

PREAMBLE

In order that we may preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and also that we may cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, in accordance with the principles of constitutional legislation established among us, do hereby ordain, adopt, and set forth as the fundamental law or Constitution of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** the Articles of Faith, the Covenant of Christian Character, and the Articles of Organization and Government here following, to wit:

ARTICLES OF FAITH 1

I. The Triune God

We believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; that He only is God, holy in nature, attributes, and purpose. The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 5:16; 6:1-7; 40:18-31; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; John 14:6-27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:13-18)

[1. Scripture references are supportive of the Articles of Faith and were placed here by action of the 1976 General Assembly but are not to be considered as part of the Constitutional text.]

II. Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man.

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that He truly arose from the dead and took again His body, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and is there engaged in intercession for us.

(Matthew 1:20-25; 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-36; Romans 8:3, 32-34; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-5; 7:22-28; 9:24-28; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3, 15)

III. The Holy Spirit

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead, that He is ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus.

(John 7:39; 14:15-18, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33; 15:8-9; Romans 8:1-27; Galatians 3:1-14; 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)

IV. The Holy Scriptures

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

V. Sin, Original and Personal

5. We believe that sin came into the world through the disobedience of our first parents, and death by sin. We believe that sin is of two kinds: original sin or depravity, and actual or personal sin.

5.1. We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam by reason of which everyone is very far gone from original righteousness or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and inclined to evil, and that continually. We further believe that original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until the heart is fully cleansed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

5.2. We believe that original sin differs from actual sin in that it constitutes an inherited propensity to actual sin for which no one is accountable until its divinely provided remedy is neglected or rejected.

5.3. We believe that actual or personal sin is a voluntary violation of a known law of God by a morally responsible person. It is therefore not to be confused with involuntary and inescapable shortcomings, infirmities, faults, mistakes, failures, or other deviations from a standard of perfect conduct that are the residual effects of the Fall. However, such innocent effects do not include attitudes or responses contrary to the spirit of Christ, which may properly be called sins of the spirit. We believe that personal sin is primarily and essentially a violation of the law of love; and that in relation to Christ sin may be defined as unbelief.

(Original sin: Genesis 3; 6:5; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:18-25; 5:12-14; 7:1-8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:16-25; 1 John 1:7-8)

(Personal sin: Matthew 22:36-40 {with 1 John 3:4}; John 8:34-36; 16:8-9; Romans 3:23; 6:15-23; 8:18-24; 14:23; 1 John 1:9-2:4; 3:7-10)

VI. Atonement 3

6. We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility and for the children in innocency but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

(Isaiah 53:5-6, 11; Mark 10:45; Luke 24:46-48; John 1:29; 3:14-17; Acts 4:10-12; Romans 3:21-26; 4:17-25; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 1:3-4; 3:13-14;

Colossians 1:19-23; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:9; 9:11-14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:19-25; 1 John 2:1-2)

[3. Constitutional changes adopted by the 2009 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies.]

VII. Prevenient Grace

7. We believe that the human race's creation in Godlikeness included ability to choose between right and wrong, and that thus human beings were made morally responsible; that through the fall of Adam they became depraved so that they cannot now turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God. But we also believe that the grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all people, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness, believe on Jesus Christ for pardon and cleansing from sin, and follow good works pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

We believe that all persons, though in the possession of the experience of regeneration and entire sanctification, may fall from grace and apostatize and, unless they repent of their sins, be hopelessly and eternally lost.

(Godlikeness and moral responsibility: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:16-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 8:3-5; Isaiah 1:8-10; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:1-4; Micah 6:8; Romans 1:19-20; 2:1-16; 14:7-12; Galatians 6:7-8)

(Natural inability: Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalms 14:1-4; 51:5; John 3:6a; Romans 3:10-12; 5:12-14, 20a; 7:14-25)

(Free grace and works of faith: Ezekiel 18:25-26; John 1:12-13; 3:6b; Acts 5:31; Romans 5:6-8, 18; 6:15-16, 23; 10:6-8; 11:22; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; 10:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:10a; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-15; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; James 2:18-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2:20-22)

VIII. Repentance

8. We believe that repentance, which is a sincere and thorough change of the mind in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and a voluntary turning away from sin, is demanded of all who have by act or purpose become sinners against God. The Spirit of God gives to all who will repent the gracious help of penitence of heart and hope of mercy, that they may believe unto pardon and spiritual life.

(2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 32:5-6; 51:1-17; Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 3:12-14; Ezekiel 18:30-32; 33:14-16; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:1-14; 13:1-5; 18:9-14; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30-31; 26:16-18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9)

IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

10. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

11. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God.

12. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:5-9, 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4; 7:6; 8:1, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:1, 4-5; Philippians 3:3-9; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:9; 3:1-2, 9; 4:7; 5:1, 9-13, 18)

X. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification 4

13. We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by grace through faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as "Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit," "the fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness."

14. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as a Christlike disciple. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9)

("Christian perfection," "perfect love": Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18)

("Heart purity": Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3)

("Baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit": Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9)

("Fullness of the blessing": Romans 15:29)

("Christian holiness": Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15; Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21)

[4. Constitutional changes adopted by the 2009 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies.]

XI. The Church 5

15. We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability.

The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

The Church is a historical reality, which organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms; exists both as local congregations and as a universal body; sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Exodus 19:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 8:11; 10:7; 16:13-19, 24; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; John 17:14-26; 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8; 2:32-47; 6:1-2; 13:1; 14:23; Romans 2:28-29; 4:16; 10:9-15; 11:13-32; 12:1-8; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 7:17; 11:1, 17-33; 12:3, 12-31; 14:26-40; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:1; Galatians 5:6, 13-14; 6:1-5, 15; Ephesians 4:1-17; 5:25-27; Philippians

2:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 13; 2:4-12, 21; 4:1-2, 10-11; 1 John 4:17; Jude 24; Revelation 5:9-10)

[5. Constitutional changes adopted by the 2009 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies.]

XII. Baptism

16. We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, to be administered to believers and declarative of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness.

Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training.

Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.

