

# **District Overseer Manual**

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# Chapter One

## The Organization and Structure of a District

The Church of God has a centralized form of church government. The structural levels of the organization of the church are: general, state/region (or territory), district, and local. Each state/region, under the oversight of an overseer, is divided into districts in accordance with (1) the number of churches in the state/region, (2) geographical and/or social/cultural boundaries, or (3) practical considerations chosen to facilitate effective ministry goals.

### Definition of a District

The district usually consists of several churches within the same general area over which a district overseer has the immediate oversight. The district overseer is appointed by the state overseer. The geographical boundaries of each district in his state are also set by the state overseer.

The district provides a bridge for communication and service between the local church and the state office. The district overseer is the liaison of the state overseer to the local churches. He is to effect the organization of activities and to establish intercommunication between the local churches and the state overseer. Consequently, he must be closely related both to the state overseer and to the local pastors of his district. Since it is virtually impossible for the state overseer to give the necessary personal supervision to each local church and pastor, he must depend upon the district overseer to keep him informed and to inspire cooperation on the district. If there is a breakdown in the communication or supervision, the entire program suffers.

The district unit encourages fellowship and cooperation in ministry between local churches within the bounds of the district. This is a vital function since it is rather impractical to think of forging close ties between churches throughout the much larger state or territory.

Although every local church is part of the entire Church of God, the district unit allows several churches to bond more intimately, giving visible witness that the local congregation is part of a larger community of believers, all with the same faith and purpose.

Like all other organized units within the church, the district is subject to the International General Assembly of the Church of God. It is within the framework of the *Minutes of the International General Assembly* that ministry goals and projections are formulated and carried out, thus bringing cohesion and unity to the full body that the Great Commission might be implemented more effectively.

## **The Office of District Overseer**

### **Importance of the office**

The importance of the office of district overseer derives from the purpose and importance of the district unit as part of our centralized form of church government. The district overseer has the immediate oversight of the pastors and churches on his district. It is his responsibility to lead these pastors and churches in functioning as a district organization within the Church of God.

The district overseer serves as a mediator and communicator between the state overseer and the local pastors and churches, and between the local pastors and churches and the state overseer. In addition to being a mediator and communicator, he must be a leader, facilitator, and shepherd to the pastors and churches on his district, encouraging them to pursue their mission and ministry on the local and district levels in cooperation with the mission and ministry of the church at the state and international levels.

The *office* of the district overseer is officially recognized by the church as being vital to all church goals and ministry objectives. However, the district overseer is the one who has the primary responsibility for seeing that his office succeeds. He does this by leading his district to function as an integral part of the fellowship and ministry of the whole church. More than anything else, *how well he leads* will determine the respect and effectiveness of his position as district overseer.

The perceived importance of the office of district overseer can differ dramatically from one locality to another. On some districts, many of the church members and pastors hardly know the makeup of the district. On other districts, the district overseer gives strong and positive leadership and is well-known to all. In those situations where the state overseer and the district overseer work together as they should, the oversight and leadership of the district overseer can be very important to pastors and churches, as well as to the state overseer and the international church.

## **The district overseer appointment**

The state overseer not only decides the bounds of each district in his state or territory, but he also appoints the district overseer to serve on each district.

Although in years past, certain churches have been viewed as district churches, with the pastor serving as district overseer almost by virtue of office, that concept was never totally accurate. Overseers have full authority to appoint whomever they choose. This *may* be the pastor of the largest church or the smallest church on the district. The district overseer may, in fact, be someone serving on staff at a church or a retired pastor who has many years of respected ministerial experience, and a true shepherd's heart.

What is crucial at this point—from the perspective of the state overseer who appoints and the minister who accepts the district challenge—is for this individual to be the one most qualified to effectively unite and promote ministry on the district. Strong, ministry-oriented district overseers produce stronger, more productive state/territories. There is not a fixed formula for locating and placing men in these positions. It is done through prayer, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, and through the wisdom of a state overseer who understands both the value and the intricacies of personal relationships.

## **District overseer's authority**

The district overseer works under the direct supervision of the state overseer. By virtue of his appointment, the district overseer, on behalf of the church, is authorized to perform his duties as set forth in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*. These duties define the official bounds of the district overseer's authority.

## **District overseer's duties**

According to the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*, the district overseer has duties in five major areas: (1) church conferences, (2) evangelism, (3) promotion, (4) appointment of pastors, and (5) supervision of church building and remodeling programs.

1. *He is to see that a conference is conducted in each of the churches on his district at least annually. However, he may authorize the local pastor to conduct the conference.*

No conference shall be held in any church on the district without supervision or permission of the district and/or state overseer.

The church conference is for the purpose of transacting any business necessary for the operation of the local church. The district overseer should conduct or grant the pastor of the church permission to conduct regular conferences to inform the membership of the financial status of the church. A regular conference includes all members of the church who wish to attend and should be announced at least ten (10) days in advance of the meeting.

2. *He is to see that a general evangelistic effort is put forth in his district during the year.*

It is the responsibility of the district overseer to plan, implement, and coordinate district evangelism in cooperation with the state overseer and local pastor. If properly planned and conducted, district rallies, revivals, seminars, retreats, and conventions offer great channels through which to spark evangelism.

As part of his evangelistic duty, he must also take the lead in encouraging churches to conduct personal evangelism initiatives, and to extend their church ministerial outreach into surrounding towns and communities that hopefully will lead to the planting of new churches.

3. *He is to see that the state program is carried out in the churches of his district.*

The district overseer is responsible for creating and maintaining a good relationship between the local churches and state and international offices. He is to promote all the international and state programs of the church. In doing promotion, he becomes the vital link between the international church and the local churches, as well as between the state office and the local churches. Many good programs created at the international or state level will never be implemented in the local churches if the district overseer fails to recognize their importance and fails to promote them.

4. *He is to assist the state overseer in the appointment of pastors, when called upon to do so.*

Only the state overseer has the authority to appoint pastors, but he can benefit from the assistance of the district overseer in deciding who shall be appointed as pastor of a local church. It is incumbent upon the district overseer to know the pastors and churches on his district. It is also his responsibility to keep the state overseer informed of what is taking place in the district churches—progress reports, testimonies, problems, irregularities—and any other important facts affecting the pastors and churches on his district.

The district overseer should have a knowledge of those on his district who are called to the ministry, so that he might recommend them to the state overseer. Local churches must refrain from setting forth applicants for the ministry until the district overseer has conferred with the state overseer. The district overseer must be authorized by the state overseer to conduct or have conducted a church conference where an applicant is set forth for any rank of the ministry in the Church of God.

5. *Together with the state overseer, he is to pass on the selection, purchase, and construction of all church properties on the district.*

The district overseer should assist the state overseer in the oversight regarding church building programs, should be familiar with the condition of the properties, the needs for building, expansion and improvements, the debt burden, and the ability to finance building projects of each church on his district.

In addition to these specific duties set forth in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*, the district overseer helps promote youth and discipleship ministries throughout the district.

# Chapter Two

## The Role of the District Overseer

The divine call to be a pastor is a high and holy calling worthy of full acceptance and commitment. As a pastor/shepherd we are primarily concerned with our congregation.

Our heart and focus are on our church body—from the newest baby to the oldest member. We love them all and care about every developmental stage in their lives, as well as their spiritual journey in the church. We gladly seek to serve them to the best of our abilities and giftedness with which we have been blessed.

What happens when I am called upon by my state overseer to serve as a district overseer? What does that require, and how much time will it take from my family, as well as my church family? To answer those two questions, let us consider the role of the district overseer.

- **A friend and a brother**

First the district overseer is to be *a friend and brother* who truly cares for all the pastors on his district. He will come to know each pastor and his family in a personal way. (They all have a story to tell, and out of each story will come insight and understanding as to whom they are and what their dreams about life and ministry are.)

One example of getting to know them is to know the birthdays and the anniversaries of each pastor and his spouse, and then celebrate them in a meaningful way. I would suggest that the district overseer should meet monthly with all the pastors on his district for a meal and fellowship. Wives should be included, for they also need each other. This mealtime would be a great time to celebrate someone's birthday or anniversary.

You see, getting to know one another on a first-name basis and bonding together as brothers is a major role of the district overseer if there is going to be brotherhood and community on the district. Remember, on the Day of Pentecost the saints were in one mind and one accord. That is community, and that is where the Holy Spirit likes to show up and do something special for the people. Another example of being a true friend and brother is to commit to praying daily for the pastors and the churches on his district. Randomly call up a

pastor and ask if there is any need in his ministry that you can help him pray about. This would speak volumes to the pastor. Be a man of prayer.

- **A public role model**

Second of all, the district overseer is to be a public *role model* for pastors and members on his district. He is to be a role model in how his faith gives him hope and courage for every challenge in his life and ministry. He is to be a role model in how he loves and cares for his wife and children in and outside the church. He is to be a role model in how he handles his finances in his home and in his church. Being a role model is huge.

- **A resource person**

Third of all, the district overseer is to be a *resource person* for pastors and churches under his care. Out of his years of experience, education, and study, he can provide helpful information and personal inspiration pertaining to church problems and challenges that face all pastors. The district overseer will surely want to encourage his pastors to take advantage of ministerial training opportunities by doing so himself.

- **A contact person**

Fourth of all, he is to be a *contact person* for the state overseer. Since the state overseer cannot know all that needs to be known in order to make good decisions pertaining to some pastor or church, he can call on the district overseer who will most likely know what is going on and have vital information that can greatly assist the state overseer in his responsibility to make wise decisions and appointments. The district overseer can be of great help to the state overseer when he needs more information pertaining to a pastor or church in trouble, or to a new pastor needing to be appointed to a church that is in need of a pastor.

- **A district events planner**

Fifth of all, the district overseer is to be a *district events planner*. He can plan two or three events a year that will involve every pastor and church on the district. He should hear from the pastors, and get their suggestions and insights. Let the decision be made with the help of all pastors and then plan a way to promote it in every church. The event could be a district revival conducted in a different church each night. It could be a district world missions night at one of the churches with a selected missionary as the speaker. It could be a youth rally, an all music night, an art festival, a ministerial training day, or it could be a pastors retreat.

- **A man of personal integrity, ethics, and high morals**

Last of all, the district overseer is to be *a man of personal integrity, ethics, and high morals*. In all his relationships with pastors and churches, he is to speak the truth in love and live what he preaches. The world is becoming more cynical and secular in its view and relationship to the Christian church, truth, and morality. Thus, the district overseer must not allow the trends and behavior of our culture to alter his commitment to a sanctified life that brings glory to God and honor to the church.

# Chapter Three

## The District Overseer's Administrative Relationships

If there is one word that best describes the life of a district overseer, it is *relationships*: Relationships with church officials, pastoral colleagues, and laity in the Church of God, as well as relationships with international personnel, state/regional personnel, and district personnel. Let us take a closer look at these relationships.

- **Denominational Loyalty**

Because the district overseer occupies a strategic position in the organization and ministry of the church, it is crucial that he be loyal to the Church of God. The district overseer's attitude, words, and deeds toward the church and church leaders at the state and international levels will have a significant impact upon the attitudes and behavior of the pastors and churches on his district. The district overseer should strive to see that his words and deeds demonstrate an attitude of solid commitment to serving Christ and the church.

