membership

The local conference shall be composed of the voting members of the local church. Such members must be sixteen years of age or over.

#### 2. Meetings

Local conference meetings shall be held at least once a year. Special meetings may be called by the regional or district director or the church board.

#### 3. Voting

Voting shall be done by the eligible members present in a meeting duly called for the transacting of the business at hand. Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted. (For a pastoral vote, an expression may be obtained from adherents, but this is not to be a part of the official vote.)

#### 4. Bylaws

Each local conference shall adopt its own bylaws in accordance with this Constitution and the acts of the General Conference and its district conference.

## D. OFFICERS

An officer in the church shall hold to sound doctrine as defined in this Constitution in Article IV.A.1.-6., shall model the characteristics of spiritual maturity and Christian life including conformity to the standards in Article IV.B.1.-11., shall evidence a God-given gift for leadership, shall have developed both the heart of a servant and the skills of a leader, and shall know how to exercise authority for the building up of the church and for the glory of God.

Not all mature Christians have gifts of leadership and all officers do not have identical gifts or characteristics. Leadership functions include guidance of the church in establishing goals and objectives, helping members identify and use their gifts for the good of both the person and the church, keeping satisfaction of personal and group needs in balance, teaching, counseling, and administering discipline.

The officers of each church may be pastor, deacons, elders, Sunday school superintendent or Christian education director, trustees, chairman, if other than pastor, secretary and/or treasurer and other officers as may be needed. These officers shall be members of the local church.

The above standard shall be applied to other leaders as defined in the local church bylaws.

### 1. Pastor

- a. Selection. The manner of pastoral selection shall be left to the decision of each region/district, with the provision that the local church, the pastor, and the region/district shall be involved in the negotiations.

The pastor shall be chosen from among persons approved as ministers in the Missionary Church.

Other than in situations of need, only men may serve as a pastor in a church with one pastor or as a senior pastor in a church with multiple staff. (See Position Paper X: "The Role of Women in Ministry")

- b. Duties. A pastor shall be an example to the flock of God by keeping himself free from all worldly entanglements and above reproach in all matters of conduct and finance. It shall be his duty to preach the Word; to exercise prayerful and diligent oversight of the church, watching for the souls thereof as one that must give account; and to seek earnestly the salvation of the lost, that in all things he may be approved unto God. The pastor shall be recognized as head of the local church and shall be responsible for the public services and general promotion of the church activities. He shall be an advisory member of all committees. It shall be his prerogative, with the approval of the church board, to arrange for all special meetings and to engage the necessary help for the same.

### 2. Ministry Staff

Full or part-time ministry staff may be hired provided the person has been approved as a minister in the Missionary Church or has been approved by the regional or district board for the ministry position.

### 3. Chairman of the Local Conference

- a. Selection. The pastor shall serve as chairman of the local conference unless the local church bylaws allow for another of its members to serve this function.
- b. Duties. The chairman of the local conference shall preside at all meetings of the local conference. The chairman of the local conference shall serve as chairman of the church board unless the local church bylaws specify otherwise.

4. Elders

- a. Selection. There may be one or more elders in each congregation as the local conference may determine. The process of selection shall include nominations from the membership of the local conference, review by the leadership and election by ballot by the local conference. Term limits shall be for a specified time as determined by the local conference. Their qualifications shall be such as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- b. Duties. The elders shall assist the pastor in the spiritual duties of the church, primarily in matters such as spiritual advice, leadership accountability, church discipline, and making disciples.

5. Deacons

- a. Selection. There shall be one or more deacons in each congregation as the local conference may determine. They shall be chosen from the congregation which they are to serve and shall be elected by ballot for such term as may be determined by the local conference. Their qualifications shall be such as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- b. Duties. The deacons shall assist the pastor in the spiritual duties of the church, provide the emblems for the Lord's Supper, and administer the relief program of the church.

6. General Sunday School Superintendent

- a. Selection. The general Sunday school superintendent shall be a person of deep piety and shall be in full sympathy with the doctrines and policies of the denomination. The superintendent shall be a member of the church and shall be elected by ballot for such a term as may be determined by the local conference.
- b. Duties. The superintendent shall have general oversight of the Sunday school. The superintendent shall submit to the local conference an annual report of the school. In all matters of special importance, the superintendent shall consult the pastor before decisions are made or actions taken.

7. Trustees

- a. Selection. Trustees shall be elected by ballot at the annual business meeting of the local conference for such term of office as may be determined by the local conference, subject to civil law.
- b. Duties. A chairman shall be elected in such manner as the local conference shall determine, and a secretary who shall keep an accurate record of all meetings. The trustees shall hold in trust the property and shall be responsible for its care and maintenance, unless other provisions are made for holding the property. They shall make an annual report to the local conference.

8. Church Secretary

- a. Selection. The church secretary may be elected by ballot at the annual business meeting of the local conference or may be appointed by the church board from the members of the board.
- b. Duties. It shall be the duty of the secretary to keep a record of the proceedings of each local conference meeting and also of each church board meeting. The secretary shall keep a church register and shall issue transfers, letters and certificates as authorized by either the local conference or the church board.

9. Treasurer

- a. Selection. The local conference shall have the option of either directing the church board to appoint the church treasurer from the church membership, or including the office of the church treasurer in its regular elections.
- b. Duties. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive and to hold all monies of the church except that from organizations in the church which have their own treasurers; to issue receipts where necessary; to pay all

obligations regularly as directed by the church board; and to give a report of the treasury to each local conference meeting or the church board as required.

## **E. CHURCH BOARD**

### **1. Membership**

The church board shall include the pastor and any of the following: chairman of the local conference, deacons or chairman of the board of deacons, elders or chairman of the board of elders, director of Christian education, chairman of the trustee board, church secretary, church treasurer, and as many others as the local conference may decide. Members of the church board shall be members of the local church.

### **2. Meetings**

The church board shall meet at least once each quarter. Special meetings may be called by the chairman or at the request of three members of the board.

### **3. Duties**

The duties of the church board shall be the transaction of business, prayer, and consultation relative to the work of the church. The board shall make arrangements for the support of the pastor and such workers as may be engaged by them. It shall pass upon all applicants for church membership.

The church board, exclusive of the pastor, shall represent the church in negotiating for a pastor.

## **F. AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS**

There may be organized in each local congregation a Sunday school, men's organization, women's organization, Missionary Youth Fellowship, and such organizations as authorized by the local conference. Auxiliary organizations shall be subject to the bylaws and regulations of the local conference and the respective regional or district conference.

## **ARTICLE XVIII – DUE PROCESS PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERS AND ENTITIES OF THE MISSIONARY CHURCH**

An appeal from a decision of any entity of the Missionary Church begins at the level appropriate for the appeal. The right of appeal includes the right of the body hearing the appeal to endorse or overturn a previous ruling.

An appeal from the decision of the pastor shall begin with the local church board.

An appeal from the decision of the local church board begins with the district board if the church is within a district and with the regional board if not within an organized district.

An appeal from the decision of the district director begins with the district board or regional board.

An appeal of the decision of the regional director begins with the regional board.

An appeal from the decision of a district within a region begins with the regional board.

An appeal from the decision of the regional or district board outside a region begins with the General Oversight Council.

General Time Lines and Administrative Details:

1. Within 14 days, the decision of the pastor may be appealed in writing to the church board.
  - a. Within five days, the chairman of the church board or his designee shall meet and review the appeal with those making the appeal. When the pastor is chairman of the church board, the board shall appoint one of its members, other than the pastor, to review the appeal.
  - b. A hearing shall be set up within 21 days of the notification of appeal.
2. Within five days of notification, the decision of the church board may be appealed in writing to the regional board, if the church is not in a district, or district board through the secretary of the region or district. The regional or district director or his designee will set a hearing before the regional or district board or an appropriate committee no later than its next regularly scheduled meeting.
3. Within five days of notification, the decision of a district board in a region may be appealed in writing to the regional board through the secretary of the region. The regional director or his designee will set a hearing before the regional board or an appropriate committee no later than its next regularly scheduled meeting.
4. Within five days of notification, the decision of the regional or district board, not in a region, may be appealed in writing to the General Oversight Council through the president of the Missionary Church who will contact the regional or district director and review all appropriate materials involved. Within 30 days, a teleconference or hearing will be arranged with the General Oversight Council.
5. The General Oversight Council shall serve as the final arbitrator in all cases referred to it. Appeals to the General Oversight Council are discretionary appeals.
6. In paragraphs 1.b. through 5. above:
  - a. Those making the appeal may be represented by counsel.
  - b. Minutes shall be kept.
  - c. The decision shall be given in writing within 10 days to the parties involved in the appeal.
6. In matters of faith and practice not specifically addressed by the Constitution, where a member or entity of the Missionary Church appears, in the judgment of the body having jurisdiction, to deviate from the traditional position of the Missionary Church, that body has the right to rule.

## **ARTICLE XIX – PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the General Conference in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with this Constitution and any special rules of order the General Conference may adopt.

In the same manner each regional or district conference, local conference, and all other constitutionally delineated entities of the Missionary Church shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

## **ARTICLE XX – AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended at any regular General Conference by a two-thirds vote of the conference, provided that all recommended amendments be published at least 30 days prior to the date set for the General Conference. Published at least 30 days prior to General Conference means notification of regional and district directors, ministers,



missionaries, delegates and churches. There shall be one reading of all amendments in a meeting prior to the one in which they shall be voted upon.

Recommendations for amendments from departmental boards must come through the General Oversight Council.

Recommendations for amendments from local churches, regions or districts must come through the regional or district governing body. Such action of the regional or district governing body must receive a two-thirds vote.

# **POSITION PAPERS**

## **POSITION PAPERS AND THE CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution of the Missionary Church is the basic statement of denominational beliefs and practices. Constitutional items are protected against rash and hurried action by the body by means of a set time for advance notice and a two-thirds affirmative action by the body.

Position papers serve various purposes. These papers usually enlarge on specific sections of the Constitution or address some other position of the church that needs to be elucidated for the constituency. Some are for application or amplification of our basic doctrinal positions. Some documents tend to be developed as the direct result of a social issue in need of clarification. Some position papers apply biblical principles where no specific Scripture may directly mention that issue. All position papers address situations that are relevant to the day in which we live and add to the denominational stance amidst a broader ecclesiastical dialogue.

The position papers clarify or amplify the body of the Constitution. They require a two-thirds majority vote of General Conference for adoption. Some of these papers are used as a part of the credentialing process for prospective ministers.

# **I. AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY FOR THE MISSIONARY CHURCH**

## **THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION**

Human beings were the zenith of God's creative activity. The first pair was charged with the superintendence of God's created order in a manner which would demonstrate responsibility to both the Creator and the creation (Gen. 1:27-31). Clearly, since humans are to have dominion over the created order, they must seek to understand it. Therefore, the quest for knowledge is a necessary activity. In like manner, if humans are to be responsible to God, they must know something of God's character, who God is and what He requires.