(Matthew 3:1-7; 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-39; 10:44-48; 16:29-34; 19:1-6; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-22)

XIII. The Lord's Supper

17. We believe that the Memorial and Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is essentially a New Testament sacrament, declarative of His sacrificial death, through the merits of which believers have life and salvation and promise of all spiritual blessings in Christ. It is distinctively for those who are prepared for reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it they show forth the Lord's death till He come again. It being the Communion feast, only those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints should be called to participate therein.

(Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; John 6:28-58; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:23-32)

XIV. Divine Healing

18. We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to seek to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. Providential means and agencies when deemed necessary should not be refused.

(2 Kings 5:1-19; Psalm 103:1-5; Matthew 4:23-24; 9:18-35; John 4:46-54; Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-42; 14:8-15; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16)

XV. Second Coming of Christ

19. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again; that we who are alive at His coming shall not precede them that are asleep in Christ Jesus; but that, if we are abiding in Him, we shall be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord.

(Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:26-28; 2 Peter 3:3-15; Revelation 1:7-8; 22:7-20)

XVI. Resurrection, Judgment, and Destiny

20. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies both of the just and of the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits-"they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

21. We believe in future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life.

22. We believe that glorious and everlasting life is assured to all who savingly believe in, and obediently follow, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.

(Genesis 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 50:6; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; John 3:16-18; 5:25-29; 11:21-27; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-16; 14:7-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:1-15)

THE CHURCH

I. The General Church

23. The Church of God is composed of all spiritually regenerate persons, whose names are written in heaven.

II. The Churches Severally

24. The churches severally are to be composed of such regenerate persons as by providential permission, and by the leadings of the Holy Spirit, become associated together for holy fellowship and ministries.

III. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]**

25. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** is composed of those persons who have voluntarily associated themselves together according to the doctrines and polity of said church, and who seek holy Christian fellowship, the conversion of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, their upbuilding in holiness, and the simplicity and spiritual power manifest in the primitive New Testament Church, together with the preaching of the gospel to every creature.

IV. Agreed Statement of Belief

26. Recognizing that the right and privilege of persons to church membership rest upon the fact of their being regenerate, we would require only such avowals of belief as are essential to Christian experience. We, therefore, deem belief in the following brief statements to be sufficient. We believe:

26.1. In one God-the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

26.2. That the Old and New Testament Scriptures, given by plenary inspiration, contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living.

26.3. That man is born with a fallen nature, and is, therefore, inclined to evil, and that continually.

26.4. That the finally impenitent are hopelessly and eternally lost.

26.5. That the atonement through Jesus Christ is for the whole human race; and that whosoever repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and regenerated and saved from the dominion of sin.

26.6. That believers are to be sanctified wholly, subsequent to regeneration, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

26.7. That the Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth, and also to the entire sanctification of believers.

26.8. That our Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgment will take place.

V. The Covenant of Christian Character

27. To be identified with the visible Church is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all who are saved from their sins and are seeking completeness in Christ Jesus. It is required of all who desire to unite with the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, and thus to walk in fellowship with us, that they shall show evidence of salvation from their sins by a godly walk and vital piety; and that they shall be, or earnestly desire to be, cleansed from all indwelling sin. They shall evidence their commitment to God-

27.1. FIRST. By doing that which is enjoined in the Word of God, which is our rule of both faith and practice, including:

(1) Loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself (Exodus 20:3-6; Leviticus 19:17-18; Deuteronomy 5:7-10; 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-31; Romans 13:8-10).

(2) Pressing upon the attention of the unsaved the claims of the gospel, inviting them to the house of the Lord, and trying to compass their salvation (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

(3) Being courteous to all men (Ephesians 4:32; Titus 3:2; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 3:18).

(4) Being helpful to those who are also of the faith, in love forbearing one another (Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:2, 10; Colossians 3:12-14).

(5) Seeking to do good to the bodies and souls of men; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and ministering to the needy, as opportunity and ability are given (Matthew 25:35-36; 2 Corinthians 9:8-10; Galatians 2:10; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17-18).

(6) Contributing to the support of the ministry and the church and its work in tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10; Philippians 4:15-19).

(7) Attending faithfully all the ordinances of God, and the means of grace, including the public worship of God (Hebrews 10:25), the ministry of the Word (Acts 2:42), the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-30); searching the Scriptures and meditating thereon (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-16); family and private devotions (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Matthew 6:6).

27.2. SECOND. By avoiding evil of every kind, including:

(1) Taking the name of God in vain (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; James 5:12).

(2) Profaning of the Lord's Day by participation in unnecessary secular activities, thereby indulging in practices that deny its sanctity (Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13-14; Mark 2:27-28; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10).

(3) Sexual immorality, such as premarital or extramarital relations, perversion in any form, or looseness and impropriety of conduct (Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

(4) Habits or practices known to be destructive of physical and mental well-being. Christians are to regard themselves as temples of the Holy Spirit (Proverbs 20:1; 23:1-3; 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:18).

(5) Quarreling, returning evil for evil, gossiping, slandering, spreading surmises injurious to the good names of others (2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:15; Ephesians 4:30-32; James 3:5-18; 1 Peter 3:9-10).

(6) Dishonesty, taking advantage in buying and selling, bearing false witness, and like works of darkness (Leviticus 19:10-11; Romans 12:17; 1 Corinthians 6:7-10).

(7) The indulging of pride in dress or behavior. Our people are to dress with the Christian simplicity and modesty that become holiness (Proverbs 29:23; 1 Timothy 2:8-10; James 4:6; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 John 2:15-17).

(8) Music, literature, and entertainments that dishonor God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; James 4:4).

27.3. THIRD. By abiding in hearty fellowship with the church, not inveighing against but wholly committed to its doctrines and usages and actively involved in its continuing witness and outreach (Ephesians 2:18-22; 4:1-3, 11-16; Philippians 2:1-8; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

ARTICLES OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT

Article I. Form of Government

28. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** has a representative form of government.

28.1. We are agreed on the necessity of a superintendency that shall complement and assist the local church in the fulfilling of its mission and objectives. The superintendency shall build morale, provide motivation, supply management and method assistance, and organize and encourage organization of new churches and missions everywhere.

28.2. We are agreed that authority given to superintendents shall not interfere with the independent action of a fully organized church. Each church shall enjoy the right to select its own pastor, subject to such approval as the General Assembly shall find wise to institute. Each church shall also elect delegates to the various assemblies, manage its own finances, and have charge of all other matters pertaining to its local life and work.