The district overseer can and should set an example which demonstrates to those under his leadership that true loyalty is better than blind allegiance. Loyalty requires one to constantly examine the church in the light of God's Word and the example of Christ. We are likely at times to recognize that the church is not yet perfect. We must work together constructively—in a spirit of Christian love—for its improvement even while recognizing, cherishing, and preserving all that is good in the present order of things.

While not blind to faults or weaknesses, the district overseer should have a keen vision and always be a convincing voice for what is right with the church. He should cultivate loyalty on his district by calling attention to the benefits of being part of the Church of God. This partnership provides pastors and congregations a ready-made fellowship and identity with a major Pentecostal/Evangelical body that has a worldwide ministry. For all involved, this brings strength and security as well as the challenge and feasibility for carrying out the Great Commission.

The district overseer has a Christian duty to be a minister and a spiritual shepherd to all people in his district. He should harbor no prejudice or ill will toward people of other

persuasions; yet he must remain firmly committed to serving Christ and the Church of God. Such a leader will be respected not only by the pastors and churches under his oversight but also by people throughout the community at large.

- **Relationship to State/Regional Overseer**

The district overseer is the liaison of the state/regional overseer to the local churches. Since it is virtually impossible for the state/regional overseer to give the necessary personal supervision to each local church and pastor, he must depend upon the district overseer to keep him informed and to inspire cooperation on the district.

The district overseer derives his authority from the Church of God International General Assembly and the state/regional overseer. This fact alone demands that the state/regional overseer and the district overseer must work closely together to have an effective program for ministry at the state/regional and district levels. To do this, the state/regional overseer and the district overseer should be well acquainted with each other and should clearly understand each other. One of the priorities for the state/regional overseers and district overseers may be the setting aside of personal, quality time for cultivating this personal relationship. Such will prove invaluable in months ahead and result in more effective communication and ministry.

Thus, when problems arise on the district, the district overseer will know something of how the state/regional overseer will think about the matter and be able to clearly understand the state/regional overseer's instructions. Of equal importance, the district overseer will be able to describe events or situations in terms the state/regional overseer will understand.

These same principles hold true in the district overseer's relationship with other state/regional officials, such as the state/regional youth and discipleship director. The district overseer will work with these men as part of the state/regional team, and he must have a good working relationship with them, though his line of authority comes directly from the state/regional overseer.

The district overseer should be aware that it is not unusual for lay people to take their problems directly to the state/regional overseer. The laity ought not to bypass the district overseer, but they can and often do. If the district overseer has a good relationship with his state/regional overseer, he will not be upset by people who bypass his authority. Normally, the state/regional overseer will share with the district overseer any information pertinent to him and his district work. The district overseer must not, either directly or indirectly, betray

the confidence shared with him by the state/regional overseer. Confidentiality and trust must be maintained between the state/regional overseer and the district overseer at all times.

What has been said regarding the relationship between the laity and the state/regional overseer should also be understood regarding the pastors on the district. Pastors should not bypass the district overseer, but they can and do. Once again the objective for the district overseer should be to maintain understanding and confidentiality between himself and the state/regional overseer.

For the district overseer, a problem much more serious than that of the laity or pastors bypassing his authority may be the failure of the state/regional overseer to recognize his role and give him authority. The relationship between the district overseer and the state/regional overseer is a two-way street. State/regional overseers are under a mandate by those who appoint them to delegate responsibility to district overseers and to keep the lines of communication open so the district overseer is fully informed of all transactions on his district.

Communication is very important between the state/regional and district overseers. Continual efforts must be made by both to ensure that each has full understanding of the thoughts, methods, and procedures involved in their individual and joint actions regarding the pastors and churches of the district.

- **Relationship to Pastors**

Ideally, the district overseer should be well acquainted with every pastor on his district and the “world” in which each pastor is seeking to fulfill his calling. Since the pastors on the district are under the immediate supervision of the district overseer, no one should know each pastor and church better than he does.

Every pastor should feel secure in his relationship with the district overseer. The district overseer should strive to create a compassionate, nonjudgmental relationship in which pastors will feel free to share their successes and problems with him. Such trust and sharing will require an effort on the part of the district overseer and the pastor to spend time together. It is the responsibility of the district overseer to try to set up opportunities for spending time with, and becoming better acquainted with, pastors and their families.

Pastors and their families often lead a lonely life because they have few friends with whom they feel free to discuss problems. The district overseer may be the closest and most

important person in whom a pastor confides. The district overseer should spare no effort to win the confidence of the pastors. They in turn should have no fear or anxiety when approaching him about whatever they need.

Although the district overseer is quite naturally understood to represent the international church and the state/regional overseer, he should at the same time guard against seeming to be an unreasonable advocate of his superiors and always an opponent of local pastors. He should be a real friend, not only to those who are over him in the Lord, but equally to the pastors under his supervision. Every pastor needs to know he will be treated fairly and impartially by his district overseer.

Fairness is of crucial importance when the district overseer becomes involved in assisting the state/regional overseer in making pastoral selection and appointments.

Experience shows that crisis may come at any time in a pastor's life. Pastors may experience painful difficulties regarding their children, spouse, finances, congregation, spiritual needs, and problems of faith and theology. In these times of crises, the pastor should be able to confide in his district overseer without fear of betrayal or reprisal.

By virtue of his office, the district overseer is a pastor to the pastors on his district. In accepting this role, he must seek to become known as a trustworthy counselor and advisor.

- **Relationships to Laity**

The district overseer seeks to carry out his duties in the best interest of the local pastors and the people who make up the congregations. He is wise to remember that the largest constituency under his supervision is the laity who comprises the membership of each local church. He is the district overseer to these people, as well as to their pastors.

The district overseer cannot take the place of the local pastor, and he should not encourage church members to bypass their pastor, bringing problems directly to the district overseer. Still, he will be viewed by the people on his district as being the "district pastor." In his pastoral capacity the district overseer should be available to serve the needs of all the people on his district. To the laity, as well as to the pastors, he should be a trustworthy leader, confidant, counselor, and advisor.

By his own denominational loyalty, godly example, aggressive spiritual leadership, and genuine interest in the churches on his district, the district overseer can have a positive influence upon the laity. The district overseer can be a tremendous influence in getting the

laity to recognize that discipleship, evangelism, and missions are not options which the church may take or leave: they are commandments of our Lord.

# Chapter Four

## Assisting the State Overseer in Pastoral Selection

### 1. Dealing with pastoral changes

One of the most sensitive issues a district overseer has to deal with is that of pastoral change. Directly or indirectly, whether he wishes to be or not, the district overseer will be involved when a pastoral change takes place on his district.

Officially, according to the *Minutes* of the International General Assembly, "the state/regional overseer shall appoint the pastor subsequent to consultation with the district overseer..." Ideally, the pastoral change process will be a smooth one in which the state overseer works hand-in-hand with the district overseer. Unfortunately, it does not always happen that way. Sometimes, the pastor will go directly to the state/regional overseer and a change is made without the district overseer being either informed or involved through the contact from members of the church where the change is taking place or from other ministers who are interested. It can be an awkward situation.

What can a district overseer do to assure that any pastoral changes that take place on his district will be as positive and productive as possible? Here are some steps to consider.

#### Before a Change

Pastoral change is inevitable. However, there are several things a district overseer can do to positively anticipate these changes. One of the best preemptive measures is to stay in regular contact with the pastors on the district. This can be done through district meetings, fellowships, seminars, and personal interaction. A pastor who has a close personal relationship with the district overseer is more likely to share his feelings prior to making a final decision on a change. Many times a word of encouragement or a bit of appropriate counsel from the district overseer makes a world of difference in a pastor's perspective. Sometimes a change is needful. When this is the case, the district overseer can help guide the pastor in his approach to the state overseer and to his congregation. In any event, it is that positive personal relationship that will make the whole process much easier and smoother.

When a pastor lets the district overseer know he is contemplating a change, he should be encouraged to share his feelings with the state/regional overseer. It may be appropriate for the district overseer to accompany the pastor when he visits the state/regional overseer. The pastor will be appreciative of any personal support during the transitional period.

### **During a Change**

Once the change process has begun, the district overseer should stay active in his involvement—offering to assist the state/regional overseer, staying in close contact with the outgoing pastor and his family, monitoring the feelings of the congregation, and making welcome the incoming pastor and his family. To have a leader on the scene, available and involved, facilitates the change process in a way that will benefit everyone.

Often the reason a district overseer is not made an active part of a pastoral change on his district is because he doesn't show an interest. Even if he doesn't agree with the way the matter has been handled, he should still show a helpful, cooperative spirit.

### **After a Change**

Once a change is made, whether it has gone smoothly or been tough, the best approach for the district overseer is to stay positive and optimistic. He should stick with the new pastor until all the dust has settled. Again, there is nothing more important than the development of a strong personal relationship.

Over a period of time, how a district overseer handles pastoral changes will be one of the most critical factors in determining his leadership effectiveness.

## **2. Suggested questions to ask a prospective pastor during the church interview**

When the state overseer allows a church to interview a prospective pastor for their church, the church must take the matter very seriously and prepare themselves for a profitable interview. Besides the praying that must take place, there are good reasons for a church to interview the prospective pastor. Reason number one: the interview will make known something of his calling and giftedness. Reason number two: the interview will make known something of his temperament and personality. Reason number three: the interview will make known something of his family and future plans.

The following suggested questions would be helpful to ask:

1. Ask about his spiritual journey.
2. Ask about his family.
3. Ask about his ministerial experiences.
4. Ask about his educational and ministerial training.
5. Ask about steps he takes in casting vision for the church.
6. Ask him to share his views about the mission of the church.
7. Ask him to share his decision-making process and his philosophy related to church finances.
8. Ask him to share what three books—other than the Bible—have impacted him the most.
9. Ask him to state three ministers who have impacted him the most.
10. Ask him to tell the church about his health and the health of his family.

# Chapter Five

## Ministerial Pointers for District Overseers

### 1. The qualifications needed to be an effective District Overseer

It goes without saying that a district overseer is to be a person who is accountable to the state overseer, and provides thoughtful leadership on his district that adds value to all pastors and members of the Church of God. But, there is more to being an effective district overseer. Let us look at the qualifications needed to be an effective district overseer. They are:

- **A teachable spirit**

*This is a person who has a teachable spirit and is eager to continue learning by reading ministry books and attending ministry classes.*

This speaks of a person who is reading, growing, and staying on the cutting edge of effective ministry.

Learning and growing leaders have a freshness about them that is contagious. Maxwell writes, “You don’t have to be a natural to become a great leader, you simply need a heart for God and a teachable spirit.” So true.

A district overseer should have a teachable spirit.

- **A ready mind**

*This is a person who has a mind that is ready to take the necessary time to think, to strategize, and to implement district ministry.*

In Dr. Albert Mohler’s book, *The Conviction to Lead*, he makes the following points:

1. “. . . the quality of your actions will never exceed the quality of your thinking.”
2. “Careful attention to thinking is what first sets the leader apart.”
3. “At the very least, most seem quite satisfied never to think in a concerted, critical, and careful way. Such leaders never think strategically, consistently, or critically.