Education is the discovery and implementation of truth, truth about God and truth about creation, in such manner that persons become all that they are meant to be, accountable stewards who are fully aware of responsibilities to God, others and the world.

## **THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION**

The content of education defines the proper subject matter of the educational process. The church has historically thought of education as the study of a two-fold revelation, designated as special revelation and general revelation.

### **Special Revelation**

Special revelation is the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as commonly received. The Bible reveals propositional truth about God, man, and the universe, truth which cannot be discovered from any other source. The Bible informs about origins and presents human activity within the circle of God's sovereignty. The Bible makes human existence meaningful and assures a destiny with purpose. Biblical absolutes are intended to provide the foundation stones for all structures of society. Therefore, the study of the Bible, both as an end in itself and a means to an end (the proper interpretation of the meaning of the universe) is a legitimate pursuit.

### **General Revelation**

General revelation comes from observance of the universe. By observing, categorizing and experimenting with the created order, knowledge is gathered about God, others and the world. Therefore, study of every facet of the universe, including mankind as relation to it and responsibility toward it, is a legitimate pursuit.

### **The Integration of Faith and Learning**

Special revelation and general revelation have a relationship that is both hierarchical and complementary. The relationship is hierarchical in that special revelation always takes precedence over general revelation and provides a framework for what is learned from the study of general revelation. Exploration of the universe will yield insight into its form and function, but only the Bible reveals the purpose of the existence of the universe. The relationship is complementary in that neither will yield information which contradicts the other when properly understood. The study of both is essential for a balanced understanding of the nature and meaning of things. An adequate worldview cannot be developed apart from such a holistic approach to education.

## **THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION**

Meaningful education enrolls the student at the cradle and graduates the student at the grave.

### **The Home and Education**

The first and foremost responsibility for education rests with parents. Both the Old and New Testaments elevate the home to the level of an educational institution. God said to Israel:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deut. 6:6-7)

The New Testament ideal is found in Ephesians 6:4:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

While both of these passages seemingly refer to religious education, they also imply that a spiritual context is essential to all learning. It is in the home that the child first learns about others and the world around him. Interpersonal relationships, formative attitudes, habit patterns and value systems are directly related to home training. The church properly responds to this awareness when it makes available to parents the support and resources necessary to fulfill the task.

### **The School and Education**

Since it is logistically difficult for most homes to provide an adequate education, parents have chosen to band together in a community to provide a formal setting for their children's education. In the western world this has assumed the form of compulsory public education. Some parents, out of concern to teach a specific value system or religious heritage, have provided alternate education programs, the private school and home schooling. It is the right of parents to choose public, private or home schooling without interference from the state.

All Christians have a biblical responsibility as citizens to seek to use existing structure to influence community schools to reflect their desired philosophy of life and value system. In a pluralistic society, Christians should request that traditional biblical values be fairly presented in the market place of ideas.

### **Higher Education**

Contemporary complex social structures and the sheer mass of knowledge about the universe require a longer period of formal schooling than was necessary in former generations. The same biblical concerns which bring the church into involvement with education in the home and school will properly carry that concern into higher education. The need for an integration of faith and learning never ceases. Higher education is only a difference of degree, not a difference of kind. The more intense and specialized curricula of higher education must be placed in the correct context, a balanced worldview which gives correct place to God, others and the universe. Hence, the church should encourage her people to pursue higher education.

From within the context of the church, the Holy Spirit calls certain individuals to specific roles (Eph. 4:11-16). Both the Old and New Testaments, and the church through the centuries, have recognized that God calls and anoints some to special leadership roles. Appropriate programs in Christian liberal arts colleges, Bible colleges and theological seminaries are essential if those who are called by the Holy Spirit are to receive proper training. Such programs of study will be designed to allow those called of God to develop their fullest potential for leadership roles at all levels of the church.

### **The Local Church and Education**

In addition to providing support for the home and sponsoring institutions of formal education, the church should provide programs and opportunities for all of her adherents to learn more about God, the Bible, and Christian living. Every activity and organization of the church should have education as one of its goals. The discovery and implementation of

truth is always a proper concern of the church. When seen in this light, everything the church does has an element of education.

## **EDUCATION AND THE GREAT COMMISSION**

The Great Commission as given by the Lord makes teaching an obligation of the church (Matt. 28:19-20). It is essential for educational activity to accompany evangelism. The nurture which follows is, by definition, a process which begins at the new birth and continues throughout life. The discovery and implementation of truth to every arena of life, and especially the application of a Christian value system, are essential to discipleship.

- Adopted by the 1991 General Conference

## **II. THE GIFT OF TONGUES**

### **Introduction**

A revival of speaking in tongues influenced North America and other parts of the world in the last century, and the effects of this revival continue today. This movement has had a broad scope geographically, culturally and socially. So it is not surprising that there has also been a wide variation in the experiences and degrees of involvement in this phenomenon, as well as in the acceptance or rejection of the people and groups who espouse this teaching. Some who speak in tongues teach and insist that the gift of tongues is the evidence or sign that one is filled with the Holy Spirit. Some who do not speak in tongues teach and insist that the gift of tongues is not for this age, but was only for the time of the apostles and the birth of the church. Others find themselves somewhere in between.

The Missionary Church believes the entire record of the Bible concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of tongues must be understood against this larger backdrop.

### **A Spirit-Filled Life Will Be Characterized by Both the Fruit of the Spirit and Proper Use of the Gifts of the Spirit**

We believe that every Christian should be filled with the Spirit. This truth must continue to have strong emphasis in our teaching and preaching. The Spirit-filled life has been a basic tenet of the Missionary Church from its beginning, and our Constitution states what we believe concerning the work of the Spirit in people's lives: "The divine work of making men holy begins in repentance and regeneration, yet through a subsequent crisis experience the believer is to die to self, to be purified in heart, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that he may be separated wholly unto God to serve Him in righteousness and holiness. After the crisis experience, the believer is to be perfected in holiness in the fear of God and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Historically, the Missionary Church has stood for a warm-hearted, vital experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We have endeavored to hold to a correct interpretation of the Christian life as presented in the Scriptures. We believe there is an experience of the Spirit's fullness subsequent to the conversion experience. The vitality of this Spirit-filled life is dependent on a continual day-by-day abiding in Christ in complete abandonment to His will. This life will be characterized by both the fruit of the Spirit and a proper use of the gifts of the Spirit. We still maintain this position.

### **Possessing Spiritual Gifts Is Not Evidence for the Fullness of the Spirit**

Gifts can obviously be counterfeited. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 are sobering: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" If some of the greater gifts, such as prophecy, can be exercised so as to be regarded by Jesus as a work of iniquity, we should not be surprised when other gifts also become a counterfeit of Satan.

So while we recognize the gifts of the Holy Spirit as taught in Scripture to be valid gifts for the church today, no particular gift or gifts are the necessary or required evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, nor are they considered as the evidence of Christian maturity.

Although there are several instances in Scripture where people spoke in a tongue following an infilling of the Holy Spirit, this is not normative throughout Scripture. We believe these instances are descriptive of what happened during a unique time of historical transition, chronicled in the book of Acts. However the absence of explicit commands in the New Testament letters linking the practice of tongues to Spirit-filled living indicates that these instances are not intended to be prescriptive for all Christians in the church era. Furthermore, to insist that speaking in tongues is evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness invalidates the experience of all those believers whose lives have given abundant evidence of the power of the Spirit but who have never spoken in tongues.

### **The Gifts of the Spirit Are for “The Common Good” in the Body of Christ**

Every Christian has at least one gift. “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit “just as He determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11). Christians should not expect to receive or to exercise any one particular gift, several gifts, or all the gifts. With this fact in mind Paul asked, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). It is clear, grammatically and contextually, that the intended answer to these questions is, “No.” Therefore, Christians need each other.

Gifts are always related to service and are not to be used as a measure of Christian experience. We agree with A.B. Simpson when he said, “...our possession of these gifts does not affect our personal salvation and sanctification, and our standing with **God as subjects** of His grace.”<sup>1</sup> Gifts are not to be exercised selfishly, but are for the profit of the whole body.

### **The Gift of Tongues Must Be Practiced with Orderliness, Unity and Love**

Speaking in tongues is referred to in scripture both in corporate and private worship. The guidelines for speaking in tongues in a corporate setting are found in 1 Corinthians 14 and state 1) that no more than two or, at the most, three may speak in a tongue during a service, and 2) there must be one present who can interpret. Paul says that in the church he would rather speak five intelligible words than ten thousand in a tongue. Private speaking in tongues refers to a private conversation with God. Paul sees limited value in this, however, since the benefit consists only in the personal edification of the speaker—not the edification of the entire body (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4).

The gift of tongues is not intended to be divisive. However, due to the passion people have for their positions, both the acceptance and the rejection of tongues have often caused division in churches, homes, and other groups. Pride and division in the Corinthian church created problems in the unity of the body. The instruction clearly shows that loveless Christianity, unbiblical judgment of others, rifts in a congregation, and refusal to listen to the teaching of Scripture are not of the Holy Spirit.

### **Christians Should Be Known by Their Fruit Rather Than by Their Gifts**

The Missionary Church considers the biblical distinction between the gifts and the graces of the Spirit important. The gifts of the Spirit are clearly presented in 1 Corinthians 12. The graces of the Spirit are bound together by love (1 Corinthians 13), and the desire for spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1) must be preceded by earnest pursuit of love. The graces of the Spirit are also identified as fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is evident that one may possess a gift or several of the gifts of the Spirit without enjoying the necessary graces of the Spirit. A gift, such as prophecy, can be exercised without the grace of love and thus be little more than noise (1 Corinthians 13:1).

The graces or fruit of the Spirit make it possible for the Christian to exercise the gifts of the Spirit in a manner that will bring glory to God and will bring His blessing upon and enhance the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ. Since Paul presents love as “the most excellent way” it suggests that love is the true essence of all the graces of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31b). The truth of 1 Corinthians 13 indicates that this is so. All of the other graces or fruit spring out of love: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christians should be known by their fruit rather than by their gifts. The most visible evidence of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is love: love for God, love for the body of Christ, and love for a lost world.

## Summary

The believer must have a passion for the Person of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of gifts. The Bible clearly teaches that the Christian life is a relationship with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit.

The Missionary Church believes that the consuming passion of the Holy Spirit is to present and glorify Christ (John 15:26). Anything that detracts from the central theme, Jesus Christ, lessens the effectiveness of the church. Like Paul, we are “resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Seeking manifestations more than seeking Christ is a danger to be avoided. To quote A.B. Simpson again, “When we seek anything less than God we are sure to miss His highest blessing and likely to fall into side issues and serious errors.”<sup>2</sup>

Pastors should teach the Spirit-filled, victorious Christian life—not as an option for the Christian, but as a necessity. Our congregations need to know the deepened experience of the grace of God in their lives. We must not lose sight of what God has already done for us or deny His past blessings. We counsel our people to be “led by the Spirit of God” (Romans 8:14) and “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:39).