Article II. Local Churches

29. The membership of a local church shall consist of all who have been organized as a church by those authorized so to do and who have been publicly received by those having proper authority, after having declared their experience of salvation, their belief in our doctrines, and their willingness to submit to our government. (100-107)

Article III. District Assemblies

30. The General Assembly shall organize the membership of the church into district assemblies, giving such lay and ministerial representation therein as the General Assembly may deem fair and just, and shall determine qualifications of such representatives, provided, however, that all assigned ordained ministers shall be members thereof. The General Assembly shall also fix the boundaries of assembly districts, and define the powers and duties of district assemblies. (200-205.7)

Article IV. The General Assembly

31.1. How Composed. The General Assembly shall be composed of ministerial and lay delegates in equal numbers, elected thereto by district assemblies of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**; such ex officio members as the General Assembly shall from time to time direct; and such delegates of districts under the administration of the World Mission and Church Growth departments of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** as may be provided for by the General Assembly.

31.2. Election of Delegates. 6 At a district assembly within 16 months of the meeting of the General Assembly or within 24 months in areas where travel visas or other unusual preparations are necessary, an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates to the General Assembly shall be elected by plurality vote, provided that the ministerial delegates shall be assigned ordained ministers of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**. Each Phase 3 assembly district shall be entitled to at least one ministerial and one lay delegate, and such additional delegates as its membership may warrant on the basis of representation fixed by the General Assembly. Each assembly district shall elect alternate delegates not exceeding twice the number of its delegates. In situations where travel visas are problematic, a district assembly may authorize the District Advisory Board to select additional alternates. (203.23, 301-1.1)

[6. Constitutional changes adopted by the 2009 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies.]

31.3. Credentials. The secretary of each district assembly shall furnish certificates of election to the delegates and alternates severally elected to the General Assembly, and shall also send certificates of such elections to the general secretary of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** immediately following the adjournment of the district assembly.

31.4. Quorum. When the General Assembly is in session, a majority of the whole number of delegates elected thereto shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. If a quorum has once been had, a smaller number may approve the minutes then remaining unapproved, and adjourn.

31.5. General Superintendents. The General Assembly shall elect by ballot from among the elders of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** as many general superintendents as it may deem necessary, who shall constitute the Board of General Superintendents. Any vacancy in the office of general superintendent in the interim of General Assemblies shall be filled by a two-thirds vote of the General Board of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**. (305.2, 316)

31.6. Presiding Officers. A general superintendent appointed thereto by the Board of General Superintendents shall preside over the daily meetings of the General Assembly. But if no general superintendent be so appointed or be present, the General Assembly shall elect one of its members as temporary presiding officer. (300.1)

31.7. Rules of Order. The General Assembly shall adopt rules of order governing its manner of organization, procedure, committees, and all other matters pertaining to the orderly conduct of its business. It shall be the judge of the election and qualifications of its own members. (300.2)

31.8. General Court of Appeals. The General Assembly shall elect from among members of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** a General Court of Appeals and shall define its jurisdiction and powers. (305.7)

31.9. Powers and Restrictions.

(1) The General Assembly shall have power to legislate for the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, and to make rules and regulations for all the departments related to or associated with it in any respect, but not in conflict with this Constitution. (300, 305-5.9)

(2) No local church shall be deprived of the right to call its pastor, subject to such approval as the General Assembly shall find wise to institute. (115)

(3) All local churches, officers, ministers, and laypersons shall always have the right to a fair and orderly trial and the right to make an appeal.

AMENDMENTS

32. The provisions of this Constitution may be repealed or amended when concurred in by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the General Assembly, and when concurred in by not less than two-thirds of all the Phase 3 and Phase 2 district assemblies of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**. Either the General Assembly or any Phase 3 or Phase 2 district assembly may take the initiative in the matter of proposing such alterations or amendments. As soon as such alterations or amendments shall have been adopted as herein provided, the result of the vote shall be announced by the Board of General Superintendents, whereupon such alterations or amendments shall have full force and effect.

Part III: Covenant of Christian Conduct

The Christian Life

Marriage and Divorce and/or Dissolution of Marriage

Sanctity of Human Life

Induced Abortion

Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy

Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research . . .

Human Cloning

Euthanasia

Allowing to Die

Human Sexuality

Christian Stewardship

Church Officers

Rules of Order

Amending Special Rules

A. The Christian Life

33. The church joyfully proclaims the good news that we may be delivered from all sin to a new life in Christ. By the grace of God we Christians are "to put off the old self"-the old patterns of conduct as well as the old carnal mind-and are to "put on the new self"-a new and holy way of life as well as the mind of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:17-24)

33.1. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** purposes to relate timeless biblical principles to contemporary society in such a way that the doctrines and rules of the church may be known and understood in many lands and within a variety of cultures. We hold that the Ten Commandments, as reaffirmed in the New Testament, constitute the basic Christian ethic and ought to be obeyed in all particulars.

33.2. It is further recognized that there is validity in the concept of the collective Christian conscience as illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, as an international expression of the Body of Christ, acknowledges its responsibility to seek ways to particularize the Christian life so as to lead to a holiness ethic. The historic ethical standards of the church are expressed in part in the following items. They should be followed carefully and conscientiously as guides and helps to holy living. Those who violate the conscience of the church do so at their own peril and to the hurt of the witness of the church. Culturally conditioned adaptations shall be referred to and approved by the Board of General Superintendents.

33.3. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes this new and holy way of life involves practices to be avoided and redemptive acts of love to be accomplished for the souls, minds, and bodies of our neighbors. One redemptive arena of love involves the special relationship Jesus had, and commanded His disciples to have, with the poor of this world; that His Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor and marginalized. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the

poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe the Christian's responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love. We believe Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that it drives the Christian beyond their own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in this world, motivates us to place our means in the service of alleviating such need and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others.

(Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 15:7; Psalms 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:10)

33.4. In listing practices to be avoided we recognize that no catalog, however inclusive, can hope to encompass all forms of evil throughout the world. Therefore it is imperative that our people earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil that transcends the mere letter of the law; remembering the admonition: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil."

(1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

33.5. Our leaders and pastors are expected to give strong emphasis in our periodicals and from our pulpits to such fundamental biblical truths as will develop the faculty of discrimination between the evil and the good.