They go from thought to thought without reflection, analysis, or questioning their own decisions. They operate at the basis level of thinking, and they think about the things that interest them. But they are not seriously interested in the process and quality of thought.”

4. “We do not set ourselves up as prophets or oracles. Instead, we lead out of authenticity and the open acknowledgment that we are doing what all leaders must do—face the facts, lean into the truth, apply the right principles, acknowledge the alternatives, and finally make the right decision. In other words, the leader leads by conviction.”

A district overseer should have a ready mind.

- **A servant’s heart**

*This is a person who has a heart to serve all the pastors and churches on the district.*

This servant’s heart is all about saying and doing things that will be a blessing to others.

Jesus said it best when He said to the twelve disciples, “...If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and **servant** of all” (Mark 9:35 NKJV).

The servant’s heart is shaped by the level of love in our hearts for God and our neighbor. From the heart comes the God-given desire to serve.

In their book, *Building Leaders*, authors Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini write: “We define a Christian leader as a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction.” He goes on to say, “Leadership isn’t about us. It’s all about other people. We’re not to lead for what we can get out of it, but for what others, followers, can get out of it that will glorify God.”

A district overseer should have a servant’s heart.

- **Helping hands**

*This is a person who has hands that will help implement district plans and accomplish district goals.*

He is not just one who is a major planner sitting around a table with other leaders, but one who will put his hands to the “plow” as well. He will lead by example, even when there is a call to physical work. He is the first one there and the last one to leave. He is to set the example for others to follow.

A district overseer should have helping hands.

- **Bended knees**

*This is a person who has knees that will bend in prayer for the pastors and churches on his district.*

Is anything more important to a leader's life than his daily devotional life comprised of prayer and Bible reading? I think not!

The daily devotional life gives foundation, strength, and perspective to leaders like nothing else. You receive peace during rocky times, and you receive fire during challenging times. Bended knees make for good leadership. If others see you as a praying leader, then those under your care will be more excited and committed to your leadership.

A district overseer should have bended knees.

- **Gospel feet**

*This is a person who has feet that will carry the gospel of peace and goodwill throughout the district.*

Peace and goodwill feet are all about a Christlike attitude and action. What kind of feet carries the gospel of peace? Listen to Christ: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9 NKJV).

A district overseer should have gospel feet wherever he goes and in whatever he does in fulfilling his oversight ministry on the district.

Conclusion: These guidelines for district overseer selection are Biblical and practical. Let all selected district overseers accept this high standard and go forward in advancing the kingdom of God.

## **2. Lead by a set of core values.**

If you are going to be an effective district overseer, then you must have a set of core values that you will not violate. Some may call these absolutes, and in reality, that is what they are. These core values have to do with what you do as a leader, as well as how you go about doing it. You must have a set of personal core values to guide and council you.

Here are some guidelines in how to establish and carry out core values:

- *Base your core values only on the Bible.*

This should come as no surprise to you. From the Bible, we know God to be a righteous God who places great value on things being done right. Everything we need to know about God and righteousness (what is right and wrong) is found in the Holy Bible.

- *Be true to your core values.*

Circumstances and friendships can and will challenge our core values. If our commitment to Christ is real, we know to put the kingdom of God and *His righteousness* first in our lives.

- *Be guided by your core values.*

Always be ready to speak up for your core values. This will help you to know how to decide on the many matters that you will need to act upon as a district overseer.

- *Do not be arrogant or hardhearted with your core values.*

Do not be self-righteous in letting others know of your core values. Some will be embraced by others and some might not be embraced. Be very understanding and compassionate to those who do not embrace all your core values. Your core values should never get in the way of your love for both the saint and the sinner.

- *Do not vacillate with your core values.*

A great character trait for any leader to exemplify is being consistent in living your life, doing ministry, and making decisions based on your core values. Giving mixed signals will cause people under your leadership to not trust you.

- *Let your core values bring glory to God.*

If our core values are based on God's Word, and we seek to live them out in a loving and caring way, then they will bring glory to God. We are to listen to and obey God's Word.

When we as district overseers are guided by a set of core values based upon God's Word, then all that we do and how we go about doing it will honor God, advance the kingdom of God, and bless the Church of God.

### **3. Get to know the pastors on your district.**

Every pastor has a story to tell. It is about his personal life, the life of his family, and his ministerial life. Knowing his story is vital to your leadership effectiveness.

a. *Get to know their family background.*

Let them tell you where they were born, the family they grew up in, and their educational background.

b. *Get to know their occupation/employment background.*

Ask them to tell you about their places of employment and what they did.

c. *Get to know their religious background/journey.*

Find out what churches they attended when growing up and what churches they have been part of since becoming an adult. Include the pastor's wife as well.

d. *Get to know their churches.*

You do this by attending their special services, revivals, and events. As you show an interest in their churches, your influence will become greater and more rewarding.

e. *Get to know the heart and passion of their ministry.*

Ask them to share with you what they believe they are gifted to do as a pastor. Find out what their passion and burden are all about.

f. *Get to know their dreams and vision for the ministry/church.*

This will help you to know what they want to accomplish with their ministry. As a district overseer, you will want to help them achieve their goals. You will do this by showing an interest in their dreams and encouraging them to pursue them.

g. *Get to know the cities and communities where the pastors labor.*

The pastors should be able to tell a lot about the population, industry, economy, and education that make up their place of service. You will need to do some demographic research on your own so as to know more about the past, present, and future population growth pattern where they live and minister.

h. *Get to know what books and persons that have impacted them the most.*

This will give you as the district overseer great insight into their way of thinking and philosophy about church and ministry.

#### **4. Praying for the pastors and their churches on the district**

It is very vital that the district overseer maintain an active and growing prayer life. His devotional time with God should be daily. He is committed to reading the Bible and spending time in prayer. This is part of the district overseer's daily schedule.

During his prayer time, it is very important that he remember the pastors and their churches. When praying for the pastor, call his name out in prayer. Pray for his family and their challenges.

Here are some suggestions in knowing what to daily pray about:

- a. Pray that God will bless each pastor/church with a greater burden for the kingdom of God.
- b. Pray that God will bless each pastor/church with a vision for the expansion of their ministry and outreach.
- c. Pray that God will bless each pastor/church with a fresh anointing of the Spirit.
- d. Pray that God will bless each pastor/church with a winning strategy for effective ministry.
- e. Pray that God will bless each pastor/church with victory.

The district overseer can be no less than Epaphras. Paul said about him, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis" (Colossians 4:12-13 NKJV).

#### **5. Formulate a growth strategy for the district**

As the district overseer you will want to see your district grow spiritually and numerical. This will require servant leadership on your part to lead the district in planning and promoting a commitment to the mission Christ gave the church.

- First, through diligent research and prayer, get a clear picture of what the demographic facts are about your district, and then pray about what the possibilities are for advancing the kingdom of God. God will give you a vision for your district. Vision should gender excitement and hope with the pastors and churches on the district. Vision gives you focus, fire, and followers.

- Second, identify your district resources and personnel that can be used to pursue your vision. Begin with what you have.
- Third, set aside a set time for the pastors and district churches to engage in a season of special prayer for the vision.
- Forth, formulate goals connected with the vision that reflect personal faith and commitment. If you can see in your spirit the realization of the goals, and if you will exercise the ministry giftedness on your district, then you will experience God's grace and behold His glory in a mighty way.

Five questions to ask in evaluating your vision and goals for your district:

1. *Can they be messaged?*  
 Can it be put into words?  
 Can it be put into words that capture people's attention?  
 Can it be put into a few words?  
 Can you shout it from the housetop?
2. *Can they be measured?*  
 Does it have a beginning and end dates?  
 Can the vision be divided up into set and dated goals?
3. *Can they be managed?*  
 Is there leadership to oversee the work?  
 Are there enough people available to make it work?
4. *Can they be mastered?*  
 Are the vision and goals attainable?  
 Are the vision and goals doable?
5. *Can they appeal to the majority?*  
 Will this vision and these goals appeal to the adults?  
 Will this vision and these goals appeal to the youth?

If your answer is yes then go forward with the vision and goals. Remember, a vision must demonstrate comprehensiveness, clarity, and conviction.

- Fifth, do the necessary planning to reach your goals. See to it that as many as possible (pastors and laity) are giving input into the plans and strategy to be adopted. (This will take time and effort on the part of the district overseer.)
- Sixth, see that all pastors are on board. Form a team from the churches on the district to help. Teamwork makes the dream work.

- Seventh, make it known to all the churches. Go out of your way to make sure everyone is informed about what is going on. Good promotion and publicity are needed.

Remember all along the way that God can make it happen. The great apostle Paul wrote, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” (I Corinthians 3:6 NKJV).

# Chapter Six

## Conducting Church Conferences

It is the duty of the district overseer to either conduct (moderate) or authorize pastors to conduct conferences in the churches on his district. Whether the district overseer presides over a regular or called conference of the church, it is important for him to be an able moderator of the meeting.

In order to be an able moderator, the district overseer should be thoroughly acquainted with the rulings of the International General Assembly relative to church conferences. The rulings of the Assembly listed under the heading “Conferences” in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly* are reproduced in the following text:

### Conference

#### I. Purpose

A church conference is a business meeting for the purpose of transacting any business necessary for the operation of the local church.

#### II. Who May Conduct a Conference?

1. No pastor has the right to hold a conference without permission from the district overseer.
2. No conference shall be held in the district except under the direction or supervision of the district overseer. This does not exclude the authority of the overseer of the state, which is fully explained in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*.
3. In any instance where there is not a sufficient number of active members in the local church to assist in conducting a conference, the state or district overseer, and two or more ministers whom he may select, shall make full disposition of all matters that may demand attention.
4. The state and district overseers should see that at least one conference a year is conducted in each local church in their respective state or territory.
5. The local church has a right to appoint a committee in conference to look after some affairs of the church. Such a committee, however, is to do nothing that would

conflict with or violate the local, state, and general church program and government, to create confusion.

### **III. Regular Conference**

1. The regular conference, consisting of the membership, is called or set for any regularly designated time by the pastor or district overseer. The purpose of the conference is to inform the church of its financial status. The church conference shall also consider any other business referred to it by the pastor and his church council. All major disbursements must be approved by the church in conference.
2. The regular conference shall be announced at least ten (10) days before it is to occur.

### **IV. Called Conference**

1. The called conference consists of all members of the local church who wish to attend, said conference to convene at a time set by the pastor to take care of business arising between the regular conferences. This does not exclude the right of the state and district overseers to call or moderate conferences in local churches.
2. When it is necessary to have a called conference, all members of the local church should be notified if possible.

### **V. Order of Conference**

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall serve as the guide for conducting all business conferences.

Usual order of business:

1. Financial reports of various departments of the church
2. Other reports of committees, and so forth
3. Transfer of membership, if any
4. Unfinished business left from previous meeting
5. New business

The rules of practice which govern a body of people for the discussion and execution of business are known as parliamentary law. The purpose of the rules of order is to make universal applications to the democratic process. Parliamentary law is designed to:

1. Maintain orderly discussion.

2. Facilitate the conduct of business.
3. Provide for the rulership of the majority.
4. Protect the rights of the minority.