<sup>1</sup>A. B. Simpson, *Gifts and Grace* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>A. B. Simpson,

- Revised by the 2003 General Conference

### III. THE ASSURANCE OF THE BELIEVER

*We recognize there are committed Christians who hold differing views concerning the assurance of the believer. Because of our commitment to the Great Commission and our Purpose Statement, we will not make the differing views of the assurance of the believer an issue of division or disunity. We will proclaim the holiness of God, the love of God for all persons, and the call to holy living, regardless of differing views on the assurance of the believer. Regional and, district directors and credentialing committees are to use this position paper in the credentialing process.*

The Scriptures teach that the Christian believer may have the blessed assurance of being saved. He need not live in uncertainty as to his relationship with God. He can know beyond doubt that his sins are forgiven and he is a child of God.

#### Assurance of Acceptance

First, the believer may be assured by the witness of the Spirit, that inward evidence of acceptance with God. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom 8:16). "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us " (1 John 3:24). The Spirit bears witness after faith has been exercised in the promises of God (Cf. Heb. 11:5-6).

Other evidences are also given by which the believer may be certain about his saved relationship. The first Epistle of John, which centers on knowing, conditions that certainty on such evidences as conforming one's life to the Word of God (2:3-5); doing what is right (2:29; 3:7-10); loving fellow Christians (3:14-15); possessing an uncondemning heart (3:19-21); and living victoriously over sin and Satan (5:18).

#### Assurance of Security

There is another aspect to assurance, the certainty of being kept. We may enjoy assurance of present acceptance, but what about the future? Can we have the assurance of perseverance? Sometimes defeated people are discouraged from beginning the Christian life for fear they will not "hold out."

There is no question about the gracious purpose and the power of God to keep His own from falling, and to present them before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy (Jude 24). God's enabling power far exceeds even our asking. He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," (Eph. 3:20). God is greater than every degree and kind of opposition. Paul therefore asks, "If God is for us, who can

be against us?" (Rom 8:31). No outside enemy or force is strong enough to sever us from the love of God. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

### **Condition of Security**

We need not worry, therefore, about God's ability or loving purpose to make us final victors. But this outcome is not automatic or inevitable. Throughout the New Testament it is consistently taught that the keeping power of God becomes effective through the exercise of faith. The elect "through faith are shielded by God's power" (1 Peter 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews, addressing them as "holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling," calls for steadfast faith: "We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (Heb. 3:1, 14).

Let us observe that the scriptural condition for salvation is believing. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). See also John 3:16, 18; 5:24; 6:40, 47. But the word "believes" used in all of these passages is in the present tense, and it means "to believe and to continue to believe." It is the continuous or progressive present, and implies not only an initial act of faith but a maintained attitude. Assurance of security, therefore, is for the believing one. We are saved by faith and we are kept by faith.

### **False Security**

Nowhere in the New Testament is it suggested that a Christian can presume on his saved relationship. Nowhere is the idea conveyed that he has "arrived" and all he needs to do is "coast in" because of an initial act of faith. Nowhere is encouragement given to the backslider that since he was once saved he will always be saved. Nowhere is there any support for the antinomian heresy that a Christian can indulge in sin with impunity. On the contrary, followers of Christ are exhorted to "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matt. 26:41); "be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the lawless men and fall from your secure position" (2 Peter 3:17); "be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10); hold "on to faith and a good conscience" in order to avoid shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:18); "be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good" (Titus 3:8); "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (Heb. 10:23); "stand firm in the Lord" (Phil. 4:1).

The Christian is warned of mortal dangers through salt losing its saltiness (Lk. 14:34-35); through failing to remain in Christ (John 15:6); in being moved from the hope held out in the gospel (Col. 1:23); in wandering from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10); in escaping from the trap of the devil (2 Tim. 2:24, 26); in ignoring such a great salvation (Heb. 2:3); in turning away (apostatizing) from the living God (Heb. 3:12); in being hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13); in deliberately keeping on sinning (Heb. 10:26-31); in wandering from the truth (James 5:19-20); in being overcome by the world (2 Pet. 2:20-22); in forsaking one's first love (Rev. 2:4, 5).

This is the clear teaching of the New Testament. God's sovereign provision is coupled with human responsibility. The declarations of Scripture are always linked with demands, the indicatives with imperatives. Security is for the one who is believing. We are kept by the power of God through faith. The classical passages on God's keeping power, John 10 and Romans 8, both condition security on human faith evidenced in obedience. The promise of eternal life and protection from enemies is for those who listen to the voice of Christ and follow Him (John 10:27-28). The promises in Romans 8:29-39 are for those who love God (vs. 28), a love which will be demonstrated by keeping the commandments of Christ (See John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10; compare Matt. 28:19-20).

### **Truth in Balance**

These complementary truths, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, have not always been kept in balance. In fact, men, seizing upon one to the exclusion of the other, have tried to erect entire theological systems on only one of them. For example, Calvin, who was preceded by Augustine, erected his system on the principle of the sovereignty of God with five main points: (1) unconditional election; (2) limited atonement; (3) total moral inability and depravity; (4) irresistible grace; and (5) the final perseverance of the saints. Calvin held that God predestinated some, including babies, to be saved; others to be damned. The difference in destinies was found not in any human response to or rejection of the gospel but in the inscrutable will of God. Some of his followers have carried these principles to fatalistic extremes. They



have opposed any evangelistic or missionary effort as an affront to God's sovereignty. Many so-called Calvinists today hold greatly modified views of the system even though they still hold to the capstone of the structure "Once in grace, always in grace" or "Once saved, always saved."

Arminius, who belonged to the generation following Calvin, attempted to counter the Calvinistic system by insisting upon (1) election conditioned upon God's foreknowledge of individual response to the gospel; (2) atonement with the world in view; (3) moral good only through regeneration based on the faith of the individual; (4) possibility of resisting grace; (5) perseverance through the help of the Holy Spirit by the response of faith. Historically the Missionary Church has been in agreement on these five points. However, some of those who followed Arminius went much further. They built their system on the principle of human freedom to the exclusion of divine sovereignty and came out with a revised form of the heresy of Pelagianism. They denied human depravity, affirmed man's inherent goodness, stressed human effort and volition, and ended up with salvation by works.

### **Final Arbiter**

The final arbiter of truth is the Word of God, to which the Missionary Church is committed. The Word sets forth both the truth of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God in His sovereignty chose to create man a free being to exercise choice within His sovereign purpose.

Admittedly, the operation of both transcends human understanding, but the greatest theologian of all time, the Apostle Paul, holding to both could only bow in praise before the unsearchable wisdom of God. In the 9th chapter of Romans, he sets forth in unrelieved clarity God's initiative, purpose, and work in saving man by sovereign grace. "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy." "Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" But in the chapter which follows, man's responsibility is set forth with such emphasis that the initiative for his salvation seems to rest solely with him: "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Then the Apostle places still more responsibility on man: "And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

Then in the 11th chapter of Romans, these two great principles are repeatedly joined. The fact is stated, but the method transcends human understanding. The great theologian can only express wonder and praise as he marvels at the transcendent ways of God: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgment, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

To sum up, the Scriptures teach both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. They teach, on the one hand, the adequacy of God's provision in grace to save us, and on the other hand, the need of exercising and maintaining faith to make the provision of salvation effective. Through faith the believer may enjoy the assurance of both present acceptance and God's keeping power. But a lapse of vital, operative, obedient faith can lead to tragedy. New Testament Christians are warned that there is no escape from the consequences of persistent backsliding and that the possibility of apostasy is a biblical reality. Throughout the New Testament, Christians are urged to maintain a steadfast faith in and fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Revised by the 2005 General Conference

## **IV. ABORTION**

Abortion has been catapulted into the forefront of the ethical problems confronting Christians today. The issue has been nurtured in a general climate of moral relativism, a growing sexual permissiveness, and a threatening population explosion.

The moral issue of abortion is more than a question of the freedom of a woman to control the reproductive functions of her body. It is rather a question of those circumstances under which a human being may be permitted to take the life of another.

We believe that all life is a gift of God, so that neither the life of the unborn child nor the mother may be lightly taken. We believe that in Scripture God Himself has conferred divine blessing upon unborn infants and has provided penalties for actions which result in the death of the unborn.

The Missionary Church believes that abortion for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment or economic advantage is morally wrong. Consequently, we urge our pastors and people to become well informed concerning alternatives to abortion.

At the same time, we recognize certain medical conditions which pose a serious threat to the life of the mother and which may necessitate therapeutic abortion. In these cases, the decision for abortion should be made only after there has been medical, psychological and spiritual counseling of the most sensitive kind.

We also recognize certain traumatic conditions such as rape and incest which may result in pregnancy and which can create a serious threat to the psychological well-being of the mother and any existing family. We do not believe that the scriptural answer is to end the new life which may have resulted from such traumatic circumstances. Rather, we do strongly urge that total and continual Christian understanding and support be shown by the membership of the local church to the mother and any family involved during the pregnancy and following the birth.

Furthermore, the Missionary Church believes that local congregations and individual members must accept responsibility, under God, for the acceptance and loving care of all those born into this world as a result of our strong stand against abortion and that ministries should be offered to such persons within and without the church fellowship.

- Adopted by the 1981 General Conference

## **V. LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

Leadership is a term with many connotations. When we add the modifier "Christian," the connotations increase. Some of these meanings come from the culture of which we are a part, and some come from Scripture. It is important that we learn to distinguish between these two sources.

There is a tendency on the part of Christians to want to define an ideal model of leadership by studying leaders in the Bible, but we must recognize that the patriarchal culture of the Old Testament and the Greco-Roman culture of the New Testament were quite different from the culture of the latter 20th century Western world. This is not to say that there are no biblical guidelines for leadership. It is only to say that the result of the biblical principles of leadership applied to our situation may look different than when applied to other cultures at other times.

For example, in the New Testament we find no highly developed church structures as we do today in the West. Organization and leadership within the early church were relatively simple. For that reason, we find no models for the leadership of our large, urban churches with their professional staffs or for denominations with national and international dimensions. To say that we find no models, however, is not to say we find no principles; and it is to those principles that we need to give careful attention as we seek to develop models for our present situation.

The first New Testament principle to be noted is that every church leader demonstrates exemplary Christian character (1Tim. 3, Tit. 1:5-9). In pagan societies even to this day, character is not as important as the pragmatic ability to get results. Whoever can control spiritual power most effectively is looked to as a spiritual leader, regardless of his or her personal character or ethics. In the church, however, what a person is is more basic than what he can do. A leader is to be a living demonstration of the highest qualities of Christian life and thought and a living proof that biblical ethics work. These qualities and the living proof are not required only of leaders. Every Christian, whether in a leadership role or not, should be marked by them. The ideal is "every man mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). The point is that the basic qualification for leadership is a significant degree of spiritual maturity based on sound doctrine and continuing spiritual growth. A significant factor in this maturing process will be a lifestyle which puts into practice biblical values and which resists the molding pressures of contemporary non-Christian cultural values.