33.6. Education is of the utmost importance for the social and spiritual well-being of society. Public schools have a mandate to educate all. They are limited, however, as to their scope and, in fact, are prohibited by court rulings from teaching the basic tenets of Christianity. Nazarene educational organizations and institutions, such as Sunday Schools, schools (birth through secondary), child care centers, adult care centers, colleges, and seminaries, are expected to teach children, youth, and adults biblical principles and ethical standards in such a way that our doctrines may be known. This practice may be instead of or in addition to public schools, which often teach secular humanism and fall short of teaching principles of holy living. The education from public sources should be complemented by holiness teaching in the home. Christians should also be encouraged to work in and with public institutions to witness to and influence these institutions for God's kingdom.

(Matthew 5:13-14)

34. We hold specifically that the following practices should be avoided:

34.1. Entertainments that are subversive of the Christian ethic.

Our people, both as Christian individuals and in Christian family units, should govern themselves by three principles. One is the Christian stewardship of leisure time. A second principle is the recognition of the Christian obligation to apply the highest moral standards of Christian living. Because we are living in a day of great moral confusion in which we face the potential encroachment of the evils of the day into the sacred precincts of our homes through

various avenues such as current literature, radio, television, personal computers, and the Internet, it is essential that the most rigid safeguards be observed to keep our homes from becoming secularized and worldly. However, we hold that entertainment that endorses and encourages holy living and affirms scriptural values should be affirmed and encouraged. We especially encourage our young people to use their gifts in media and the arts to influence positively this pervasive part of culture. The third principle is the obligation to witness against whatever trivializes or blasphemes God, as well as such social evils as violence, sensuality, pornography, profanity, and the occult, as portrayed by and through the commercial entertainment industry in its many forms and to endeavor to bring about the demise of enterprises known to be the purveyors of this kind of entertainment. This would include the avoidance of all types of entertainment ventures and media productions that produce, promote, or feature the violent, the sensual, the pornographic, the profane, or the occultic, or which feature or glamorize the world's philosophy of secularism, sensualism, and materialism and undermine God's standard of holiness of heart and life.

This necessitates the teaching and preaching of these moral standards of Christian living, and that our people be taught to use prayerful discernment in continually choosing the "high road" of holy living. We therefore call upon our leaders and pastors to give strong emphasis in our periodicals and from our pulpits to such fundamental truths as will develop the principle of discrimination between the evil and good to be found in these media.

We suggest that the standard given to John Wesley by his mother, namely, "whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin," form the basis for this teaching of discrimination. (33.2-33.4, 903.12-3.14)

(Romans 14:7-13; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Ephesians 5:1-18; Philippians 4:8-9; 1 Peter 1:13-17; 2 Peter 1:3-11)

34.2. Lotteries and other forms of gambling, whether legal or illegal. The church holds that the final result of these practices is detrimental both to the individual and society.

(Matthew 6:24-34; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-11; Hebrews 13:5-6; 1 John 2:15-17)

34.3. Membership in oath-bound secret orders or societies including but not limited to those such as Freemasonry. The quasi-religious nature of such organizations dilutes the Christian's commitment, and their secrecy contravenes the Christian's open witness. This issue will be considered in conjunction with paragraph 112.1 regarding church membership.

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 5:11-16; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17)

34.4. All forms of dancing that detract from spiritual growth and break down proper moral inhibitions and reserve.

(Matthew 22:36-39; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 3:1-17)

34.5. The use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or trafficking therein; giving influence to, or voting for, the licensing of places for the sale of the same; using illicit drugs or trafficking therein; using of tobacco in any of its forms, or trafficking therein.

In light of the Holy Scriptures and human experience concerning the ruinous consequences of the use of alcohol as a beverage, and in light of the findings of medical science regarding the detrimental effect of both alcohol and tobacco to the body and mind, as a community of faith committed to the pursuit of a holy life, our position and practice is abstinence rather than moderation. Holy Scripture teaches that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. With loving regard for ourselves and others, we call our people to total abstinence from all intoxicants.

Furthermore, our Christian social responsibility calls us to use any legitimate and legal means to minimize the availability of both beverage alcohol and tobacco to others. The widespread incidence of alcohol abuse in our world demands that we embody a position that stands as a witness to others. (903.12-3.14)

(Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-24:2; Hosea 4:10-11; Habakkuk 2:5; Romans 13:8; 14:15-21; 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:9-12, 19-20; 10:31-33; Galatians 5:13-14, 21; Ephesians 5:18)

(Only unfermented wine should be used in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.) (413.11, 427.7, 428.2, 429.1, 802)

34.6. The unprescribed use of hallucinogenics, stimulants, and depressants, and the misuse and abuse of regularly prescribed medicines. Only on competent medical advice and under medical supervision should such drugs be used.

(Matthew 22:37-39; 27:34; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 9:24-27)

B. Marriage and Divorce and/or Dissolution of Marriage 1

[1.] The meaning of divorce in this covenant shall include "dissolution of marriage" when it is used as a legal substitute for divorce.

35. The Christian family, knit together in a common bond through Jesus Christ, is a circle of love, fellowship, and worship to be earnestly cultivated in a society in which family ties are easily dissolved. We urge upon the ministry and congregations of our church such teachings and practices as will strengthen and develop family ties. In particular, we urge upon the ministry the importance of teaching and preaching clearly the biblical plan of the permanence of marriage.

The institution of marriage was ordained by God in the time of man's innocence, and is, according to apostolic authority, "honourable in all;" it is the mutual union of one man and one woman for fellowship, helpfulness, and the propagation of the race. Our people should cherish this sacred estate as becomes Christians, and should enter it only after earnest prayer for divine direction, and when assured that the contemplated union is in accordance with scriptural requirements.

They should seek earnestly the blessings that God has ordained in connection with the wedded state, namely, holy companionship, parenthood, and mutual love—the elements of home

building. The marriage covenant is morally binding so long as both shall live, and breaking of it is a breach of the divine plan of the permanence of marriage.

(Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:21-24; Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4)

35.1. In biblical teaching, marriage is the commitment of male and female to each other for life, reflecting Christ's sacrificial love for the Church. As such, marriage is intended to be permanent, and divorce an infraction of the clear teaching of Christ. Such infractions, however, are not beyond the forgiving grace of God when this is sought with repentance, faith and humility. It is recognized that some have divorce thrust upon them against their will or are compelled to resort to it for legal or physical protection.