To accomplish these purposes it is necessary for the assembly to be organized, for the business to be classified, and for the discussion to be governed. *Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised)* is the official guide for the business of the International General Assembly and should, therefore, serve as the guide for the district overseer in conducting all business sessions.

In addition to being well-acquainted with the International General Assembly rulings regarding conferences, the district overseer should have a working knowledge of *Robert's Rules of Order*, the standard guide for parliamentary procedure in all democratic forums.

Finally, in order to be an able moderator the district overseer should be thoroughly informed of the immediate purpose of the conference and the business to be conducted by the church. While the district overseer cannot anticipate everything that will be discussed or acted upon during a conference, he should have as much information as possible.

# Chapter Seven

## Monthly meetings with the pastors

The district overseer's purpose in meeting monthly with the pastors on his district is twofold:

1. Get to better know and trust one another. This creates a sense of covenant and community in God's work on the district.
2. Learn how to better work together for the good of every pastor and church. This creates a sense of worth and importance in God's kingdom work for each pastor and church.

Let us see how this monthly meeting will make a difference for pastor and church.

1. It begins with gaining new and greater insight into who we are as ministers. This has to do with select reading and open dialogue within the group of ministers. This has a direct connection to our *heads*.
2. New and greater insights bring transformational enrichment for the soul. This is about internalizing the knowledge we are acquiring and allowing it to challenge the *heart* to a greater commitment to excellence in ministry.
3. Enrichment of the soul leads to implementation of new and exciting ministry. To be true to ourselves, we must apply our new knowledge and understanding and thus revise and update our mission and ministry. This is about our *hands* getting involved.
4. Implementation of new and exciting mission and ministry in the churches on the district brings about new and exciting achievements. God will honor and reward such passion and grant life-changing results for the local church. Thus, the churches on the district will say, "Hallelujah!"

Where and how can these monthly meetings take place?

1. You can meet at a local restaurant and enjoy the redemptive fellowship with one another.

2. You can meet at a local church for a time of study and learning. See that your discussions are reflective, insightful, and edifying. The time given to these meetings should be well planned.
3. Rotate the location of your meetings, based upon the wishes of the pastors.
4. Let the pastors on your district select a ministerial/Biblical theme for each meeting that will take place at a church.
5. When meeting for study and learning, encourage each pastor to share out of his/her experiences and insights related to the monthly theme.
6. Encourage laughter.
7. At times, encourage the spouses to be part of the monthly meeting.
8. Respect the time given to these monthly meetings by planning the date, time, place, and theme for each meeting well in advance.
9. Always have prayer time before leading.

# Chapter Eight

## Legal Matters: “Hot” Legal Topics

By Dennis W. Watkins, Legal Counsel for the Church of God

### Introduction

Legal issues continue to be a growing area of church affairs, necessitating familiarity with and resources for proper risk management.

Always remember that the farther away activities of a church venture from traditional worship and Bible study, the more the likelihood of potential legal ramifications. Churches are being sued for such activities as selling chicken dinners, sponsoring athletic events, and many other activities. As the number of ministry opportunities increases, so does the possibility that someone will try to find a legal angle from which to attack the church.

### Necessity of frequent contact with a lawyer

Some of the best advice that can be given to a pastor is to acquaint himself with and form an ongoing relationship with a local, reputable attorney. This relationship is important, because the pastor can avail himself of the lawyer’s expertise, *before* making a mistake with legal ramifications. It is always better to think preventatively rather than retroactively, and major decisions should not be made regarding the church or its business, without first contacting a lawyer.

### Church property Issues

On the issue of property, be sure to verify that all properties involving our churches are in the proper Church of God form. I have the form *Church of God Warranty Deed*, and I regularly work with attorneys around the country, educating them as to our policies and procedures regarding property and providing them with forms.

Our method of property ownership not only benefits the denomination, but also provides advantages to the local church, because many local churches seek assistance through our MRP program, and other various business aspects, and these services cannot be provided,

without the property being placed in the correct forms. The deed form also protects from secession of the church property by a dissident minority.

### Insurance Issues

Insurance is without a doubt the most important issue we can cover, because a church that “*thinks*” it is insured but is not insured or is underinsured, is going to face some serious problems. Particularly, insurance is valuable because most liability policies cover for *defense costs*, which can range in the thousands of dollars, even for a frivolous case.

The following questions are very important in determining your insurance:

1. Who is your carrier? Does this carrier routinely insure churches, on a broad scale?
2. In case of a fire loss, is your building insured for *full replacement costs*? In the alternative, in the event of a fire loss, is your church *insured to value*?
3. In case of a fire loss, does your church’s policy have a *coinsurance penalty*? Most policies state that in the event of a fire loss, if your building is not insured at least up to a certain percentage (usually 80-90%) on the fair market value or actual replacement value of your building, *at the time of the loss*, there may be a penalty involved. This means that you may have less insurance coverage than you think in the event of catastrophic fire loss.
4. Does your church’s policy have *non-owned and hired auto-vehicle coverage* for your church? This coverage allows a person who is on church business or in the furtherance of church activities, who is driving a vehicle not owned by the church, to have insurance coverage in the event of an accident. However, you must have the right clause in your policy.
5. Does your church’s insurance policy have a sexual misconduct endorsement?
6. If you have employees, have you complied with state laws regarding workers compensation insurance? This includes church schools and day cares.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that you understand what type of liability and other insurance coverage that you have available to your church. Be sure to ask your agent what *exclusions* apply to your policy.

## Child Sexual Abuse/Molestation

This area is of course a very fertile area for lawsuits against churches in our day. The very best materials on this subject, in my opinion, are provided under the name *Reducing the Risk, Keeping Your Ministry Safe from Child Sexual Abuse* and are marketed by *Christianity Today* at [www.churchlaw-today.com](http://www.churchlaw-today.com); telephone number: 1-800-222-1840.

The above course points out the four basic areas of need in preventing problems in this area:

1. Screening—for paid and volunteer workers. Remember: apply a six-month rule for *all* workers.
2. Supervision—Make sure two adults are in classrooms with children, at all times, and that your church has windows in all doors and other areas.
3. Reporting—this is a major issue for many ministers confronted with certain news or information about alleged abuse. It is very important to know if your state has a rule limiting a certain period of time in which you must report an allegation of sexual abuse. If you are not aware of same, or if an allegation arises in your church, please contact me, so that I can refer you to an attorney who can provide for you assistance in this area. Not reporting an alleged incident of child abuse in your state can result in serious penalties against you or the church.
4. Responding properly to an allegation of child abuse is also very important.

Once again, the *Reducing the Risk* training material contains an excellent video, as well as written materials and sample forms for dealing with this issue.

## The Church as Employer

This area is certainly a *hot trend* topic for church law. If you have a day care or a church school with a number of employees, you certainly need to know these rules.

In former years, employees were *terminable at will*, meaning that individuals could be relieved of employment at any time and for any reason. Also, employees could end their

employment at any time, at will. However, in recent years, state and federal laws have come into place which change this picture.

If you have a church policy handbook or an employee handbook, it should contain a clause which says, “This document does not constitute a contract of employment...,” if this clause is not in violation of state law.

Also, there is a litany of federal statutes that exist, which, if they apply, may result in serious consequences regarding termination of employees. They are, among others:

1. Title VII—Civil Rights Act of 1964

This Act covers discrimination because of sexual harassment, racial or ethnic discrimination, and other areas of protection. The Act covers hiring, firing, and many things in between.

2. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978

3. The Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA)

4. American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

5. Fair Labor Standards Act of 1939 (FLSA)—which covers minimum wages

6. Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (if applicable)

Be sure that your church carries proper worker’s compensation insurance. This can be a very problematic area if you do not carry it.

In short, be very careful about labor relations and termination of employees. This is an area of law that can be very troublesome for the unwary minister of church.

### **Local Church Counseling**

The counseling area is persistently problematic, and there are surprising statistics of admitted improprieties by ministers in the counseling setting.

Be sure to note that the term *counseling* has been given broad definition by some courts, including, but not limited to, a telephone call, tarrying after church, talking to a minister, or a young person talking to a youth pastor.

The main point that should be made about counseling is that ministers should make their counseling *spiritual*, unless the minister is a licensed professional. *Spiritual* counseling is

defined as based on an understanding of Scripture, and not rooted in psychotherapeutic principles.

Be sure that the person you are counseling with understands that you may have to disclose certain facts told to you, such as commission of crimes or child abuse. Also, counseling should be done only during church hours, with others there. Sessions for counseling should not last over 45 minutes, and the number of sessions a year should be limited, such as three or four sessions at the most.

If one of your ministers sees that he is *over his head* in a counseling relationship, he should get out of that relationship as soon as possible and refer the counselee to a qualified and trained professional.

### **Defamation**

Defamation is defined as the speaking and publishing of false, distorted, and misleading information about another, in a way that harms that person's reputation. Libel is written or published information, and slander is oral or verbal defamation.

Advise your pastors not to use the background stories or experiences of others in illustrations without obtaining the consent of the person involved.

### **Undue Influence**

Advise your ministers to be careful about receiving gifts from elderly people or individuals who may appear to be susceptible to the undue influence of a minister or church.

Anytime such a person desires to give or will something to you or one of your ministers or a church, be sure that person gets *independent legal advice*, which means sending him or her to his or her lawyer, or a lawyer not connected with the church. This will help to remove the taint of undue influence.

### **Application of Securities Law to Church Bond and Financing Programs**

This is an area of church law which may continue to be more prevalent.

Under these rules, securities laws are enforced against churches or ministers, in the same way that they are enforced against corporations for fraudulent stock issues. In some cases, ministers have been held to be criminally and civilly liable.

In general, there should not be a material omission of financial information about the church or its financing or its building program. Material misrepresentations of the financial

strength or condition of a church can lead to problems. There should not be false predictions of success or payback probabilities on these programs. Also, unfounded guarantees can result in problems.

### **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations**

- **Church-owned vans**

On January 1, 1995, a federal act came into effect, which applies to church-owned or leased vans or buses used for interstate church-related functions. In particular, this would apply when your churches use church-owned or leased vehicles to cross state lines on church activities.

The act states that the vehicle must carry over sixteen (16) passengers, including the driver or have a gross weight of over 10,001 pounds in order to apply.

There are numerous requirements under the act, including qualified drivers with certain methods of operation must be used to operate the vehicle. The vehicle must have certain markings and certain parts and accessories. The driver may only drive certain designated numbers of hours of service, and the vehicle must have regular inspections, repair and maintenance.

The bottom line is that you should be careful when sponsoring an out-of-state church-related trip to ensure that the vehicle meets these detailed specifications. If you need a telephone number for the United State Department of Transportation in your state, which will provide you with copies of these regulations, please contact me, and I will be glad to share same with you.

- **15-Passenger Vans**

You should be aware of the evolving problems regarding these vehicles and the “rollover” issues regarding overloading them. Church insurance companies have issued detailed warnings and bulletins regarding 15-passenger vans.

Please contact my office for copies of articles relating to this issue. Also, your church insurance carrier may provide you with new regulations or requirements regarding operation of these vehicles.