A second principle related to Christian leadership is that service is more important than status. Jesus made it clear that His followers were not to seek position or power for themselves (Matt. 20:20-28; John 13:16). There is one Lord; and the words meaning "rule" (Greek words with the root arch) are never used in the New Testament in reference to

relationships among Christians. So the Christian leader is not a ruler; he is a servant, although not primarily a servant of the people he serves. He is primarily a servant of God from whom he receives his guidance and direction.

For the leader to function only on the level of the group is to abdicate the role of the leader. This balance between being a servant and being a leader is demonstrated for us by Jesus Himself. The accounts of the cleansing of the temple and the washing of the disciples' feet picture for us the balance which should be found in a leader, as one who exercises authority and yet ministers to the people with the heart of a servant.

A related principle is that leadership is more a matter of function than office, of doing the ministry than of being a minister. Leadership in groups almost always begins as a ministry function and gradually becomes institutionalized into an office. The tendency, then, is to begin to think of holding the office rather than of performing the function of a servant-leader. Seeking an office for personal satisfaction or as the base for exercising authority is contrary to the biblical concept of servant-leadership.

A third principle relates to the existence of various types of leaders, ranging from the prophetic type, characterized by the ability to motivate people to obey the Word of God, to the priestly type, more akin to our modern concept of management. The latter type of leader will organize and run the programs conceived by the former, and some leaders will have varying degrees of these characteristics. The danger is that tension may arise between the two functions or between the people carrying out the functions, or that one function will tend to predominate at the expense of the other. For this reason, some prefer to distinguish between leadership and management.

However we may define the terms, we need to recognize that the body needs all of its members and both types of leadership.

A distinction is also made between professional and lay leaders. The concept of professional church leaders is not as clear in the New Testament as the general concept that leadership is a legitimate function in the church. Professionalism has grown as the church has developed institutional identity. The cultural factors become significant when dealing with this aspect of leadership. The church in a tribe with a subsistence level economy would not have the option of professional leaders although it would certainly need leaders. The house churches in places where there is government suppression of Christianity, as in China, do not have the option of professional leadership as we know it, but the criteria for leaders would still apply.

This does not make professional clergy unbiblical; but it does mean that we need to begin with a concept of leadership in the church which comes from biblical principles and which recognizes that some of our common concepts and patterns of leadership are more a product of 20th century Western society than a project of biblical principles or patterns.

A fourth principle underlying leadership in the church involves the recognition by the leader and by the church that a qualification for leaders is the possession of the appropriate leadership gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is why a leader needs more than just the general qualities of mature Christian character. All members of the body should possess these, and persons who are not in leadership posts are not exempt from the need to reach such standards. Neither are they second class members of the church. It is simply a matter of recognizing that God in His sovereignty has given various gifts to the members of His body and that they need to be recognized not on a hierarchical basis but on the basis that all gifts are for the building up of the church. A leader, then, is one who has God-given leadership gifts and uses them within the church with the spirit of a servant.

The fifth principle is that Christian leadership involves skills which need to be developed through careful study and practice. Those skills may vary with the cultural expectations of leaders and with the complexity of the organization involved, but diligence in order to be "a workman who has no need to be ashamed" applies to leaders as well as to every other member of the church.

These skills will include varying combinations of such things as guiding in the development of purposes, goals and objectives; motivating the church in the pursuit of these ends; instructing the church in God's Word; helping the members of the church identify and use their gifts for the good of the church and the fulfillment of the person; keeping group and personal need-satisfaction in balance; counseling; encouraging; organizing and managing the activities and ministries of the church; administering discipline; serving musically; and doing evangelism and church planting in unreached areas.

A caution needs to be raised about the tendency to confuse certain personality types with gifts of leadership. Stereotypes of leaders are sometimes formed on less than valid biblical criteria, and anyone who fits the stereotype is thought to be a potential leader. Adherence to the above principles will help to avoid the error.

A second caution relates to the tendency for leaders to seek to avoid the risks involved in leadership by shunning the role entirely or by trying to transfer responsibility to the church or to a committee or board. It is clear from Scripture that God's people have not always been willing to follow God's appointed leaders. Jeremiah's case is an outstanding example of this resistance. This can prove to be a severe test for the servant-leader.

In summary, the criteria for leadership in the church are: (1) spiritual maturity as defined by the Scriptures, (2) a servant spirit committed to the service of the church, (3) a sense of divine call, (4) appropriate spiritual gifts, and (5) developed leadership skills.

- Adopted by the 1985 General Conference

## **VI. HOMOSEXUALITY**

The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Gen. 2:24), and formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to be one flesh. In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-23). Everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bonds of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

Homosexual activity, like adulterous relationships, is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. In Leviticus 18:22, God declares the practice of homosexuality an abomination in His sight. In Romans 1:26-27 the practice of homosexuality is described as a degrading and unnatural passion. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 identifies the practice of homosexuality as a sin that, if persisted in, brings grave consequences in this life and excludes one from the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those once engaged in homosexuality were among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations need to maintain the belief that all human beings have sinned, and that all Christians have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly, and hostile to God. In the name of Christ we proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and power for godly living for all who repent and believe the gospel.

We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality. While homosexuals as individuals are entitled to Civil Rights, including equal protection of the law, the Missionary Church opposes legislation which would extend special consideration to such individuals based upon their "sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimizing the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to so-called "Gay Rights" legislation, where such legislation has been enacted into law, the Missionary Church strongly urges that churches and organizations be exempted from compliance by amendment to the law. The position and practice of such organizations regarding homosexuality is determined by their religious convictions. This we hold to be a grave matter of religious freedom.

Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations should compassionately proclaim the good news of forgiveness and encourage those involved in homosexual practices to cease those actions, accept forgiveness, and pray for deliverance, as nothing is impossible with God. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven sinner (1 Cor. 6:11).

We further call upon pastors and theologians, along with medical and sociological specialists within the Christian community, to expand research on the factors which give rise to homosexuality and to develop therapy, pastoral care and congregational support leading to complete restoration.

--Adopted by the 1985 General Conference

## VII. GAMBLING

The Missionary Church reaffirms its opposition to gambling and lotteries, including those run by government. These are socially, morally and economically destructive. They are rooted in covetousness and violate the biblical work ethic.

We believe that gambling in any form is potentially addictive. It is a social evil that feeds upon greed and sells a set of fantasy values that exploit people. It especially harms the poor who can least afford to forfeit their financial resources on the promise of instant wealth. The tragic end result is often deepened poverty and increased welfare rolls, to say nothing of the emotional damage and disillusionment experienced by the vast numbers of planned losers.

Gambling undermines the economic base of a nation in that it reduces the purchasing power of people. Money gambled by wage earners cannot be spent to purchase goods and services of constructive and productive businesses.

Compulsive gambling may cause the individual's character to be further weakened and to disintegrate. It may lead to indolence and self-delusion, the break up of families, crime, loss of jobs and even suicide.

Since we deplore the exploitation of the weaknesses of humanity, the Missionary Church calls upon all who are in positions of influence and decision-making to seek other means by which to raise revenue. We further call upon the churches and schools to conduct programs that will inform people of the evils of gambling.

--Adopted by the 1985 General Conference

## VIII. PORNOGRAPHY AND OBSCENITY

### DEFINITIONS:

**Pornography:** From the Greek words *porne* (harlot) and *graphos* (writing). Webster's Dictionary defines pornography as: (1) originally a description of prostitutes and their trade; (2) writings, pictures, etc. intended to arouse sexual desire.

**Obscenity:** From the Latin word *obscaenus* ("ob" means to, "caenum" means filth). Webster's Dictionary defines obscene as: (1) offensive to modesty or decency, lewd, impure; (2) foul, filthy, repulsive, disgusting.

WHEREAS the multi-billion dollar pornography industry in America has grown and continues to grow in epidemic proportions and is invading and affecting every segment of society; and

WHEREAS the lifestyle advocated by the pornography industry is in direct conflict with the holy living that is taught in the Word of God; and

WHEREAS family, church and community values and relationships are being seriously affected by this industry; and

WHEREAS the Supreme Court in 1973 reaffirmed that a community does have the right to establish and protect its standards; and

WHEREAS there is an alarming increase in teen-age pregnancies, child prostitution, sexual assaults upon women and children, and the demeaning of persons in direct proportion to the degeneration of biblical moral values;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that members and adherents of the Missionary Church unite their efforts and energies with organizations such as the National Consultation on Pornography, Inc., National Federation of Decency by Law, and other like agencies to defeat all forms of pornography.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our people to become aware of the magnitude of the problem and become involved in community plans to exercise a positive voice through actions such as the boycotting of products, publications, TV programs and places of business that promote this cancer on our society; and finally

BE IT RESOLVED that our people write to the president of the United States--

1. Thanking him for his own stand against the pornographic industry in this country.
2. Requesting him to order the Justice Department to enforce obscenity laws which are already on the books.
3. Assuring him of our prayers and support in this effort.

- Adopted by the 1985 General Conference

## **IX. BIBLICAL INERRANCY**

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith and conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

### A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself truth and speaks truth only, has inspired holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
4. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the church.

### ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Article I  | We affirm that the holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.   |
|            | We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the church, tradition, or any other human source.  |
| Article II | We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the church is subordinate to that of Scripture. |
|            | We deny that church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.   |

- Article III We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.
- We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.
- Article IV We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.
- We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation.
- We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.
- Article V We affirm that God's revelation within the holy Scriptures was progressive.
- We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.
- Article VI We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.
- We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed to the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.
- Article VII We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.
- We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.
- Article VIII We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.
- We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.
- Article IX We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write.
- We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.
- Article X We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.
- We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.
- Article XI We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar, of spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the church.

(Taken from "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," 1978.)

- Adopted by the 1989 General Conference



## **X. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

The important role of women in ministry is clearly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments (See Judges 4-5; Esther 1-9; Acts 18:14-28; Acts 21:8-9; and Romans 16:1-2.) and is a vital part of the heritage of the Missionary Church. We believe that it is consistent with both scripture and our heritage that the Missionary Church clearly affirm her understanding with regard to that role.

As members of the body of Christ, all women have been given spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). Furthermore, God has uniquely gifted certain women for administrative and leadership roles. We recognize that it is God's will that these women engage in church and para-church ministries, such as serving on boards and committees, teaching Sunday school classes that may include men, speaking in services, and serving on ministerial staffs.

We affirm the essential equality of men and women with regard to their standing before God and the inherited blessings of salvation (1 Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28). At the same time, there is a functional difference reflected in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. This difference does not deny the essential equality of men and women, just as God being the head of Christ does not deny the essential equality of the Father and the Son (1 Cor. 11:3).