(Genesis 2:21-24; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 7:36-50, 16:18; John 7:53-8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 7:10-16; Ephesians 5:25-33)

35.2. Ministers of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** are instructed to give due care to matters relating to solemnizing marriages. They shall seek, in every manner possible, to convey to their congregations the sacredness of Christian marriage. They shall provide premarital counseling in every instance possible before performing a marriage ceremony including proper spiritual guidance for those who have experienced divorce. They shall only solemnize marriages of persons having the biblical basis for marriage. (107-7.1)

35.3. Members of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** are to seek prayerfully a redemptive course of action when involved in marital unhappiness, in full harmony with their vows and the clear teachings of the Scripture, their aim being to save the home and safeguard the good name of both Christ and His Church. Couples having serious marital problems are urged to seek counsel and guidance of their pastor and/or any other appropriate spiritual leaders. Failure to comply with this procedure in good faith and with sincere endeavor to seek a Christian solution, and subsequent obtainment of divorce and remarriage, makes one or both parties subject to possible discipline as prescribed in 504-4.2 and 505-5.12.

35.4. Through ignorance, sin, and human frailties, many in our society fall short of the divine plan. We believe that Christ can redeem these persons even as He did the woman at Samaria's well, and that sin against God's design for marriage does not place one beyond the forgiving grace of the gospel. Where a marriage has been dissolved and remarriage has followed, the marriage partners are enjoined to seek the grace of God and His redemptive help in their marriage relation. Such persons may be received into the membership of the church at such time as they have given evidence of their regeneration and an awareness of their understanding of the sanctity of Christian marriage. (27, 107.1)

C. Sanctity of Human Life

36. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes in the sanctity of human life and strives to protect against abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, and the withholding of reasonable medical care to handicapped or elderly.

Induced Abortion. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** affirms the sanctity of human life as established by God the Creator and believes that such sanctity extends to the child not yet born.

Life is a gift from God. All human life, including life developing in the womb, is created by God in His image and is, therefore, to be nurtured, supported, and protected. From the moment of conception, a child is a human being with all of the developing characteristics of human life, and this life is dependent on the mother for its continued development. Therefore, we believe that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. We oppose induced abortion by any means, when used for either personal convenience or population control. We oppose laws that allow abortion. Realizing that there are rare, but real medical conditions wherein the mother or the unborn child, or both, could not survive the pregnancy, termination of the pregnancy should only be made after sound medical and Christian counseling.

Responsible opposition to abortion requires our commitment to the initiation and support of programs designed to provide care for mothers and children. The crisis of an unwanted pregnancy calls for the community of believers (represented only by those for whom knowledge of the crisis is appropriate) to provide a context of love, prayer, and counsel. In such instances, support can take the form of counseling centers, homes for expectant mothers, and the creation or utilization of Christian adoption services.

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** recognizes that consideration of abortion as a means of ending an unwanted pregnancy often occurs because Christian standards of sexual responsibility have been ignored. Therefore the church calls for persons to practice the ethic of the New Testament as it bears upon human sexuality and to deal with the issue of abortion by placing it within the larger framework of biblical principles that provide guidance for moral decision making.

(Genesis 2:7, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; 21:12-16, 22-25; Leviticus 18:21; Job 31:15; Psalms 22:9; 139:3-16; Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15, 23-25, 36-45; Acts 17:25; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** also recognizes that many have been affected by the tragedy of abortion. Each local congregation and individual believer is urged to offer the message of forgiveness by God for each person who has experienced abortion. Our local congregations are to be communities of redemption and hope to all who suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual pain as a result of the willful termination of a pregnancy.

(Romans 3:22-24; Galatians 6:1)

Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** supports the use of genetic engineering to achieve gene therapy. We recognize that gene therapy can lead to preventing and curing disease, and preventing and curing anatomical and mental disorders. We oppose any use of genetic engineering that promotes social injustice, disregards the dignity of persons, or that attempts to achieve racial, intellectual, or social superiority over others (Eugenics). We oppose initiation of DNA studies whose results might encourage or support human abortion as an alternative to term live birth. In all cases, humility, a respect for the inviolable dignity of human life, human equality before God, and a commitment to mercy and justice should govern genetic engineering and gene therapy.

(Micah 6:8)

Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Other Medical/Scientific Endeavors that Destroy Human Life after Conception. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** strongly encourages the scientific community to aggressively pursue advances in stem cell technology obtained from sources such as adult human tissues, placenta, umbilical cord blood, animal sources, and other non-human embryonic sources. This has the righteous end of attempting to bring healing to many, without violating the sanctity of human life. Our stand on human embryonic stem cell research flows from our affirmation that the human embryo is a person made in the image of God. Therefore, we oppose the use of stem cells produced from human embryos for research, therapeutic interventions, or any other purpose. As future scientific advances make new technologies available, we strongly support this research when it does not violate the sanctity of human life or other moral, biblical laws. However, we oppose the destruction of human embryos for any purpose and any type of research that takes the life of a human after conception. Consistent with this view, we oppose the use, for any purpose, of tissue derived from aborted human fetuses.

Human Cloning. We oppose the cloning of an individual human being. Humankind is valued by God, who created us in His image, and the cloning of an individual human being treats that being as an object, thus denying the personal dignity and worth bestowed on us by our Creator.

(Genesis 1:27)

Euthanasia (Including Physician Assisted Suicide). We believe that euthanasia (intentionally ending the life of a terminally ill person, or one who has a debilitating and incurable disease that is not immediately life-threatening, for the purpose of ending suffering) is incompatible with the Christian faith. This applies when euthanasia is requested or consented to by the terminally ill person (voluntary euthanasia) and when the terminally ill person is not mentally competent to give consent (involuntary euthanasia). We believe that the historic rejection of euthanasia by the Christian church is confirmed by Christian convictions that derive from the Bible and that are central to the Church's confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Euthanasia violates Christian confidence in God as the sovereign Lord of life by claiming sovereignty for oneself; it violates our role as stewards before God; it contributes to an erosion of the value the Bible places on human life and community; it attaches too much importance to the cessation of suffering; and it reflects a human arrogance before a graciously sovereign God. We urge our people to oppose all efforts to legalize euthanasia.