## **Conclusion**

This is only a representative list of church law topics, and unfortunately, this list continues to grow. It is vital that our ministers acquaint themselves through education and seminars on these vital issues, and that we work to keep our ministers forewarned about these major legal topics.

If I may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me:

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# Chapter Nine

## Ministerial Licensure

See attached Credentialing Checklist on page 50

### I. EXHORTER

Exhorter is the first rank in the ministry of the Church of God. The time served under this designation of ministry is one of training and experience. This period is combined with the Ministerial Internship Program, in which the exhorter serves under the supervision of a local pastor. The experience in the Ministerial Internship Program and other ministerial activities establish a record of achievement and progress. This record is used by the district overseer and the state/regional overseer as a basis for recommending advancement in rank.

#### A. Exhorter Qualifications

*Minutes of the International General Assembly*

1. The church recognizes the exhorter as a regular rank of the ministry. It is, however, the primary rank, and all applicants for the ministry must serve as exhorters before being promoted in rank, except ordained ministers coming from other reputable organizations.
2. Must have the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Declaration of Faith 8, 9).
3. The candidate for exhorter must be actively engaged in the ministry either in pastoral ministry, evangelism ministry, associate pastoral ministry, or a specialized ministry listed on the ministerial report form (e.g. Chaplaincy, etc.).
4. Must be thoroughly acquainted with the teachings and doctrines of the church as set forth by the International General Assembly.
5. Must successfully pass the examination given by a duly constituted board of examiners.

#### B. Exhorter Rights and Authorities

*Minutes of the International General Assembly*

The exhorter shall have full right and authority to:

1. Preach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Serve as evangelist.
3. Serve as pastor of a church.
4. In cases of emergency, the exhorter may be authorized by the state/regional overseer to baptize converts and receive believers into fellowship of church membership (47th A., 1958, pp. 28, 29).
5. When an exhorter is serving as pastor, and where state laws recognize the credential of an exhorter as those of a duly authorized minister of the gospel, the exhorter may solemnize the rites of matrimony (54th A., p. 46).
6. Exhorters who are serving as helpers and assistants may receive tithes when available (21st A., 1926, p. 32).
7. The exhorter must be active in the ministry, and shall be required to pay tithes [into the local church where his or her membership is located] and to make monthly reports to the state/regional overseer and to the secretary general. The exhorter may be promoted to the rank of ordained minister when deemed qualified by the state/regional overseer and others concerned (42nd A., 1948, p. 27).

### **C. Steps for Exhorter Applicants**

- a. Applicants will communicate to their pastors their request to be credentialed in the Church of God. (If the applicant is a pastor, the request is made to the district overseer.)
- b. The pastor of the exhorter applicant (district overseer if applicant is a pastor) will contact the state or regional office to request a “New Minister, Calling And Ministry Studies (CAMS), Exhorter, Minister of Music, and Minister of Christian Education Application.” This form will be mailed to the pastor from the state or regional office. After the applicant has completed the form, the applicant presents it to his/her pastor (or district overseer) for the completion of Part II. On Part II of the form, the pastor (or district overseer) will recommend or decline to recommend the applicant. The pastor (or district overseer) will send the application to the district overseer. The district

overseer will recommend or decline to recommend the applicant and will then send the application to the state office.

c. The state overseer will review the “New Minister, Calling And Ministry Studies (CAMS), Exhorter, Minister of Music, and Minister of Christian Education Application.” If there are no questions of concern, the next step will be taken. However, if the applicant or the applicant’s spouse has been divorced and remarried and either of their former spouses(s) living, then the marital status procedure will be followed (see section for Multiple Marital if more than one previous marriage ending in divorce).

d. A background check will be completed. If questions about the applicant’s qualifications are raised from the background check, the questions must be answered prior to the next step.

e. The applicant completes the Calling and Ministry Studies (CAMS) program. At the conclusion of the CAMS program, the CAMS board (which could be a state examining board) interviews the applicant and determines to recommend or decline the applicant’s request for ministerial credentials.

f. The application is reviewed by the state overseer for his approval or denial.

g. The state overseer approves the local church to set forth the applicant into ministry. The local congregation is asked to recommend the applicant for entrance into the ministry. This action is to be taken in a local church conference (regular or called). Approval must be recorded in the minutes of the local church conference and the completed Local Church Endorsement form sent to the district overseer. The district overseer will endorse the form and forward it to the state overseer.

h. When the Local Church Endorsement form is received in the state office, the state overseer will send the applicant an order form for a study guide. The state overseer will also schedule the examination, provide date, time, directions, and instruction for the written and oral examinations. If the applicant does not wish to, cannot be ready, or be available for that date, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request that the state overseer permit the applicant to take the exam at a later date.

i. The applicant takes the written and oral examinations for the Exhorter credential.

j. If the applicant passes the written and oral examinations, the individual is awarded the Exhorter credential.

## **II. FEMALE MINISTERS**

*Minutes of the International General Assembly*

Female ministers are to use the same ministerial titles as males with all the requirements, duties, responsibilities, and ministry opportunities of male ministers who hold either the first or second level of ministerial credentials as presently set forth in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*.

## **III. MINISTER OF MUSIC AND MINISTER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

*Minutes of the International General Assembly*

### **A. Qualifications of Ministers of Music and Ministers of Christian Education:**

1. Must have the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Declaration of Faith 8, 9).
2. Must be thoroughly acquainted with the teachings and doctrines of the church as set forth by the International General Assembly.
3. Must possess the necessary training, either formal or an adequate substitute thereof, to enable him [or her] to serve the church effectively in either of these highly specialized areas of the ministry.
4. Must successfully pass the examination given by a duly constituted board of examiners.

### **B. Rights and Authorities**

The minister of music and/or minister of Christian education shall have full right and authority to:

1. Serve as music director, Christian education director, teacher or assistant pastor of local churches.
2. Publish, defend, and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. The minister of music and/or minister of Christian education shall not be eligible for ordination as long as he (or she) remains solely in the field of music or Christian education (63rd A., 1990, p. 79).

4. In the event the minister of Christian education or minister of music enters into a pulpit ministry, we recommend that he/she be given credit for his/her period of licensure (as minister of Christian education or minister of music) and that this period serve in lieu of the exhorter's license (50th A. 1964, p. 55).

### C. Procedural Guidelines

Applicants must successfully pass the regular exhorter examination plus an additional examination in their specialized field given by a duly constituted board of examiners.

That we grant special dispensation to those who were licensed as ministers of music or ministers of Christian education prior to March 1, 1985, to allow them to proceed to ordination, provided other requirements are met (International Executive Committee Minutes; February 14-16, 1989).

## IV. PROMOTION TO ORDAINED MINISTER

### *Minutes of the International General Assembly*

#### A. Qualifications of Ordained Ministers

1. Must have the baptism in the Holy Ghost (Declaration of Faith 8, 9).
2. The candidate for ordained minister shall be actively engaged in the ministry either in pastoral or evangelistic work.
3. Must be thoroughly acquainted with the teachings and doctrines of the Church of God as set forth by the International General Assembly.
4. Must successfully pass the examination given by a duly constituted board of examiners for ministerial candidates. It is understood that the examination will embrace areas of church government, doctrine, and general Biblical knowledge.

#### B. Rights and Authorities (47th A., 1958, pp. 28, 29 [2]).

The ordained minister shall have the right and authority to:

1. Preach, publish, teach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Do the work of an evangelist.
3. Serve as pastor of a church.
4. Baptize converts.
5. Receive believers into fellowship of church membership.
6. Administer Holy Sacraments (Ordinances).
7. Solemnize rites of matrimony.
8. Establish churches (47th A., 1958, pp. 28, 29).

That the ordained minister shall be privileged to sit in the International General Council of the ordained bishops, without voting privileges.

In the case of military chaplains, the International Executive Committee is empowered to waive age, time, and performance minimum for ordination as a bishop.

#### C. Steps for Ordained Minister and MIP Applicants

- a. Applicants will communicate to the pastor and/or district overseer their requests for advancement to the rank of ordained minister. (If the applicant is the pastor, the request is made to the district overseer.)
- b. The pastor and/or the district overseer will contact the state office to request the "Ordained Minister and MIP Application," which will be sent to the applicant.
- c. Applicants will complete the application and submit the application to the pastor and/or district overseer. The pastor and/or district overseer will complete the "Pastoral Recommendation" section and send the application to the district overseer.
- d. The district overseer will recommend or decline recommendation of the applicant and will send the application to the state overseer.
- e. The state overseer will review the "Ordained Minister and MIP Application." If there are no questions or concerns, the next step will be taken. However, if there has been a change in the marital status of the applicant, then the marital status procedure

will be followed (see section for Multiple Marital if more than one previous marriage ending in divorce).

f. A background check will be completed. If questions about the applicant's qualifications are raised from the background check, the questions must be answered prior to the next step.

g. The applicant will complete the MIP or the equivalency (See Church of God Minutes, 73rd A., 2010, S55, II. Internship Requirements, p. 144).

h. The state overseer approves the local church to set forth the applicant into ministry at the rank of ordained minister. The local congregation is asked to recommend the applicant for advancement in the ministerial rank. This action is to be taken in a local church conference (regular or called). Approval must be recorded in the minutes of the local church conference and the completed Local Church Endorsement form sent to the district overseer. The district overseer will endorse the form and send it to the state overseer.

i. When the Local Church Endorsement form is received in the state office, the state overseer will send the applicant an order form for a study guide. The state overseer will also schedule the examination, provide date, time, directions, and instruction for the written and oral examinations. If the applicant does not wish to, cannot be ready, or be available for that date, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request that the state overseer permit the applicant to take the exam at a later date.

j. The applicant takes the written and oral examinations for the Ordained Minister credential.

k. If the applicant passes the written and oral examinations, the individual is awarded the Ordained Minister credential.

## **A. PROMOTION TO ORDAINED BISHOP**

*Minutes of the International General Assembly*

### **A. Qualifications of Ordained Bishops**

1. The applicant for ordination must meet the Biblical requirements as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

2. An applicant for ordination as a bishop may be ordained when he is twenty-five (25) years of age, provided he has had at least eight (8) years of active ministry, or when he is thirty (30) years of age, provided he has had at least five (5) years of active ministry, if he is otherwise qualified. In those cases in which a ministerial applicant has had verifiable active ministerial experience prior to receiving credentials, exceptions to the age qualifications can be made upon recommendation by the ministerial applicant's administrative bishop and with the approval of the Executive Council (72nd A. 2008).

3. In the case of military chaplains, the International Executive Committee shall be empowered to waive age, time, and performance minimums for ordination, if the applicant is otherwise qualified (51<sup>st</sup> A., 1966, p. 58).

4. Must have the baptism in the Holy Ghost (DF 8, 9).

5. Must successfully pass the examination given by a duly constituted board of examiners for ministerial candidates. It is understood that the examination will embrace areas of church government, doctrine, and general Biblical knowledge.

6. Applicants for ordination as a bishop who have a living former spouse, or whose spouse has a living former spouse, shall be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the International Executive Council before being set forth by the local church (64th A., 1992, p. 81).

7. The wife of the applicant for ordained bishop's license must be grave, not a slanderer, sober, and faithful in all things (41st A., 1946, p. 27).