We believe that the New Testament words "elder," "overseer," and "pastor-teacher" refer, with differing implications, to the same office (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Eph. 4:11; compare 1 Tim. 2:12). These New Testament references indicate that this office should be filled by men. The position of the pastor in a church with one pastor or the senior pastor in a church with multiple staff is the contemporary equivalent of this New Testament office. In addition, denominational and district executives who serve as overseers of the church generally or local churches specifically shall be men. In situations of need and for the duration of that need, a woman may serve in the role and perform the ministries of a pastor-teacher. In 1 Timothy 2:12 in the Greek, Paul says that a woman should not "continue" as the official teacher of a congregation nor "continue" having authority over men. He does not forbid her doing such altogether.

We believe what the New Testament teaches about the role of women in ministry is God's continuing will for His people in every era.

- Adopted by the 1989 General Conference

## **XI. ORDINATION**

We understand that the New Testament does not provide an absolute definition of ordination. However, we recognize the need to have a system for credentialing ministers that satisfies denominational and governmental requirements. We refer to this credentialing procedure as licensing and ordination.

Licensing is our recognition of the calling, giftedness and preparation of a person for a life of vocational ministry.

Ordination is the consecration of a person to ministry upon full proof of calling, giftedness and preparation as affirmed by the church.

We believe the responsibility and authority that accompanies ordination is primarily moral and spiritual and merits appropriate respect and submission from those served.

- Adopted by the 1999 General Conference

## **XII. OUR VALUES**

It is appropriate that we declare where we stand to our constituency, to a younger generation, and to the world at large. We expect this declaration to influence our concerns, shape our policies, fashion our strategies and determine short and long-range goals.

WE STAND ...FOR the essentials of the Christian faith as expressed in our Statement of Faith--  
...AGAINST the denial of God's Word as final authority in matters of faith and practice.

- WE STAND ...FOR the free exercise of religion--  
...AGAINST state intervention in the affairs, governance and hiring practices of churches and Christian organizations.
- WE STAND ...FOR the sanctity of human life--  
...AGAINST abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and the general eradication of the unique God-given dignity and worth of all human beings.
- WE STAND ...FOR pursuing renewal through commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the infilling of the Holy Spirit for power, lives of sacrifice and separation from the sins of this world--  
...AGAINST personal and structural injustice, whether it is religious, political, or economic.
- WE STAND ...FOR the right to share our convictions and the gospel of Jesus Christ freely among all peoples--  
...AGAINST any effort to deny individuals the right to adhere to and propagate the faith of their choice.
- WE STAND ...FOR Christian education where the biblical view of our world and life is central--  
...AGAINST education that is intolerant of the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- WE STAND ...FOR government based on the equal rights of all citizens regardless of race, gender, or faith--  
...AGAINST racism and anti-semitism anywhere, anytime.
- WE STAND ...FOR strengthening marriage and the family as God's basic social unit--  
...AGAINST the growing practice of divorce, premarital sex, extramarital sex and domestic abuse.
- WE STAND ...FOR the pursuit of a pure and righteous life--  
...AGAINST homosexuality, and lesbianism; incest; prostitution; pornography in all forms; drug and alcohol abuse; Satanism, humanism, and materialism.
- WE STAND ...FOR a vigorous prophetic/redemptive witness by the church to the state on clearly moral issues--  
...AGAINST politicizing the church or encouraging the church to speak beyond its area of competence.
- WE STAND ...FOR a generous response to the needs of the oppressed, poor and hungry through acts of Christian compassion--  
...AGAINST any "liberation theology" that advocates revolution and ideological subversion of the Bible and/or basic Christian doctrines to Marxist dictates.
- WE STAND ...FOR the support of religious liberty around the globe, the legitimacy of all nations to provide for their national security and the non-violent resolution of international conflicts--  
...AGAINST those voices on both the left and the right that would make churches and church organizations instruments of political activism with a primary commitment to a political ideology.

Having so declared we now give ourselves to the fulfillment of this declaration to the glory of God the Father. We do so convinced of His help, guided by the holy Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Adapted from "A Declaration" which was adopted at the 1987 convention of the National Association of Evangelicals.

- Adopted by the 1989 General Conference

### **XIII. ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME**

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a growing epidemic that may surpass the ravages of any plague in human history. In this decade, tens of thousands of North Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million North Americans are carriers of the AIDS virus. For those who have contracted AIDS, currently there is no known medical cure, and thus the disease is fatal. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results of those who are carriers of the AIDS virus.

We extend Christian compassion to all who have acquired this disease by whatever means (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Luke 10:25-31). We urge the provision of spiritual, emotional, and even physical care for them to the same degree that patients with other life-threatening diseases receive. Christians, following the example of Christ, should seek to minister to HIV infected persons. In keeping with our historical precedents (e.g., the furtherance of medical missions, retirement homes, inner city missions, etc.) we urge our local churches to become involved with the development of new ministries to provide compassionate care for persons with AIDS. They need the hope and peace that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can give them.

We are concerned for both the confidentiality of the infected and the protection of the uninfected. Failure by one who is HIV positive to inform any person who may be exposed to the virus is as morally reprehensible as is discrimination against an identified HIV positive person. We believe that the interests of the uninfected (including an uninfected spouse) have priority over the confidentiality of persons who are HIV positive and persist in high risk behavior. Furthermore AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special "civil rights" on persons afflicted with AIDS but threatens the health of others is totally unacceptable.

The Missionary Church reaffirms the sanctity of marriage and deplors nonmarital sexual intercourse, homosexual practices, and intravenous drug abuse. While we acknowledge that there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains that the two primary groups of individuals with AIDS in North America to date are practicing homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles.

Family life teaching and sexual education is a God given responsibility of parents. The church's task is to assist both parents and youth in understanding their sexuality in the context of biblical values. Sexual education alone, however, will not stop the spread of AIDS. Our society needs to understand and acknowledge that there are compelling emotional, philosophical, medical, sociological, historical and biblical reasons for practicing abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. Since God has designed sexual intercourse for monogamous heterosexual marriage alone, and since this form of sexual practice will ultimately help to solve this problem, the Missionary Church calls her people and her world to teach and live by biblical sexual morals.

In conclusion, the Missionary Church recommends the following three responses:

1. Confront the disease as Christ and His disciples dealt directly with the issues of their day (Matt. 8:2-3 and 9:35-36).
2. Care for those stricken, with the love of Christ and the good news of hope, forgiveness and salvation (Matthew 22:39; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 7:12).
3. Promote the biblical lifestyle which minimizes the spread of this infection (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20).

Amos, Williams E., *When Aids Comes to Church*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.

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Hayner, Stephen A., "AIDS: Ethical and Moral Questions," May 1, 1987.

"Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome," A Christian Medical Dental Society Statement. Passed unanimously by the CMDS House of Delegates, April 29, 1988, Seattle, Washington.

"National Association of Evangelicals Resolution on A.I.D.S." Adopted by the N.A.E. General Session, March 9-10, 1988, Orlando, Florida.

- Adopted by the 1989 General Conference

#### **XIV. SPIRITUAL WARFARE: THE CHRISTIAN AND DEMONS**

The Bible frequently pictures the Christian life as a warfare. The principal antagonists are God and Satan; but men (as creatures created in God's image) and angels (both good and evil) are deeply and actively involved. Christians, as God's children by redemption, are the special objects of Satan's attacks.

Occult practices are as old as Satan's invasion of the Garden of Eden, but a renewed and alarming participation in them is evident in our contemporary, Western world. The spiritual vacuum created by powerless religion has provided fertile ground for such activities to flourish. This trend calls for a fresh look by the church at the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, whether we want to be or not.

The mention of angels and demons raises a special problem for most Western Christians, however, because spirits are not functional beings in the worldview of the typical Western Christian. While the reality of angels and demons may be affirmed as part of one's theological belief system, they are perceived as being confined largely to a supernatural realm with relatively infrequent contact with people on earth, especially Christian people. As science has provided explanations for many of the phenomena of life, the gap between the "spirit world" and the "real world" has become larger and larger. Significant segments of our society have given up a belief in spirit beings altogether, and the impact of this is seen in the secularization of society and the liberalization of theology.

On the other side of the spectrum are the peoples in the Two-thirds World whom we are commissioned to reach with the gospel and for whom spirits are very functional beings in everyday life. While they may ascribe more activity to spirits than they ought to, their worldview is often nearer to the worldview of the Bible than is ours.

Because of this worldview shift, not only are angels and demons not perceived as very real, neither is the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are more apt to control their emotions and modify their conduct in the presence of important people than in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Person and work of the Holy Spirit has become a source of great confusion in the church. There is a need to recognize a truly biblical view of the world in which spirits are functional beings. This is critical because Satan, supported by his host of fallen angels, is seeking to "devour" us (1 Pet. 5:8); and, if we do not recognize the enemy, we will not resist him effectively.

The Scriptures are unmistakable, however, in their teaching that this war was won decisively on our behalf by Christ at the cross (John 19:30, Col. 2:15, Heb. 2:14). Provision has been made for the Christian to "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). We have authority to "overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). We can be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:35-39).

The Scriptures are also clear in their warnings and admonitions to God's people concerning relations with Satan, demons, and occult practices. In Old Testament times, Israel was told clearly that occult practices, practices which look to spiritual sources other than God for knowledge or power, were "detestable" to God (Deut. 18:9-13). Paul in 1 Cor. 10:20 gives insight on idolatry as practiced by the Gentiles when he says that behind the idols are demons.

In His time on earth, Jesus demonstrated how we are to do battle with the enemy, and the New Testament writers all include warnings concerning the attacks of Satan. Paul admonishes us to "take [our] stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:11). Peter commands us to "be self-controlled and alert: because our enemy the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). James tells us to "resist the devil" (Jas. 4:7). John cautions us, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

According to the Gospels, Jesus had much to say about Satan and demons, and a significant proportion of the record of His ministry is an account of His dealings with these enemies. Either Jesus was wrong in His belief in demons, or He was accommodating Himself to the wrong views of the people of that day, or He was right. Since He was right, there is no good reason to suppose that Satan and the demons have changed their methods of operation significantly or that the power of God over them has changed. We are still to be on our guard against them and resist them, not ignore them.

Every provision has been made for Christians' protection if they use the armor (Eph. 6:10-18) and the weapons (e.g., prayer, the Bible, the blood, praise/worship) available to them. But, if they fail to do so or if they "give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:27), they are subject to demonic oppression.

The primary tactic of demons in seeking this control is deception. Satan used it on Eve (Gen. 3:1-7, 2 Cor. 11:3), and he has been using it ever since. Deception is clever lying, and the deceived person is unaware that he is acting on the basis of a lie. God's truth is the primary defense against such deception; hence the need for diligent Bible study. Discernment often comes through other Christians; hence the need for faithful participation in the life of the church.

Satan's ultimate objective is to deprive God of His glory. That, of course, is impossible. No one can add to or subtract from the glory of God. Satan can limit the degree to which God's glory is proclaimed and demonstrated on earth, however, by influencing God's children to live beneath their privileges in Christ and by hindering them in their witness and proclamation. The Christian who is not living all of life to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31) is to that extent fulfilling the purpose of Satan.