Allowing to Die. When human death is imminent, we believe that either withdrawing or not originating artificial life-support systems is permissible within the range of Christian faith and practice. This position applies to persons who are in a persistent vegetative state and to those for whom the application of extraordinary means for prolonging life provide no reasonable hope for a return to health. We believe that when death is imminent, nothing in the Christian faith requires that the process of dying be artificially postponed. As Christians we trust in God's faithfulness and have the hope of eternal life. This makes it possible for Christians to accept death as an expression of faith in Christ who overcame death on our behalf and robbed it of its victory.

D. Human Sexuality

37. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** views human sexuality as one expression of the holiness and beauty that God the Creator intended for His creation. It is one of the ways by

which the covenant between a husband and a wife is sealed and expressed. Christians are to understand that in marriage human sexuality can and ought to be sanctified by God. Human sexuality achieves fulfillment only as a sign of comprehensive love and loyalty. Christian husbands and wives should view sexuality as a part of their much larger commitment to one another and to Christ from whom the meaning of life is drawn.

The Christian home should serve as a setting for teaching children the sacred character of human sexuality and for showing them how its meaning is fulfilled in the context of love, fidelity, and patience.

Our ministers and Christian educators should state clearly the Christian understanding of human sexuality, urging Christians to celebrate its rightful excellence, and rigorously to guard against its betrayal and distortion.

Sexuality misses its purpose when treated as an end in itself or when cheapened by using another person to satisfy pornographic and perverted sexual interests. We view all forms of sexual intimacy that occur outside the covenant of heterosexual marriage as sinful distortions of the holiness and beauty God intended for it.

Homosexuality is one means by which human sexuality is perverted. We recognize the depth of the perversion that leads to homosexual acts but affirm the biblical position that such acts are sinful and subject to the wrath of God. We believe the grace of God sufficient to overcome the practice of homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We deplore any action or statement that would seem to imply compatibility between Christian morality and the practice of homosexuality. We urge clear preaching and teaching concerning Bible standards of sexual morality.

(Genesis 1:27; 19:1-25; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-10)

E. Christian Stewardship

38. Meaning of Stewardship. The Scriptures teach that God is the Owner of all persons and all things. We, therefore, are His stewards of both life and possessions. God's ownership and our stewardship ought to be acknowledged, for we shall be held personally accountable to God for the exercise of our stewardship. God, as a God of system and order in all of His ways, has established a system of giving that acknowledges His ownership over all human resources and relationships. To this end all His children should faithfully tithe and present offerings for the support of the gospel. (140)

(Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:24-34; 25:31-46; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 12:13-24; 19:11-27; John 15:1-17; Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Hebrews 7:8; James 1:27; 1 John 3:16-18)

38.1. Storehouse Tithing. Storehouse tithing is a scriptural and practical performance of faithfully and regularly placing the tithe into that church to which the member belongs. Therefore, the financing of the church shall be based on the plan of storehouse tithing, and the local **[The Church Name Goes Here]** shall be regarded by all of its people as the storehouse. All who are

a part of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** are urged to contribute faithfully one-tenth of all their increase as a minimum financial obligation to the Lord and freewill offerings in addition as God has prospered them for the support of the whole church, local, district, educational, and general. The tithe, provided to the local **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, shall be considered a priority over all other giving opportunities which God may lay upon the hearts of His faithful stewards, in support of the whole church.

38.2. Fund-raising and Distribution. In the light of the scriptural teaching concerning the giving of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel, and for the erection of church buildings, no Nazarene church should engage in any method of fund-raising that would detract from these principles, hinder the gospel message, sully the name of the church, discriminate against the poor, or misdirect the people's energies from promoting the gospel. In disbursing to meet the requirements of the local, district, educational, and general programs of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, local churches are urged to adopt and practice a financial apportionment plan, and to pay general, educational, and district apportionments monthly. (130, 154, 155- 55.2, 413.21)

38.3. Support of the Ministry. "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). The church is obligated to support its ministers, who have been called of God, and who, under the direction of the church, have given themselves wholly to the work of the ministry. We urge therefore that the members of the church voluntarily commit themselves to the task of supporting the ministry by gathering money weekly for this holy business and that the pastor's salary be paid regularly every week. (115.4)

38.4. Life Income Gifts, Planned and Deferred Giving. It is essential in the exercise of Christian stewardship that careful thought be given as to what shall be done with one's income and possessions over which the Lord makes the Christian a steward during this life. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, recognizing the need for faithful stewardship in this life and the God-given vision to leave a legacy for the future, has established the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** Foundation to enhance Christian stewardship through planned and deferred giving. Civil laws often do not provide for the distribution of an estate in such a way as to glorify God. Each Christian should give attention to the preparation of a last will and testament in a careful and legal manner, and the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** through its various ministries of missions, evangelism, education, and benevolences—local, district, educational, and general—is recommended for consideration.

38.5. Apportionments. The government of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** is representative. Each local congregation supports the overall mission of the church as defined by the General Assembly and implemented through the leadership of the Board of General Superintendents in world evangelism, education, ministerial support, and district ministries. The Board of General Superintendents, with the General Board, is authorized and empowered to apportion the World Evangelism Fund to the several assembly districts. (317.12) Subject to Manual paragraph 337.1, national boards and/or regional advisory councils are authorized and empowered to establish ministerial retirement savings plans on their region. Reporting of such plans shall be as provided in Manual paragraph 337.2. The provisions of paragraph 38.5 shall not apply to the Board of Pensions and Benefits USA.

National boards and/or regional advisory councils are also authorized and empowered to establish support for the higher education institutions on their region. (344, 345.3) Each district

is authorized and empowered to establish district ministry apportionments through the District Assembly Finance Committee. (235.1)

F. Church Officers

39. We direct our local churches to elect as church officers active members of the local church who profess the experience of entire sanctification and whose lives bear public witness to the grace of God that calls us to a holy life; who are in harmony with the doctrines, polity, and practices of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**; and who support the local church faithfully in attendance and with tithes and offerings. (113.11, 127, 145-147)

G. Rules of Order

40. Subject to the applicable law, the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws of government in the Manual, the meetings and proceedings of the members of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, local, district, and general, and the committees of the corporation shall be regulated and controlled according to Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (latest edition) for parliamentary procedure. (113, 203, 300.3)

H. Amending the Covenant of Christian Conduct

41. The provisions of the Covenant of Christian Conduct may be repealed or amended when concurred in by a two thirds vote of the members present and voting of a given General Assembly

Appendix, Chapter V, 903. Current Moral and Social Issues

903. CURRENT MORAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

903.1. Organ Donation

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** encourages its members who do not object personally to support donor/recipient anatomical organs through living wills and trusts.