8. It is understood that female ministers are not eligible for ordination as a bishop (63rd A., 1990, p. 79).

## B. Rights and Authorities

The ordained bishop shall have full right and authority to:

1. Preach, publish, teach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Serve as pastor and/or district overseer, or in other official capacities or appointments.
3. Baptize converts.
4. Receive believers into fellowship of church membership.

5. Administer Holy Sacraments (Ordinances).
6. Solemnize rites of matrimony.
7. Assist in ordination ceremonies of fellow ministers.
8. Establish and organize churches (47th A., 1958, pp. 28, 29).
9. Use the following title while holding the specified position:

State/Regional Overseer (or international equivalency)

Administrative Bishop

International Executive Committee members Executive Bishop

General Overseer Presiding Bishop

In accordance with the agreement between the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa and the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., the ordained bishops of the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa are members of the Church of God International General Council, and ordained bishops of the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, U.S.A., are members of the General Council of the Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa, when visiting Southern Africa (46th A., 1956, p. 28; 68th A., 2000, p. 81).

### C. Steps for Ordained Bishop Applicants

- a. Applicants will communicate to their pastors and/or district overseers their request for advancement to the rank of ordained bishop. (If the applicant is the pastor, the request is made to the district overseer.)
- b. The pastor and/or district overseer will contact the state office to request the appropriate application, which will be given to the applicant.
- c. Applicants will complete the "Ordained Bishop Application," and submit the application to the pastor and/or district overseer. The pastor and/or district overseer will complete and return the application to the state office.
- d. The state overseer will review the "Ordained Bishop Application." If there are no questions or concerns, the next step will be taken. However, if the applicant or the applicant's spouse has been divorced and remarried and if either of their former

spouse(s) is living, then the marital status procedure will be followed (see section for Multiple Marital if more than one previous marriage ending in divorce).

e. A background check will be completed. If questions about the applicant's qualifications are raised from the background check, the questions must be answered prior to the next step.

f. When the applicant is approved by the state overseer, the local congregation is asked to recommend the individual for advancement in the ministerial rank. This action is to be taken in a local church conference (regular or called). Approval must be recorded in the minutes of the local church conference and the completed Local Church Endorsement form sent to the district overseer. The district overseer will endorse the form and send it to the state overseer.

g. When the Local Church Endorsement form is received in the state office, the state overseer will send the applicant an order form for a study guide. The state overseer will also schedule the examination, provided date, time, directions, and instruction for the written and oral examination. If the applicant does not wish to or cannot be ready or available for that date, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request that the state overseer permit him/her to take the exam at a later date.

h. The applicant takes the written and oral examinations for the Ordained Bishop credential.

i. If the applicant passes the written and oral examinations, the individual is awarded the Ordained Bishop credential.

## **V. GUIDELINES FOR MULTIPLE MARRIAGES**

*Applicants for ministry who have more than one previous marriage ending in divorce or whose spouse has more than one previous marriage ending in divorce must be approved for any rank of ministerial credentialing by a two-thirds majority vote of their respective State/Regional Council and by a two-thirds majority vote of the International Executive Council before proceeding with the credentialing process provided they are otherwise qualified.*

# CHECKLIST – MULTIPLE MARITAL

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- 1 Candidate meets with AB
- 2 Candidate completes marital paperwork (two witness forms for every prior living spouse)
- 3 State/Regional Council reviews marital paperwork and must approve with a two-thirds majority
- 4 AB forwards the marital paperwork to Ministerial Advocate with cover letter stating the approval percentage acquired from State/Regional Council
- 5 Ministerial Advocate takes the marital paperwork to Reinstatement Committee to vet prior to presentation to International Executive Council
- 6 Ministerial Advocate presents marital paperwork to the International Executive Council and must achieve a two-thirds majority approval
- 7 These steps are repeated at every ministerial level

# CHECKLIST – CREDENTIALING

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- 1 Candidate meets with pastor
- 2 Pastor contacts AB or DO
- 3 Application
  - All questions must be answered
  - Pastor, DO, and AB signatures required
  - State/regional office keeps copy
- 4 Background Check (required at every level)
- 5 Local church endorsement (required at every level)
- 6 Study Guide
- 7 Required courses (CAMS – Exhorter level; MIP - Ordained Minister level) at the appropriate time.
- 8 Testing
- 9 Mail original application, background check, and local church endorsement to Ministerial Advocate

# Chapter Ten

## Reinstatement

### A BODY OF BELIEVERS

In Scripture the church is likened to a body of believers (1 Corinthians 12). It is to function in unity, diversity, and respect. It is to be sensitive to the needs of other members. When one suffers, all suffer; when one is honored, all are to rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26). The apostle Paul further instructs believers to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15 NIV). In this manner, members of the body of Christ affirm each other and minister to each other.

The discipline of a member of the body of Christ is a painful, but necessary experience. Since we are members of the same body, disciplinary action against any member, in reality, brings the whole body under judgment (1 Corinthians 12:12). Therefore, all such action is to be taken in love and with a view toward restoration and reconciliation.

### FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION

*Forgiveness and restoration* are distinct from each other in definition and purpose.

Forgiveness is the remission of sin by Christ in the extension of His grace and mercy. The purpose of forgiveness is the renewal and continuation of fellowship in the body of Christ (Matthew 18:15-20).

Restoration is the “mending of the net” (Galatians 6:1), so that which is torn can be placed in service again. This spiritual mentality calls for all the members of the body of Christ to bear one another’s burdens in the fulfillment of the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2-4). The purpose of restoration is to place an offending minister back in a position of usefulness and activity appropriate to his/her demonstration of renewed spiritual capabilities.

# Program of Restoration

Any minister whose credentials have been suspended or revoked shall be offered a program of restoration. The restoration process shall involve ministry from the entire church body.

## **SUPERVISION**

The prescribed program of restoration is supervised by the International Executive Council and implemented by a ministry team including, but not limited to the following: The ministerial advocate, the national/state/territorial overseer, the local church, a pastoral mentor, a Christian counselor, and the Center for Ministerial Care.

## **COORDINATION**

The Center for Ministerial Care shall coordinate the ministry team and serve in a facilitative and consultative role. (Any exceptions to this procedural approach, such as in areas outside the United States of America, shall be approved by the office of the ministerial advocate.).

## **PROCEDURES**

The disciplinary process officially begins when the minister enters the restoration program by notifying the Center for Ministerial Care in writing on the forms provided.

If requested, the person being disciplined shall be allowed up to three months to make necessary emotional, vocational and family adjustments prior to entering the restoration program, provided the limits on ministerial activities are observed.

# Trial Procedures

- 1 Charges must be in writing and signed by accuser. The Accuser must be willing to face the accused.
- 2 The national/state overseer should meet with accuser and accused as instructed in Matthew 18:15-17, where possible.
- 3 At his discretion, the national/state overseer can appoint an Investigative Board to separate fact from fiction and recommend a course of action.
- 4 If warranted, the national/state overseer will then appoint a trial board of not less than three ordained bishops.
- 5 Notify accused of charges, time and place of trial, at least seven (7) days prior to trial. Notification shall be given by certified mail with a return receipt, where possible.
- 6 When criminal charges are involved, the national/state overseer should contact the Church of God Legal Counsel and Ministerial Advocate.
- 7 Charges are presented and tried by the national/state overseer of the nation/state/region where offense(s) occurred. If accused is found guilty, his/her credentials must be revoked in the nation/state/region of his/her membership.
- 8 Appoint a secretary of record, who can be a member of the Trial Board.
- 9 Secure a list of witnesses from the accused and the accuser.
- 10 The national/state overseer is to serve as the moderator of trial.
- 11 Notify accused and accuser of decision in person or by phone and confirmed through certified mail, where possible.
- 12 The decision is a part of the accused's permanent ministerial record.

**NOTE: All trial procedures as found in Section 65. Offending Ministers of the Minutes of the International General Assembly must be strictly adhered to.**

# Appeal Procedures

## **FILING FOR AN APPEAL**

Any appeal from a decision of a national/state trial board must be presented to the general overseer in writing and signed within ten days after the defendant has received written notification of the decision.

## **GRANTING OF APPEALS**

Any appeal may be granted for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The trial was conducted improperly.
2. New evidence which was not available at the time of the trial becomes known.
3. There is a conflict of interest in those conducting the trial.
4. The International Executive Committee deems such advisable for other reasons.

# Reinstatement Non-Moral Failure, Voluntary Surrender, or Delinquent Reporting

## **INITIAL STEPS**

The candidate for reinstatement meets with the national/state/regional overseer to make the request.

The national/state/regional overseer writes a letter to the ministerial advocate requesting reinstatement.

The candidate can be reinstated only to the same level as he/she was at the time of revocation/suspension.

## **PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS**

If the revocation has been less than ten years ago, then the only paperwork required is a letter from the national/state/regional overseer requesting reinstatement and the candidate's updated contact information.

If the revocation has been more than ten years ago, then the required paperwork is an application, background check, and a letter from the national/state/regional overseer requesting reinstatement.

All paperwork is directed to the ministerial advocate.

# Reinstatement Moral Failure

## **INITIAL STEPS**

The Center for Ministerial Care sends restoration forms to candidate for restoration. The period of time required by the Minutes for restoration begins when forms have been signed and returned to the Center for Ministerial Care.

The Center for Ministerial Care contacts national/state/regional overseer to set up mentor and plan of restoration. The candidate must be approved by the mentoring pastor, national/state/regional overseer, counselor and Center for Ministerial Care.

Upon completion of the required time and the required steps as outlined by the Center for Ministerial Care and the Ministerial Advocate's Offices, the candidate appears before the Reinstatement Committee from the International Executive Council. The International Executive Council convenes three times a year (January, April, and September) in Cleveland, Tennessee. The Reinstatement Committee meets at the same time.

Upon approval by the Reinstatement Committee, the candidate's name is presented to the International Executive Council and must receive a three-fourth's majority to approve the reinstatement.

If approved and the revocation has been less than ten years ago, the ministerial advocate will request a reprint of the candidate's credentials.

## **PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS**

If the revocation has been more than ten years ago, then the required paperwork is an application and background check.

All paperwork is directed to the ministerial advocate.

# Permanent Revocation

## OFFENSES

The credentials of a minister must be revoked when found guilty of a homosexual offense, and he/she must be disfellowshipped from the church. He/she is never to be reinstated to the ministry. *Minutes 2012, S64.III.D., p. 164.*

Any minister found guilty of sexual abuse of a child or a second offense involving adultery, fornication, or any other sexual misconduct, or any combination of these offenses, shall have his/her credentials permanently revoked. He/she must be disfellowshipped from the church. However, the opportunity for reconciliation and restoration to church membership shall be given future consideration in appropriate cases. *Minutes 2012, S64.III.A.4, page 162.*

Any minister found guilty of more than one violation of unbecoming ministerial conduct shall have his/her entire disciplinary record submitted to the International Executive Council for a determination as to continued ministry or permanent revocation of credentials. *Minutes 2012, S64.III.C.6., p. 163-64.*

# Additional Rulings

## **DISORDERLY MINISTERS**

The disciplinary record of all ministers shall be cumulative and the entire record shall be considered in all disciplinary actions.