Satan's first approach is to create doubt about the character of God or the Word of God just as he did with Eve. He will also try to keep believers from growing in their knowledge of the Word and from living in obedience to it.

He will also try to create a thirst for power in some area of life or for knowledge about the future which causes them to turn to a source other than God or His Word to satisfy this thirst. Sometimes seemingly innocent experimentation or careless participation in questionable activities become openings to the occult.

Sometimes, however, Satan goes beyond that approach to a show of power. He uses attacks on the bodies and minds of people and demonstrations of his power over certain natural forces and objects to produce fear and bondage (Job 1-2). Satan knows that his power has been limited by God (Job 1:10, Luke 22:31, Rev. 12:12). He is unable to possess or exercise ownership over a Christian. He is, however, able to attack in other areas; and unless one knows how to resist him, he establishes a "foothold" from which to harass. Because he uses deception so effectively, these footholds are often not recognized or not identified for what they really are.

Demonic footholds are reclaimed by confession, repentance, renunciation (where occult activity may be involved), and cleansing through application of the merits of the blood of Christ. Sometimes demons must be commanded to leave in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every believer has access to the spiritual power necessary to resist the devil (or demon) and make him flee. Power to resist is not a gift; it is the privilege of every child of God. It is probable, however, that in any congregation there will be only a few who carry on a direct ministry to those who may be experiencing problems in this area.

The congregation, on the other hand, in its expression as the body of Christ, should be prepared to provide encouragement, support, and a base of accountability to those engaged in such ministries. It should also provide a healing community in which those going through deliverance or those rebuilding after deliverance may experience Christian love, receive strength, and find counsel.

The victory of Christ is to be manifest in the life of His people, however, not only in defense against Satan's attacks; it is also to be expressed as a vital element in the proclamation of the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world. The demonstration of spiritual power and authority in confronting demon forces among animistic people groups is an integral part of declaring the message of the kingdom of God and of planting the church where it has not yet been planted. Jesus demonstrated defensive tactics for Christians, as in His wilderness temptation (Luke 4:1-13). He also demonstrated offensive ministry strategy (Luke 4:31-44) and said that the works He did His followers would do also (John 14:12). His final commission was, "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

It may therefore be expected that confrontation with demonic forces will be more open and intense in those areas of the world where the church has not yet been planted. However, we should not be misled into thinking that similar open and intense spiritual warfare is not a present reality in the Western world.

Members of our churches are therefore called upon to be diligent, in cultivating Christian disciplines, such as Bible study, prayer, mutual accountability, stewardship, public worship, fasting, and acts of mercy. These disciplines are means of appropriating the "whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:10-18 AV) for spiritual defense and mastering the "weapons of our warfare" (2 Cor. 10:3-5 AV) for effective ministry.

--Adopted by the 1989 General Conference

## **XV. SECRET SOCIETIES**

The Christian's supreme loyalty must be to Jesus Christ who is Lord (Romans 14:9; Acts 2:36). In all associations the Christian must be free to follow Christ, obey the will of God and should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). In light of biblical teachings, the Christian needs to understand the demands of discipleship regarding membership in secret societies.

Those organizations which demand a secret oath, affirmation, or password as a condition of membership are considered to be secret societies. Most secret societies are religious in nature. Frequently, prayers are offered, hymns are sung, members engage in acts of worship, and chaplains are chosen to lead in worship and to conduct funerals. However, the worship of these societies is often Unitarian, not Christian; the religion is moralistic, not redemptive; and the ends are humanistic, not evangelical (Acts 4:12). In contradiction to the teachings of Christ and the New Testament, these societies require secret pledges and vows which bind the future actions of those who join. Swearing unreserved loyalty to any secret society is in direct conflict with the Christian's commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. The Christian must be free to follow the will of the Lord in all things.

Therefore, members of our church shall refrain from membership in all secret societies and those who unite with the church must resign from membership in any lodge or secret order previously joined.

--Adopted by the 1991 General Conference

## **XVI. EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE**

The intent of this position paper is to address euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is not intended to address every issue of human suffering related to death.

We believe that human life is a gift from God and has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition that everyone faces. Suffering that may precede death can be very grievous. It also affords the opportunity for personal reflection and reconciliation.

The ultimate test of our life's priorities may well be how we deal with suffering in the face of death. Such was the case for our Savior in the garden of Gethsemane. He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34) and zealously prayed to be spared from suffering that would only intensify. At the same time, He affirmed His commitment to the larger purpose of the Father, whatever suffering that might involve. The absence of suffering is good, which is why Jesus prayed for it. At the same time, it is not the highest good, which is why He was willing to endure substantial suffering.

The Missionary Church opposes any intervention with the intent to produce death for relief of pain, suffering or economic consideration, or for the convenience of the patient, family or society. We believe that secular arguments for physician-assisted suicide are superseded by a biblical view of a sovereign God who places a limit on human autonomy. We further believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and taking of a life on the other (Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17).

In order to affirm the dignity of human life, the Missionary Church advocates the development and use of adequate pain management to relieve suffering, provide human companionship and encourage spiritual support and intercessory prayer.

While for the believer to die is gain (Phil. 1:21), it is wrong to impose upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us until we meet Him face to face (1 John 3:2).

"Physician-Assisted Suicide": a position paper of the National Association of Evangelicals, 1997.

"Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Theological Perspectives": a position paper of Trinity Seminary: The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, n.d.

“Euthanasia”: a position paper of the Christian Medical and Dental Society, approved by the CMDS House of Delegates, May 1, 1992.

--Adopted by the 1999 General Conference

## **XVII. SANCTIFICATION**

### **Introduction**

To sanctify is to set apart for holy use, to separate out from the profane for the sacred (Hebrew, qadesh; Greek, hagiazo). As with justification, sanctification is the work of God. It is a work of grace based on the merit of Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 6:14, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Through the work of Christ, God separates the believer from sin for the purpose of holiness, which is accomplished as the believer follows after the Spirit putting to death the misdeeds of the body (See Romans 6:22; 8:1-14).

The entire Christian life depends on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13,14). Peter also wrote that we are “God’s elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood” (1 Peter 1:1,2). What then is involved in this sanctifying work of the Spirit in the believers? The full breadth of that work includes two dimensions. The first is initial sanctification that is positional in Christ and occurs when a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior. The second is the experiential dimension that is expected and commanded of Christians. For example, note Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12, “...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” The moment one receives Christ as Savior the believer dies to sin and becomes alive to holiness (Romans 6:2-4). Then Paul commands Christians to keep on counting themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). Christians should stop letting this age squeeze them into its mold but should continue permitting themselves to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24).

### **I. Initial Sanctification**

To understand the full implication of what the work of sanctification includes, we must first appreciate the biblical truth involving our identification with Christ in His death on the cross. He not only died as our Redeemer, but He also died as our substitutionary Representative, paying the price for our sins. In Christ therefore, God sees every believer as being crucified with His Son and hence as a saint positionally sanctified in Him (Romans 6:6,7; 1 Cor. 1:30, 6:11; Galatians 2:20). Paul writes that God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on behalf of us in order that we ourselves might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The idea is that the Christian’s position in the mind of God is that of a person who died with Christ and is positionally sanctified. In God’s sight the Christian is viewed as never having sinned. Thus even the carnal Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1) could be truthfully called saints earlier in Paul’s letter (1 Cor. 1:2). However, one cannot read the New Testament or observe the lives of some Christians without concluding that not every Christian who is indwelt by the Spirit is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” that is, living according to His controlling leadership. It is a fact of the Bible that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor.6:19,20) but not all are controlled by Him. (See Romans 7:14; Hebrews 5:11-6:12)

### **II. Experiential Sanctification**

Positional sanctification, consequently, must be translated into one’s own personal life experience by the help of the Holy Spirit via the Word of God (John 17:17). This is that to which Paul refers when he writes to the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” While this experiential dimension of sanctification begins at conversion, substantial progress in holiness occurs when a believer willfully makes a complete commitment to the Lord’s control (Rom. 6:12,13; 12:1). Experiential sanctification involves three aspects.

**A. The Decisive Aspect.** The decisive aspect is commanded by Paul of the Roman Christians in Romans 6:12,13 and exhorted in 12:1. He describes this aspect as the presenting of one’s bodily members to God by a

determined effort of will. This placing of one's bodily members at God's disposal can begin at conversion, as it did for the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46). However, more often than not it begins with a resolute decision subsequent to salvation to make Christ Lord of every area of one's life. This decision usually follows a period of education and spiritual growth until one comes to realize that there is more to the Christian life than what has been experienced to that point in time. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said in Matthew 16:24 that, if anyone wished to come after Him as a disciple, he would have to deny himself and take up his cross, thus putting himself at God's disposal. Some call this decision "dedication," "consecration," or "a crisis experience." This is the point when, to the best of one's ability and with all the light available at the time, a person gives all of one's self and bodily members over to God's control and God then "baptizes" or "fills" the individual with His Spirit. (Compare Acts 1:5 and Acts 2:4.)

**B. The Progressive Aspect.** From then on, the progressive aspect of sanctification continues at a more rapid pace. In Romans 6:11 Paul commands the Christians to count themselves dead repeatedly to sinning of all kinds and alive unto God every time they are tempted to sin. In Romans 12:2, believers are to stop letting this age conform them into its likeness and they are to continue letting the Lord transform their living by the renewing of their minds. As Jesus stated in Matthew 16:24, they are to continue following and obeying Him and His teachings. The intent is that the longer we live this progressively holy life, the more our lives will become conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ, God's Son (Rom. 8:29). We are to continue being filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

The Spirit-filled life is a life lived under the control of the Holy Spirit using the Bible as one's guide. This does not mean that a Spirit-filled Christian will never yield to temptation and sin. However, if one should sin, confession should be made immediately and personal forgiveness accepted by faith (1 John 1:9-2:2). It is to be remembered that the fruit of the Spirit does not come automatically to people still involved with sin dwelling in their members (Rom. 7:14-25). The fullness of the Spirit does not make obedience to God an automatic thing nor the demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit something easy to exhibit on all occasions. However, this does not mean that the ideal should not be one's aim. New circumstances may call for renewed dedication of one's body to God as a living sacrifice when the Spirit leads and as the Christian matures in Christ. All of this involves lifelong growth and development in Christ-likeness through the continual sanctifying work of the Spirit by the truth of His Word (John 17:17).

**C. The Completed Aspect.** Finally, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is completed in one sense at the time of physical death when the spirit of the Christian enters into the Lord's presence (Heb. 12:22, 23). However, sanctification will be completed in the final sense when the Christian's body is resurrected and glorified (1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20,21; 1 John 3:2). Then the believer will attain complete sanctification for all eternity.

### Summary

To reiterate, the Holy Spirit enters and indwells the life of an individual at his/her conversion, and sainthood begins positionally (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19,20). The Spirit takes over control in many Christians' lives in a decisive moment of sanctification when that Christian permits the Spirit total control. From then on the indwelt and controlled Christian is expected to continue walking according to the Spirit's leading via God's Word, the Bible (John 17:17). This filling or controlling is something that is intended to continue in the sanctified Christian's life (Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 7:1) until it is completed in one sense at the Christian's death (Heb. 12:22,23) and in the final sense at Christ's return when the Christian receives a resurrection body (Phil. 3:12-14, 20, 21).