Further, we appeal for a morally and ethically fair distribution of organs to those qualified to receive them. (2001)

903.2. Discrimination

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** reiterates its historic position of Christian compassion for people of all races. We believe that God is the Creator of all people, and that of one blood are all people created.

We believe that each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, or creed, should have equality before law, including the right to vote, equal access to educational opportunities, to all public facilities, and to the equal opportunity, according to one's ability, to earn a living free from any job or economic discrimination.

We urge our churches everywhere to continue and strengthen programs of education to promote racial understanding and harmony. We also feel that the scriptural admonition of Hebrews 12:14 should guide the actions of our people. We urge that each member of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** humbly examine his or her personal attitudes and actions toward others, as a first step in achieving the Christian goal of full participation by all in the life of the church and the entire community.

We reemphasize our belief that holiness of heart and life is the basis for right living. We believe that Christian charity between racial groups or gender will come when the hearts of people have been changed by complete submission to Jesus Christ, and that the essence of true Christianity consists in loving God with one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself. (2005)

903.3. Abuse of the Unempowered

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** abhors abuse of any person of any age or sex and calls for increased public awareness through its publications and by providing appropriate educational information.

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** reaffirms its historical policy that all those who act under the authority of the Church are prohibited from sexual misconduct and other forms of abuse of the unempowered. When placing people in positions of trust or authority, the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** will presume that past conduct is usually a reliable indicator of likely future behavior. The Church will withhold positions of authority from people who have previously used a position of trust or authority to engage in sexual misconduct or abuse of the unempowered, unless appropriate steps are taken to prevent future wrongful behavior. Expressions of remorse by a guilty person shall not be considered sufficient to overcome the presumption that future wrongful conduct is likely, unless the expressions of remorse are accompanied by an observable change of conduct for a sufficient length of time, to indicate that a repeat of the wrongful misconduct is unlikely. (2009)

903.4. Responsibility to the Poor

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes that Jesus commanded His disciples to have a special relationship to the poor of this world; that Christ's Church ought, first, to keep itself simple and free from an emphasis on wealth and extravagance and, second, to give itself to the care, feeding, clothing, and shelter of the poor. Throughout the Bible and in the life and example of Jesus, God identifies with and assists the poor, the oppressed, and those in society who cannot speak for themselves. In the same way, we, too, are called to identify with and to enter into solidarity with the poor and not simply to offer charity from positions of comfort. We hold that compassionate ministry to the poor includes acts of charity as well as a struggle to provide opportunity, equality, and justice for the poor. We further believe that the Christian responsibility to the poor is an essential aspect of the life of every believer who seeks a faith that works through love.

Finally, we understand Christian holiness to be inseparable from ministry to the poor in that it drives the Christian beyond his or her own individual perfection and toward the creation of a more just and equitable society and world. Holiness, far from distancing believers from the desperate economic needs of people in our world, motivates us to place our means in the

service of alleviating such need and to adjust our wants in accordance with the needs of others. (2001)

(Exodus 23:11; Deuteronomy 15:7; Psalms 41:1; 82:3; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:10)

903.5. Women in Ministry

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** supports the right of women to use their God-given spiritual gifts within the church, affirms the historic right of women to be elected and appointed to places of leadership within the **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, including the offices of both elder and deacon. The purpose of Christ's redemptive work is to set God's creation free from the curse of the Fall. Those who are "in Christ" are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). In this redemptive community, no human being is to be regarded as inferior on the basis of social status, race, or gender (Galatians 3:26-28).

Acknowledging the apparent paradox created by Paul's instruction to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:11-12) and to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:33-34), we believe interpreting these passages as limiting the role of women in ministry presents serious conflicts with specific passages of scripture that commend female participation in spiritual leadership roles (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 21:8-9; Romans 16:1, 3, 7; Philippians 4:2-3), and violates the spirit and practice of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition. Finally, it is incompatible with the character of God presented throughout Scripture, especially as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. (2001)

903.6. Gender Inclusive Language

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** affirms and encourages the use of gender inclusive language in reference to persons. Publications, including the Manual and public language should reflect this commitment to gender equality as expressed in paragraph 903.5. Language changes shall not be applied to any scriptural quotations or references to God. (2009)

903.7. The Church and Human Freedom

Concerned that our great Christian heritage be understood and safeguarded, we remind our people that both political and religious freedom rest upon biblical concepts of the dignity of humankind as God's creation and the sanctity of one's own individual conscience. We encourage our people to participate in appropriate activity in support of these biblical concepts and to be ever vigilant against threats to this precious freedom.

These freedoms are constantly in danger, therefore we urge election of persons to public office at all levels of government who believe in these principles and who are answerable only to God and the constituency that elected them when carrying out a public trust. Further, we resist any invasion of these principles by religious groups seeking special favors.