In the event the individual being disciplined is not credentialed by the Church of God, but is engaged in ministerial activities, the policies relating to suspension and revocation of ministry as defined in this section shall apply.

All ministers having their ministry revoked for the cause of failure to pay tithes shall be required to show a record of at least six (6) months of loyalty in tithing before being reinstated to the ministry.

Ministers who resign their ministry to evade charges instituted, or being instituted against them as a result of alleged offending conduct, shall be considered guilty.

Where ministers have had their ministry revoked for any cause and engage in ministerial activities in opposition to the Church of God, our ministers and members shall be considered disloyal in promoting their ministerial activities.

Where a minister's work has been generally known, either before or after he/she surrendered his/her license, his/her application for reinstatement to the ministry shall be approved by a two-thirds vote of the International Executive Council, and the general overseer shall determine whether or not his/her case should come before the International Executive Council.

A minister whose license is revoked and who goes into open sin shall be required to be baptized in water before his/her ministry is restored, and we further recommend that this apply to any and all ministers who shall apply for membership in the Church of God. The past record of ministers who present themselves to the Church of God shall be investigated; and where there have been accusations of immoral conduct, said ministers shall not be eligible to be an ordained minister or an ordained bishop until endorsed by three-fourths of the International Executive Council. 57

# Additional Rulings

## **DISORDERLY MINISTERS**

When a minister has been tried by a state board and his/her license ordered revoked, and the local church where his/her membership is instructed to withdraw fellowship, the local church shall be required to carry out the decision of the state board. Further, where the offending minister has been found guilty of the sexual abuse of a child, an offense that requires withdrawal of church membership and permanent revocation of ministerial credentials, the guilty party shall be prohibited from attending, participating in, or having any involvement with, any activities of the local church or churches where the victims in said offense presently attend or have attended.

Ministers who do not report or who are not actively engaged in preaching and other ministerial work for as much as six (6) months, provided such inactivity is not caused by illness or age, shall have their ministry revoked.

The minister who allegedly walks disorderly while in another state, should be tried by a state board in the state where the alleged offense was committed, and if found guilty his/her ministry should be revoked by the overseer of the state where his/her membership is.

*Minutes 2012, S64.V.pp. 165-66.*

# CHECKLIST – REINSTATEMENT

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1. Candidate meets with AB to request reinstatement
2. AB writes letter to ministerial advocate requesting reinstatement
3. Candidate can only be reinstated to same level as he/she was at revocation.
4. If less than 10 years since revocation –  
letter to ministerial advocate and updated contact info
5. If more than 10 years since revocation –  
letter to ministerial advocate, application and background check
6. Testing is not required for reinstatement
7. Ministerial advocate will request Business and Records to reprint certificate

# CHECKLIST – REINSTATEMENT

(moral failure)

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- 1 The Center for Ministerial Care sends restoration forms to candidate for restoration. The period of time required by the Minutes for restoration begins when forms have been signed and returned to the Center for Ministerial Care.
- 2 The Center for Ministerial Care contacts AB to set up mentor and plan of restoration.
- 3 Upon completion of required time and the required steps as outlined by the Center for Ministerial Care and the Ministerial Advocate's Office, the candidate appears before Reinstatement Committee from the International Executive Council.
- 4 Upon approval by the Reinstatement Committee, the candidate's name is presented to the International Executive Council and must receive a three-fourth's majority. (S64.V.8)
- 5 Ministerial advocate requests reprint of candidate's credentials.
- 6 New application and background check required if revocation was ten years or older.

# CHECKLIST – TRIAL BOARD

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- 1 Charges must be in writing and signed by accuser. The accuser must be willing to face the accused.
- 2 AB should meet with accuser and accused as instructed in Matthew 18:15-17, where possible.
- 3 At his discretion, the AB can appoint an Investigative Board to separate fact from fiction and recommend a course of action to the AB.
- 4 If warranted, the AB will then appoint a trial board of not less than three (3) OBs.
- 5 Notify accused of charges, time, and place of trial, at least seven (7) days prior to trial. Notification shall be given by certified mail with a return receipt, where possible.
- 6 When criminal charges are involved, the AB should contact the Church of God legal counsel and ministerial advocate.
- 7 Charges are presented and tried by the AB of the state/region where offense(s) occurred. If accused is found guilty, his/her credentials must be revoked in the state/region of his/her membership.
- 8 Appoint a secretary of record, who can be a member of the Trial Board.
- 9 Secure a list of witnesses from the accused and the accuser.
- 10 The AB is to serve as the moderator of trial.
- 11 Notify accused and accuser of decision in person or by phone and confirmed through certified mail, where possible.
- 12 The decision is a part of the accused's permanent ministerial record.

**NOTE: All trial procedures as found in Section 65. Offending Ministers of the *Minutes of the International General Assembly* must be strictly adhered to.**

# Chapter Eleven

## Supplemental Helps

*A variety of articles on subjects of special interest to the district overseer*

### **Administering Discipline in the Church**

Discipline and discipleship are related. Both mean to train to follow a prescribed way of living. For the Christian, the way of discipline and discipleship is to follow Jesus Christ. Therefore, the goal of discipline in the church is to train people to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Discipline in the church may take the form of instruction and nurture, or it may be administered as correction. As a corrective, discipline may involve penalty for wrongdoing. During the course of his service, the district overseer may be called upon to moderate a conference where accusations are brought and a member is disfellowshipped from the church. Or he may be called upon to serve on an Investigating Committee or a Trial Board, the result of which may be the revocation of a minister's license. Discipline as a punitive measure to correct wrongdoers is not pleasant, but it is necessary at times to preserve the integrity of the church.

Ordinarily, when we speak of church discipline, we think first of the corrective/punitive administration of discipline. This is a legitimate understanding of discipline and one from which we will never be able to totally disassociate ourselves, but it is only a part of the true meaning of discipline. We also need to think of discipline as instruction, training, and nurture. In fact, a greater emphasis on this aspect of discipline would result in less need of corrective/punitive discipline.

We should understand that the primary objective of discipline is discipleship. Even when corrective or punitive discipline must be administered, the purpose is the improvement or reformation of one's character, not the destruction of the individual.

The church must administer discipline by instructing and training its members to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. The church must administer discipline by correcting

those who err from following Christ and by punishing those who commit serious offenses against Christ and the church. We have no authority to dispense with discipline—it is a necessity—but we do have choices regarding discipline. First, we can choose how we submit to discipline in our own lives. Second, we can choose how we administer discipline to others. These choices are crucial to obtaining the true goal of discipline—Christian discipleship.

The true objective of discipline can be, and often is, aborted. Things can go wrong when it comes to discipline. What we see often is that church discipline harms more than it helps. It destroys rather than delivers. It confuses when it should be correcting. It severs spiritual relationships, although it is intended to reconcile and heal. Why do our disciplinary actions fail to accomplish their proper purpose?

The example of the district overseer and the pastors under his supervision can be a powerful influence for Christian discipline among the members of the churches. The district overseer and the pastors under his oversight should ask and answer these questions regarding the administration of discipline:

1. *Am I, the spiritual shepherd, living a disciplined life?* Do I exemplify order, control, and moderation in my personal living habits? Do I respect and respond properly to those who are over me in the Lord? What is my attitude toward church government, teachings, and practical commitments? Do I accept and obey the law of the land? How do I manage my lifestyle, finances, personal appearance, and attitudes toward others? Does my life reflect the moral and ethical standards of Jesus Christ? In summary, does my life commend and teach discipline by example?
2. *What about our family relationships?* Is my headship over my family recognized? Is my family united in love with shared goals and objectives? Am I respected by my wife and children? Do I administer discipline in my home with love and personal consideration? Or, do I provoke my children to wrath? The minister's home should be a model of Christian discipline.
3. *Am I truly concerned about people?* Is it more important to me to help people than to protect my own image? Do I recognize at all times the spiritual nature of my work? Am I willing to risk love? To go out on a limb for what is right? To demonstrate compassion when the popular demand is for vengeance? Am I willing to give a person one more chance to do right, even though he or she has had many chances already? Which do I

value more, the private knowledge that I have saved a person from error, or public praise for sternly upholding standards? What standard am I interested in upholding, the letter of legalism or the higher law of the mercy and love of Christ?

The answers to these questions will inspire us to make discipline the way of our daily living instead of a bureaucratic tool of the church. Viewed this way and administered this way, discipline will serve its true purpose of training believers to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **Building District Fellowship**

In order to build district fellowship, more is needed than scheduling district meetings and trying to implement district programs. Meetings and programs are essential, but without real fellowship (brotherhood, Christian communion), district meetings will be poorly attended and programs will fail.

One key to building district fellowship is to recognize that fellowship is not merely something we do, that is, getting together and going through the outward motions of being friendly and worshipping. Real fellowship is brotherhood and communion. Real fellowship is belonging—being part of the community of believers. Fellowship becomes a reality when every pastor and church on the district is made to feel they belong to each other.

A major hindrance to fellowship is competition between pastors and churches on the district. The strength of Christianity is not competition but cooperation. The district overseer should seek to create a district environment in which all the pastors and churches will view each other as laborers together with God. In a competitive environment people will be hurt and hostility will build as pastors and churches vie for status. Where all work together for the glory of God, brotherhood, goodwill, and unity of purpose prevail.

Right attitudes on the part of pastors and churches are essential to building district fellowship. In these days, churches that are large enough to have activities scheduled almost every day of the week may think that little or no benefit could come from getting involved at the district level. The real issue for these churches should not be how they can benefit from district involvement but how they can contribute to ministry at the district level. Through the district connection, larger churches can work with smaller churches to help them achieve things they could not achieve alone.

While larger churches may tend to withdraw from district fellowship because they see no particular benefit from it, the smaller churches may withdraw because they think they have so little to contribute to the ministry of the church at the district level. The truth is that when pastors and churches have an independent or detached attitude toward the district unit of church life, all miss out on opportunities for ministry together which none of them have alone.

Even when pastors and churches have the right attitude about cooperation and mutual involvement at the district level, church calendars may be so crowded with events that it is difficult to find time for district activities. The primary solution to this problem is to give priority to district fellowship and make time for district activities. Other, less important activities may need to be stricken from the calendar rather than to sacrifice district fellowship. The district overseer, in order to do all the many tasks which are his responsibility, will need to work constantly with the pastors and churches of his district to maintain time and place for a vital district program.

Finally, the priority that pastors and churches give to district fellowship will depend very much on the priority the district overseer gives to it. The district overseer has the major responsibility for making his office important in the total functioning of the church. He also has the major responsibility, by his example and leadership, to make district fellowship a significant aspect of interaction with the whole church.

### **Building Integrity and Trust**

Here are five ways to build integrity and trust with the ministers on your district:

- 1. Prove loyalty.** Always be in the pastor's corner. Let him know he can depend on you regardless of the circumstances and that you will stand by him.
- 2. Produce results.** Make sure things are happening at your church. Be on the cutting edge of progress and not the rough edge of mediocrity.
- 3. Set the pace.** Be out front leading the way and showing it can be done and what happens when it is done. Be an example for others to follow.