- Adopted by the 2003 General Conference



## **XVIII. DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE**

The historic Christian Church has universally held to God's omniscience. By definition the phrase "God's omniscience" includes the belief that God has exhaustive knowledge of all things actual and possible in the past, present, and future. Therefore, He foreknows all future events and possibilities (Mt. 11:20-24).

However, some in the Christian community have challenged this view of God's foreknowledge. The position, recently dubbed the Openness-of-God view, typically affirms that God is omniscient, but it redefines omniscience. This view of omniscience excludes God's knowledge of future free choices and actions by human beings. This idea maintains that God may know all possibilities, but He does not know the actual future that human beings will choose.

The near unanimity of the historic Church against the Openness view of foreknowledge and omniscience has been due primarily to the seemingly clear passages of Scripture on the topic. For example, the prophet Isaiah distinguishes false gods from the true God by the latter's ability to foretell accurately the future. Foreknowledge is the very criterion the prophet uses to demonstrate who is truly God (Isa. 41:21-24, 44:6-8; cf. Deut. 18:22). Furthermore, the Bible is filled with predictive prophecies, many of them having to do with Israel, the Messiah, and the Church. Since many of these prophecies include the future free actions of human beings, they could not be merely predetermined events that God knew would happen only because He would Himself cause them to happen (Dan. 11:1-4). Rather, God fully knows the future, both events that He predetermines thus causing them to happen, and future free human events that He foresees but does not cause to happen (Rom. 8:29-30).

The Church has maintained throughout the centuries that such foreknowledge is both biblical and powerful evidence for the God of Christianity. The Missionary Church remains consistent with the teachings of the historic Church: God exhaustively foreknows the future, including future free human events (Psalm 139).

- Adopted by the 2005 General Conference

## **XIX. A BIBLICAL VIEW OF HUMAN SEXUALITY**

*So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.  
(Gen. 1:27)*

### ***Sexuality and Creation***

The Bible begins its discussion of human sexuality in the book of Genesis with the account of Creation. Jesus himself rooted his teaching on marriage and divorce in Genesis 2, citing the creation account as both authoritative and forever binding (Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-9). The Apostle Paul reasoned likewise, anchoring his exhortations concerning Christian marriage in the specific language of Genesis 2:24 (Eph. 5:31).

In Genesis 1-2 sexuality figures prominently in a larger conversation concerning God's original intention for humankind--his crowning creative achievement. God, we are told, created human beings "male and female," indicating that gender distinctions are part of the created order itself, not mere culturally conditioned artifacts. Gender supplies, then, an important component of what it means to be human.

Furthermore, gender distinctions prove essential for the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity. Indeed, the fulfillment of God's initial mandate requires humankind to be both male and female. We read in Genesis 1:28: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'" Obedience to this original divine directive would be impossible without God creating and blessing innate gender distinctions.

Gender enables the wonderful mix of likeness and difference that makes sexual intimacy and procreation possible. Gender and sex are both divine gifts, part of a finished creation that God pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

However puzzling and problematic human sexuality may have become--especially in our day--God did not intend it to be this way.

Sexuality is a divine blessing. God created human beings, not only for spiritual intimacy with himself, but also for an extraordinarily rich intimacy within marriage. We read in Genesis 2:24: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). This same truth we find underscored in the New Testament (Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:31).

The creation account lays the foundation for a consistent and comprehensive theology of sexuality that will be developed throughout the rest of sacred Scripture. We may summarize the biblical understanding in brief: *Human sexuality is a divine gift, by which human beings, created male and female, may experience within marriage a deep and multi-faceted union--one that is physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual--and fulfills the divine mandate to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:28).*

Before we conclude this overview of sexuality and creation, however, we should interject one important observation: while the Bible consistently celebrates the gift of marriage (Gen. 2:18; Gen. 2:24; Pr. 18:22; Pr. 19:14; 1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4), it also celebrates the gift of celibacy (Matt. 19:10-12; 1 Cor. 7:25-38). Both are divine blessings. Both provide a context for human flourishing.

### ***Sexuality and the Fall***

God's initial created order was, indeed, "very good" (Gen. 1:31), but the Fall changed everything. It disrupted, first of all, the spiritual intimacy that God intended human beings to enjoy with Him. It disrupted, secondly, the intimacy that God intended us to enjoy within marriage, including its sexual dimension. In a word, since the Fall, our sexuality is broken. The Fall left no aspect of human nature or human experience uncorrupted. Human nature fell; and human sexuality fell with it.

It should come as no surprise, then, that we find such sexual disorder in the world. God's original design for sex--that it thrive within the context of a marriage between one man and one woman--has been thwarted in countless ways. Pre-marital sex, co-habitation without marriage, adultery, pornography, and various forms of sexual abuse are rife in contemporary culture.

Sadly, we witness these disorders even in the church. On rare occasions, even some pastors have succumbed to sexual immorality. Sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the clergy is but one of the more egregious signs of the depth and pervasiveness of human sin.

Disordered sexuality is not a uniquely contemporary problem. It was a plight in the biblical world as well. Many biblical passages clearly forbid particular sexual practices (Ex. 20:14; Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18; Lev. 20:10-21; Deut. 22:13-30; Deut. 23:17-18; Matt. 5:27-30; Mk. 7:21-23; Jn. 7:53-8:11; Acts 15:20; Acts 15:19-20; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Cor. 6:13; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 10:8; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; Rev. 2:20). Other texts catalogue the egregious consequences of disordered sexuality (Gen. 19:1-29; Gen. 19:30-38; Num. 25; 2 Sam. 11-12; 2 Sam. 13; 1 Ki. 11; Pr. 2:16-19; Pr. 6:30-35).

From almost the beginning of the human story, God's gift of sexuality--which He intended for our good--has been misused by us to our own detriment. Even the most illustrious Old Testament heroes--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon--practiced polygamy, though God originally intended marriage for one woman and one man. David himself was an adulterer. Biblical spirituality, in both its Old and New Testament manifestations, has been threatened with destruction by disordered sexual desire in its myriad forms.

We should not think, then, that our contemporary sexual chaos and confusion are somehow unique. They are evidence of the fallen human condition. Disordered sexuality is a problem both for believers and unbelievers. It is a problem for both men and women. It is a problem for those with both different-sex and same-sex attraction. Clearly disordered sexuality is a universal human problem.

But we currently find ourselves at a cultural crossroads. Two particular expressions of sexual disorder have come to occupy center stage in the contemporary debate on human sexuality, namely homosexuality and transgenderism. These have always been part of the fallen human condition, but the widespread clamor for their acceptance as morally appropriate lifestyle choices is unprecedented. It is incumbent upon the church, then, to think about such disorders--and those who wrestle with them--as deeply, biblically, and compassionately as possible.

### ***Homosexuality***

Homosexuality has become a hotly-contested topic in recent years. Matters of great import hinge on this debate, including the nature of human sexuality and the nature of biblical authority. So we must think deeply and speak clearly to the issue. We are, however, called as Christians to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). That requires us to carefully navigate the narrow space between two different errors.

On the one hand, we cannot accept the growing cultural consensus regarding homosexuality. More and more people accept homosexual behavior as a valid personal choice, exempt from any kind of moral censure. Same-sex marriage is becoming commonplace. Increasingly, objection to homosexual practice--no matter how charitably expressed--is characterized as hateful and "homophobic." We cannot simply adjust our theology to accommodate the changing moral climate. We must not exchange conventional "wisdom" for the truth of God's Word.

On the other hand, we must not overreact. We cannot single out homosexual practice, as if it were uniquely subject to divine denunciation. Indeed, the Scriptures clearly indicate God's disapproval of homosexual behavior (Gen. 19:1-22; Judges 19:1-21; Lev. 18:22; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:24-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10). But the Scriptures are equally clear about God's disapproval of heterosexual immorality. (See previously cited Scriptures.) Sexual immorality of all kinds contradicts clear biblical teaching, distorts the divine gift of sexuality, and stands under the righteous judgment of a holy God. The Scriptures warn us: "Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18), in whatever form that immorality may take.

While we find ourselves in the midst of a cultural debate on homosexual *practice*, we also find ourselves debating sexual orientation itself. Some see sexual orientation as a matter of biological determinism. People are prone to same-sex attraction because of genetics, they say. Others think that it is conditioned by initial sexual experiences. Still others think that same-sex attraction is purely voluntary.

At this point, thoughtful Christians may have more questions than answers. Human sexuality is a remarkably complex phenomenon with biological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual components. To explain same-sex attraction over-simplistically--as merely nature, merely nurture, or merely an act of the will--fails to do justice to sexuality's complexity.

But we do know this: we live in a fallen world in which much is not as it was supposed to be. Disaster, disease, death--none of these accord with God's original intent. They are part and parcel of a creation in "bondage to corruption" (Rom. 8:21). In a fallen, disordered creation, it should come as no surprise that human desires become disordered, that sexual desire--which was designed to blissfully propel us toward sexual intimacy and procreation within marriage--gets bent out of shape. Some people, through no fault of their own, find themselves struggling with same-sex attraction. This fits with what we know about our fallen world and our fallenness within it. Creation is broken, waiting to be restored. We are still waiting for Jesus to make "all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

Nonetheless, we do not need to fully understand the origins of same-sex attraction to insist that God both demands and divinely enables obedience to his commands. The Bible clearly prohibits sex beyond the bounds of heterosexual marriage. So even if the Bible has little to say *directly* about sexual orientation, that is something of a moot point. What the Bible prohibits is sexual immorality. Sexual attraction is not the issue; sexual behavior is.

### ***Transgenderism***

Though God originally created two distinct and complementary sexes (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4), a distinction evident in the physiological makeup of the human race, one of the effects of the Fall is that some persons experience gender confusion. They perceive their gender to differ psychologically from their gender biologically. This differs from the

rare condition of *intersexualism* or *hermaphroditism*, conditions in which a person's sex is biologically ambiguous--that is, a person possesses both male and female primary sexual traits. In the case of *transgenderism*, an individual's sex is biologically clear but psychologically unclear. It is an issue, not of physiology, but of self-perception.

Recently, the American medical community has begun providing a range of treatment options for what is technically called "gender dysphoria," including hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery. Many LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender) advocates are seeking to normalize transgenderism, insisting that individuals have a right to define gender according to their self-perception, rather than according to their biological makeup. Furthermore, many public schools are encouraging parents and staff to validate the feelings of those with "gender dysphoria."

Nonetheless, any understanding of gender as self-defined or self-determined stands in sharp opposition to the created order and to the Word of God. God, in his wisdom, made humankind "male and female" (Gen. 1:27). That order, and each individual's participation in it, must be valued and affirmed. Gender is an important component of human personhood and cannot be tampered with without individuals suffering untold harm.