We believe that the role of the Church is to be prophetic and constantly to remind the people that "righteousness exalts a nation" (Proverbs 14:34). (2005)

903.8. War and Military Service

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes that the ideal world condition is that of peace and that it is the full obligation of the Christian Church to use its influence to seek such means as will enable the nations of the earth to be at peace and to devote all of its agencies for the propagation of the message of peace. However, we realize that we are living in a world where evil forces and philosophies are actively in conflict with these Christian ideals and that there may arise such international emergencies as will require a nation to resort to war in defense of its ideals, its freedom, and its existence. While thus committed to the cause of peace, the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** recognizes that the supreme allegiance of the Christian is due to God, and therefore it does not endeavor to bind the conscience of its members relative to participation in military service in case of war, although it does believe that the individual Christian as a citizen is bound to give service to his or her own nation in all ways that are compatible with the Christian faith and the Christian way of life. We also recognize that, as an outgrowth of the Christian teaching and of the Christian desire for peace on earth, there are among our membership individuals who have conscientious objection to certain forms of military service. Therefore the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** claims for conscientious objectors within its membership the same exemptions and considerations regarding military service as are accorded members of recognized noncombatant religious organizations. The **[The Church Name Goes Here]**, through its general secretary, shall set up a register whereon those persons who supply evidence of being members of the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** may record their convictions as conscientious objectors. (2005)

903.9. Creation

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes in the biblical account of creation (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth . . .”—Genesis 1:1). We oppose any godless interpretation of the origin of the universe and of humankind (Hebrews 11:3). (1, 5.1, 7) (2009)

903.10. Creation Care

With deep appreciation of God’s creation we believe we are to strive to exhibit the stewardship qualities that help preserve His work. Recognizing we have been given a stake in sustaining the integrity of our surroundings, we accept the individual and collective responsibilities of doing so. (2009)

(Genesis 2:15, Psalms 8:3-9; 19:1-4; 148)

903.11. Evidence of Baptism with the Holy Spirit

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** believes that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the new birth and to the subsequent work of heart cleansing, or entire sanctification, through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

We affirm that the one biblical evidence of entire sanctification, or the infilling of the Holy Spirit, is the cleansing of the heart by faith from original sin as stated in Acts 15:8-9: “God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.” And this cleansing is manifested by the fruit of the Spirit in a holy life. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love,

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).

To affirm that even a special or any alleged physical evidence, or “prayer language,” is evidence of the baptism with the Spirit is contrary to the biblical and historic position of the Church. (2009)

903.12. Pornography

Pornography is an evil that is undermining the morals of society. Printed and visual materials that degrade the dignity of humankind and are contrary to the scriptural view of the sanctity of marriage and the wholesomeness of sex are to be abhorred.

We believe that we are created in the image of God and that pornography degrades, exploits, and abuses men, women, and children. The pornography industry is motivated by greed, is the enemy of family life, has led to crimes of violence, poisons minds, and defiles the body.

To honor God as Creator and Redeemer, we urge active opposition to pornography by every legitimate means and the making of positive efforts to reach for Christ those who are involved in this evil. (2009)

903.13. Christian Modesty of Dress

Recognizing the increasing trend toward immodesty of dress in public places, we remind our people of the Christian concept of modesty as an expression of holiness and urge that Christian modesty be exercised at all times in public. (2005)

903.14. Wellness

The scripture calls all believers to balance, health, and wholeness through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Gluttony is the practice of consuming to the detriment of body, community, and spiritual life. While obesity may arise due to genetics, cultural constraints, or physical limitations, gluttony, on the other hand, reflects a way of life that consumes God’s good creation: food, resources and relationships that harm both persons and community. The practice of Christian stewardship calls us to seek to maintain the health and fitness of our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit and to live temperate lives with all the resources and relationships God provides. (2009)

(Proverbs 23:19-21; Matthew 11:19; 23:25; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:23; Philippians 3:19; Titus 1:8; 2:12; Hebrews 12:16; 2 Peter 1:6)

903.15. Substance Abuse

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** continues to strongly object to substance abuse as a social malignancy. We encourage church members to take an active and highly visible role and to participate in education relative to substance abuse and the incompatibility of such use with a Christian experience and a holy life. (2001)

903.16. Alcohol Desocialization

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** publicly supports the desocialization of alcohol consumption. We encourage civic, labor, business, professional, social, voluntary, and private agencies and organizations to assist in such desocialization to counteract the advertising and media promotion of the social acceptability of the “alcohol culture.” (2001)

903.17. Tobacco Use and Advertising

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** urges its people to continue to speak out against the use of tobacco, both as a health hazard and a social evil. Our historic stand is based on God’s Word, where we are admonished to maintain our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20). Our stand opposing the use of tobacco in all its forms is strongly supported by medical evidence, documented by numerous social, governmental, and health agencies around the world. They have demonstrated that it is a major health hazard, and have shown conclusively that its use may produce changes in normal bodily physiology, both serious and permanent.

We recognize that our young people are greatly influenced by the millions of dollars that are spent on tobacco advertising, and its twin evil, beverage alcohol. We endorse a ban on all advertising of tobacco and beverage alcohol in magazines, on billboards, and on radio and television. (2001)

903.18. HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome)

Since 1981, our world has been confronted with a most devastating disease known as HIV/AIDS. In view of the deep need of HIV/AIDS sufferers, Christian compassion motivates us to become accurately informed about HIV/AIDS. Christ would have us to find a way to communicate His love and concern for these sufferers in any and every country of the world. (2001)

903.19. Value of Children and Youth

The Bible commands every Christian to, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Proverbs 31:8). The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; 11:19) admonishes us to communicate God’s grace to our children. Psalm 78:4 declares, “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.” Jesus affirms this in Luke 18:16, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” As a response to this biblical perspective, the **[The Church Name Goes Here]** acknowledges that children are important to God and a priority in His kingdom. We believe God directed us to attend to all children—to love, nurture, protect, uphold, guide, and advocate for them. It is God’s plan that we introduce children to the life of salvation and growth in grace. Salvation, holiness, and discipleship are possible and imperative in the lives of children. We recognize that children are not a means to an end, but full participants in the Body of Christ. Children are disciples in training, not disciples in waiting.

Thus, holistic and transformational ministry to children and their families in every local church will be a priority as evidenced by:

- Providing effective and empowering ministries to the whole child—physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually; articulating Christian positions on current social justice issues that affect children; connecting children to the heart of the mission and ministry of the faith community; disciplining children and training them to disciple others, equipping parents to nurture the spiritual formation of their children.

Since the church's educational institutions (Bible schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries) prepare students for leadership, they play a crucial role in carrying out the vision and mission of communicating the value of children. They join local churches and families in taking responsibility to prepare clergy and laity to raise the next generation of children and youth to be biblically and theologically literate and to meet the known and unforeseen challenges for evangelizing, discipling, and transforming their societies.

The **[The Church Name Goes Here]** envisions an intergenerational faith community where children and youth are loved and valued, where they are ministered to and incorporated into the Church family through a wide variety of means and methods, and where they have opportunities to minister to others in ways consistent with their ages, development, abilities, and spiritual gifts.

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