How gender roles should be understood and appropriately expressed may vary from culture to culture, but gender itself remains rooted in Creation rather than culture. While gender embraces more than mere biology, it cannot be determined apart from it.

It is indeed tragic that the Fall has introduced biological anomalies like intersexuality into human experience. It is tragic that some individuals suffer from gender identity confusion. We look longingly for the liberation of creation from its current "bondage to corruption" (Rom. 8:21) and the "redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23). In the meantime, we must show love and compassion to those struggling with gender identity confusion and invite them to share in the hope for wholeness held out in the gospel.

While we cannot condone the actions of those who seek to chemically or surgically alter their biologically indicated gender, we must sympathize with the profound "gender dysphoria" that inclines them to do so. Some of those who wrestle with this issue are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must embrace them in the bonds of Christian affection and fellowship, following the example of Jesus, of whom it was said: "A bruised reed he will not break" (Is. 42:3; Matt. 12:20).

As believers, we are called to extend to our neighbors love and compassion. We are called to affirm the worth of every person as an image bearer of God. We are called to invite them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet we also insist that individuals should not seek to alter their biologically indicated gender in order to align it with their gender as self-perceived.

### ***Sexuality and Redemption (Present and Future)***

Disordered sexuality remains a deep and pervasive problem, but God has provided a redemptive remedy in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God created us for wholeness as human beings—including sexual wholeness. This wholeness, so tragically distorted by sin, can be restored by God's grace. Our fallen sexuality can be redeemed in Christ.

We can be redeemed from the *penalty* of sin. Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross. Christ died for those with same-sex attraction and gender confusion just as he died for those of us whose lives are sexually broken in other ways (Rom. 3:23). There is no sin, sexual or otherwise, that cannot be forgiven by God for those who trust in Jesus. (1 Cor. 6:9-11) When we are in Christ, sin's penalty is cancelled. Our true identity, then, is found in Christ, not in sexual attraction.

We can now also be redeemed from the *power* of sin. God's moral demands are impossible to meet in our own strength. But Jesus breaks the power of cancelled sin. With the divine aid of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, God's grace enables those who follow Jesus to live lives of moral purity and holy sexuality. This does not mean that grace necessarily eliminates the desire for sexual expressions God has ruled out of bounds. It does not mean, for example, that God will necessarily eliminate a person's same-sex attraction or gender confusion. God has clearly forbidden adultery, and yet the Scriptures and Christian experience make clear that Christians still wrestle with adulterous

desires. Temptation to sin remains a characteristic feature of the Christian life. But while temptation may be inevitable, succumbing to temptation is not (1 Cor. 10:13). God provides us freedom from sin's enslavement (Rom. 6:6). But, as followers of Christ, in order to experience this freedom, we must continue to resist the dangerous undertow of our sinful nature (Gal. 5:17, Col. 3:5). We are enabled to resist the power of sin, sexual and otherwise, as we walk in the Spirit sustained by God's strength (Gal. 5:16, Phil. 4:13).

Those in Christ will ultimately be redeemed from the *presence* of sin. While we can, by God's grace, progressively overcome the power of sin during this life, we will not attain complete perfection until our bodies are fully redeemed and glorified (Rom. 8:23). Then we will forever dwell, sin-free, in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1-5). While gender distinctions will remain in eternity—we will still be male or female—human sexual expression was designed by God only for the current created order, where it serves as a symbol of the spiritual intimacy between Jesus and his bride, the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). Once Jesus has been fully united with his bride, marriage and sexual expression, as we now know them, will be replaced with the higher pleasures and the perfect intimacy of the new creation (Matt. 22:23-33).

### ***Human Sexuality: Core Affirmations***

Therefore, the Missionary Church, in faithfulness to the Scriptures, and in concert with historic Christian orthodoxy, affirms the following truths:

- We affirm that God's intention for sex is that it adorn the institution of marriage--a sacred covenant between one man and one woman.
- We affirm that sex is a divine gift, given to seal the marriage covenant, and intended both for pleasure (Pr. 5:18-19) and for procreation (Gen. 1:28).
- We affirm that sex is part of the current order of creation, where it serves as a symbol of that glorious spiritual intimacy by which it will be subsumed in the new creation (Matt. 22:23-33).
- We affirm that God intends heterosexual marriage to serve as a living symbol of the relationship between Jesus and his bride, the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).
- We affirm that God declares all sex outside the boundaries of marriage--whether pre-marital or extramarital, whether heterosexual or homosexual--as sin.
- We affirm that sexual disorder is a universal human problem and that *all* sexual sin lies under the judgment of God.
- We affirm that God calls and empowers all Christians, whatever the nature of their sexual attraction, to moral purity and "holy sexuality."<sup>1</sup>
- We affirm that homosexuality is contrary to God's original design for human flourishing and that homosexual behavior is clearly forbidden in the Scriptures.
- We affirm that homosexual marriage, even though it may be sanctioned by the State, remains forbidden by God.
- We affirm that gender is a divine gift, essential to both our humanity and personal identity.
- We affirm that God's design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female, a distinction evident in physiological makeup of the human race.
- We affirm that gender identity is biologically (physiologically) determined, rather than being dependent on self-perception.
- We affirm that sexual sin--in whatever form it manifests itself--cannot efface the image of God. All human beings--whatever the precise nature of their sin--remain worthy of our compassion and respect, just as they remain the object of the lovingkindness of God (Rom. 5:8).
- We affirm that God calls us to love sinners, even as we grieve for their sin.

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase is Christopher Yuan's from *Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God, A Broken Mother's Search for Hope*.

- We affirm that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and are in need of the redeeming and restorative grace of God.
- We affirm our confidence in the saving power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16) and the life transforming power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). God intends grace, rather than sin, to have the last word in the lives of his children. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

- Adopted by the 2015 General Conference

# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDENTIALING

#### **Licensing**

Applicants must have completed a minimum course of study consisting of at least one course in each of the following: Old Testament, New Testament, biblical or systematic theology, practical ministry theology, biblical interpretation, homiletics or communication, leadership and History and Polity of the Missionary Church.

#### **Ordination**

Candidates for ordination shall fulfill the educational requirements listed below

- Completion of any bachelor's degree in professional Christian ministries, *or*
- Completion of any master's degree in professional Christian ministries, *or*
- Completion of the Pastoral Leadership Institute course of studies, *or*
- Completion of a supervised course of studies including 32 semester hours of general education courses and 21 semester hours of professional Christian ministries courses, in addition to the minimum courses prescribed in the requirements for obtaining a license (Old Testament, New Testament, biblical or systematic theology, practical ministry theology, biblical interpretation, homiletics or communication, leadership and History and Polity of the Missionary Church), with a minimum of three hours in each of the following: Old Testament, New Testament, biblical or systematic theology, counseling, evangelism and discipleship, and one course related to the individual's area of ministry (youth, missions, Christian education, church planting, church growth, etc.).

#### *General Information*

Courses may be taken at Bethel College or any accredited (AABC, regional, or ATS) college or seminary including the correspondence departments of such schools.

Courses may also be taken through the Pastoral Leadership Institute or at schools which have been recognized for alternative education for those persons preparing for ministry for whom traditional educational programs constitute insurmountable geographical, financial, or family difficulties. The specific advantages and disadvantages of such programs are to be explained to interested persons.

The syllabus for the history and polity of the Missionary Church is printed in Appendix 2.



## APPENDIX 2

### MISSIONARY CHURCH HISTORY AND POLITY

An Independent Study Course for New Pastors in the Missionary Church

#### Required Course Materials

##### Internet Downloads:

“The Missionary Church: From Radical Outcasts to the Wild Child of Anabaptism,” Erdel, Dr. Timothy Paul, *Illinois Mennonite Heritage*, September 1997

“Marriage, Memory, and Mission: Reflections on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MCA/UMC Merger,” Erdel, Dr. Timothy Paul and Engbrecht, Dr. Dennis

“Merging and Diverging Streams: The Colorful and Complex History of the Missionary Church,” Engbrecht, Dennis, Ph.D.

“1883-1983, One Hundred Years of Historical Distinctives,” Engbrecht, Dennis D.

**Video:** *The Word, Revival and Evangelism: Historical Origins of the Missionary Church*, 2005

#### Course Description

This course is designed to provide a brief overview of the historical development of the Missionary Church from the time of the Reformation to the present. The course deals with various themes, major religious movements in Europe and America, and key personalities who have influenced the development of the Missionary Church.

#### Course Objective

As a result of this course the student should:

- Have a general appreciation for the historical roots of the Missionary Church.
- Be knowledgeable of the primary elements in the development of the Missionary Church.
- Be able to identify the major leaders in the history of the Missionary Church.
- Understand the distinctives of the Missionary Church (what makes it unique as a denomination).
- Complete a significant step toward PLI certification (for PLI students) and Missionary Church licensing eligibility.

#### Course Procedure

Complete this course by taking the following steps:

- Read the required articles which can be downloaded from mcusa.org. Printed versions are also available if requested (see contact information below).
- Download the exam or request a printed version (see contact information below). *You may use the exam as a study guide for your reading and reviewing.*
- View the required video, *The Word, Revival and Evangelism: Historical Origins of the Missionary Church*, which can be obtained from your regional or district office, denominational

office (see contact information below), Bethel College Library, or your local Missionary Church library.

- Complete the exam. If possible, use your word processor to type the answers so that your completed exam can be submitted electronically.
- Submit completed exam electronically by email (preferred) or a printed version via US Postal Service (see instructions below). **Please note:** The grading fee is \$35, and your exam will not be processed until the grading fee payment is received.
  - *Electronic Method*
    - Send the completed exam as an email attachment to [hpcourse@mcusa.org](mailto:hpcourse@mcusa.org)
    - Use your credit card to pay the \$35 grading fee online through [PayPal](#) OR mail a personal check to H&P Course, PO Box 9127, Fort Wayne, IN 46899-9127.
  - *Hardcopy (printed) Method*
    - Mail the completed exam to the designated contact (see information below).
    - Mail a \$35 (USD) check payable to Missionary Church, Inc., to H&P Course, PO Box 9127, Fort Wayne, IN 46899-9127.

Results of your exam will be sent to you, your regional or district director and, for PLI students, the Pastoral Leadership Institute.

### **Optional Reading**

For additional reading the following list has been compiled. This is *not* required reading. It is simply intended to assist in the search for information regarding the Missionary Church.

[\*Constitution of the Missionary Church\*](#)

[\*Who We Are\*](#)

Gerber, Dr. Wayne, ed., [\*Foundations: Teacher's Manual\*](#), 2002

Lageer, Eileen, *Merging Streams*, Elkhart, Indiana: Bethel Publishing Company, 1979.

Lugibihl, Walter H. and Jared F. Gerig. *The Missionary Church Association*. Berne, Indiana: Economy Printing Center, 1950.

Storms, Everek R. *History of the United Missionary Church*. Elkhart, Indiana: Bethel Publishing Co., 1958.

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