4. **Pastor pastors.** Be a shepherd to pastors and demonstrate care for them with awareness, tenderness, and understanding.
5. **Plant seeds.** Help pastors grow continually in ministry by planting seeds that will increase vision, build relationships, elevate proclamation, and cultivate people skills.

### **Four Ways to Establish Trust**

1. **Be loyal** to the person who is not present. Defend their integrity. Focus on their positive qualities.
2. **Model** what you believe and value consistently, under all circumstances. Show that your performance is based on beliefs.
3. **Establish** a base for mutual respect. Affirm the skills and contributions of others, give praise and support.
4. **Learn** to do the right things, the right way, right away. Be balanced in your approach to life and colleagues will approach you with trust.

### **Building Up the Bivocational Pastor**

Many pastors are forced to seek secular employment to supplement their income from the ministry. This situation is generally expected to be temporary, at least until the church grows enough to provide a full salary. However, sometimes the church never reaches a level which can support a full-time pastor, or the growth doesn't happen as soon as expected or desired. How can you as the district overseer or as a minister who has been there help your bivocational pastor(s)?

1. **Assess the bivocational pastor's attitude toward having to work on a secular job.**

Sometimes it is very difficult for those called into the ministry to accept the fact that they are having to work on a secular job. They may need to be reminded that Paul, the apostle, didn't seem to think it was degrading to his ministry to make some tents on the side when necessary.

Feelings of bitterness are certainly understandable, but if allowed to take root, they will cripple the pastor's effectiveness to minister and will hinder the growth of the church. The bivocational pastor may need to be reminded that God is ultimately our employer and provider, not the church.

**1. Advise the bivocational pastor on the management of his or her time.**

Many bivocational pastors will try to maintain a "full-service" ministry and do everything the full-time pastor does. Family time needs to be scheduled and, if at all possible, uninterrupted. Prayer and study time need to be carefully scheduled when the minister is at his or her mental best. Definite limits and boundaries of ministry need to be determined, leaving some things undone or delegated to others.

**2. Assist the bivocational pastor with sermon helps, materials, tapes, and other resources.**

It is quite a task to prepare two and sometimes three new messages per week for the full-time pastor. Imagine the time constraints that study and prayer place upon the bivocational pastor. Any assistance you as the district overseer could provide to help in sermon preparation would certainly be welcomed and appreciated.

**3. Affirm the bivocational pastor's eventual transition to full-time ministry.**

Deciding to pursue ministry as one's sole means of support is always a leap of faith. The decision to abandon the security of secular employment is sometimes delayed indefinitely because of the fear of not being able to make it. You can help the bivocational pastor develop a realistic plan for making this transition.

**Dealing With Accusations of Misconduct**

Society is suffering from the repercussions of sin. Neither church members nor ministers are immune to the effects of the infection of moral decay. The district overseer carries the heavy responsibility of dealing with rumors or accusations of misconduct on the part of ministers on the district. A recent case involving a minister on a district was initiated by a member of a local church. It was reported that he was guilty of conduct unbecoming to a minister with a woman in his church.

This report came as a shock because this minister and his wife were well known. After hearing of this matter and gathering as much information as possible about the situation from his accuser, the district overseer called his fellow minister to discuss the charge with him. The district overseer expressed concern for him, his family and his church and asked him to meet with him to discuss the accusation. The minister who was accused was responsive and eager to meet with him.

After a brief discussion, the minister confessed their relationship had progressed beyond the state of friendship. Having brought his minister's license with him, he volunteered to surrender them. They prayed together for restoration of his relationship with God and his family. Following the meeting, the district overseer had the responsibility of reporting the events to the state overseer. Indeed, this is never a pleasant task!

The following guidelines are suggested for dealing with rumors or accusations:

1. Be careful to separate *facts* and *rumors*. Remember, in today's world of turmoil, brothers and sisters are being falsely accused on a daily basis.
2. Display an attitude of humility and compassion and make the accused aware of the accusation.
3. Maintain an objective perspective in gathering additional information. Ask the person making the accusation to put it in writing. Be aware that, for personal reasons, they may refuse to sign their name to any document.
4. Attempt to get the individuals of both sides together. This will be very important in cases involving accusations of misappropriation of funds or accusations regarding doctrinal disputes.
5. If the accusation appears to be more fact than rumor, the district overseer should seek direction from the state overseer on appropriate procedures.
6. If the accusation appears to be more rumor than fact, the district overseer should document the results and continue to monitor the situation. If negative reports continue to surface, the district overseer needs to inform the state overseer about the problem and seek further direction about appropriate procedures.

## Dealing With Church-Related Problems

Among the heaviest responsibilities of the district overseer are those of assisting in pastoral changes and serving as a peacemaker when potentially divisive issues arise in a congregation. The district overseer must know how to deal with problems in the churches before they divide the congregation. In dealing with such problems, the district overseer will need to (1) remain objective, (2) correctly identify the problem, (3) gather all information bearing upon the problem and its solution, and (4) assist the pastor, congregation, and state overseer in finding a solution.

1. *Remain objective.* A problem can be worsened if the district overseer overreacts. If anyone or any group believes the district overseer is siding with the other group, his effectiveness as a mediator will be hampered. Sometimes the pastor of the church is a special friend and it takes much determined effort on the part of the district overseer to remain neutral and deal fairly with all involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, the district overseer is obligated to be completely just and objective in his dealings with the pastor and the congregation.

2. *Correctly identify the problem.* It is extremely important for the district overseer to correctly identify the problem to be solved. A church member may complain about one thing, but the actual problem may be something else.

Some examples:

- A member might complain that the pastor is “too liberal.” The truth of the matter may be that the church is growing and the member does not like the lifestyles of new people in the congregation. The member blames the pastor because the new members do not “measure up.”
- A member might complain that the pastor cannot preach. The truth may be that the member simply does not like this pastor’s manner of delivery in the pulpit.
- A pastor might complain that the members are not cooperating with him. The truth may be that the pastor is demanding too much or asking things which the congregation cannot possibly do.

The district overseer should be on guard against jumping to quick conclusions about what the real problem is in a situation of conflict in the church. He may need to ask many questions of all the people involved before he can arrive at a correct identification of the problem. Any series of questions that will give the district overseer insight into the problem should be utilized. Without a correct identification of the problem, the district overseer can spend a lot of time dealing with symptoms rather than the actual cause of conflict.

3. *Gather all the information.* To make right decisions and give wise counsel, the district overseer should gather all the information he can which bears on the problem at hand. Judgments made before all the information is in may cause the district overseer to commit himself and others to a wrong course of action which may be irreversible. The district overseer should refrain from making judgmental statements until he is sure he has all the facts.

While gathering information—hearing all sides of the issue—the district overseer should encourage all parties of the conflict to remain faithful to Christ and the church by their attendance and tithing, and by maintaining a Christlike attitude. Assure all parties of the dispute that they are being given a fair hearing and will be treated with respect and equality while a solution to the problem is being sought.

If a member or members of the church bring some complaint against the pastor, the district overseer needs to talk with the pastor and hear his explanation. The pastor should be advised not to overreact or to try to marshal support to reinforce his position. And the pastor should be told never to address the problem from the pulpit, especially through his sermons. Speaking from the pulpit to gain advantage in a conflict is an abuse of one's privilege. This will only make the situation worse.

Help the pastor understand that the way he reacts to the problem will go a long way toward solving the problem or dividing the church. The pastor must be shepherd to all the people—those who support him and those who do not. It is the responsibility of the pastor to keep the church unified. If the pastor overreacts, becomes defensive, and seeks to enlist supporters for his position, most of the time he will alienate the very people to whom he needs to be reconciled. Consequently, the church is divided.

4. *Assist in finding answers.* The district overseer cannot have ready answers for every situation. He does not simply step in and settle a divisive issue in a church. His

role is to assist the pastor and the people involved in the conflict to find a solution with which they will be satisfied. Solutions imposed upon people from the outside are seldom satisfactory. The district overseer must work in such a way that the pastor and congregation find their own solutions to divisive problems. The district overseer is *mediator, peacemaker, and facilitator* for problem solving in the local church, not the problem solver personified.

Unfortunately, divisive issues in a church will sometimes require a pastoral change. However, if a pastor conducts himself properly in a crisis, he will probably have the support of the majority of the congregation. If he has the support of most of the people, but there are irreconcilable differences with a few, then he should continue to serve the church, blessing those who support him, and being as good as he can to those who oppose him, leaving the issue in the hands of the Lord.

On the other hand, if a pastor demonstrates improper attitudes in dealing with problems, he will likely lose the support of the congregation. In this case, because his leadership becomes ineffective, the pastor must seek a change without doing damage to the congregation. Every pastor should be reminded that his first responsibility before God is the well-being and integrity of the congregation. Whatever happens to the pastor, he must put the good of the congregation first. Ultimately, the pastor who will put the well-being of the congregation first will rise above any setbacks to his ministry.

### **Dealing With Differences on the District**

Each church on the district has a unique *personality* and *pattern* for the way they go about performing ministry. Churches will be different as a result of three things: the *focus* of preaching and teaching, the *framework* of training and leadership, and the *fruit* displayed in the lives of family members.

How do you shepherd from two to 10 churches on the district when each operates with a different set of *goals* and *guidelines*?

**RECOGNIZE** the differences. Churches will be characterized by different emphases: sermons, singing, shouting, Sunday school, social events, and study groups. Carefully review the model of each church. Recognize the dominant personality traits and the methods employed to fulfill the local mission.

**RELATE** to the differences. Try to think like the pastor and the people. Place yourself in their shoes (culture of the community, modeling by former ministers and members, and exposure to other people and methods). Relate to where the people are in their experience with the Lord.

**RESPOND** to the differences. When you meet the pastors and people where they live, you can influence their development and direction for the future. Respond to the needs of a church based on the particular nature of that church. Begin where they are and guide them along a path that will lead them to a greater level of maturity and involvement in progressive ministry.

### **Encouraging Long-Term Pastorates**

There is no question but that many premature pastoral changes occur simply because both pastor and congregation are discouraged, frustrated, and have no idea how to solve their problems other than by getting a new pastor. The end result of these premature pastoral changes is that problems in the church are not solved and pastors fail to mature in their ability to lead God's people.

Most churches can benefit from having a pastor to stay long enough to get well acquainted with the congregation and attain some long-range goals in ministry. For this reason, most of the time the district overseer will want to encourage long-term pastorates. Nevertheless, the district overseer should understand that a long-term pastorate is not best for the church or pastor in every situation. So, the purpose of the district overseer should be to facilitate long-term pastorates where they can benefit the church, but not to try to force a church and pastor into a prolonged and unwanted relationship.

Usually, when a pastor is fully persuaded that God has called him and placed him to serve a church, he will want to stay and continue his ministry. And it is likely that the congregation will want him to stay and continue his ministry. Assuming these conditions exist, the district overseer can affirm both the pastor and the church in their decision to work together.

When problems arise in a church, and the pastor and congregation consider the possibility of a pastoral change as a solution, the district overseer must be perceptive enough to discern what would be best for the pastor and the church. The pastor

should not have to terminate his ministry at a church prematurely because he does not have the moral support and wise counsel of his district overseer. The district overseer can prevent some unnecessary pastoral changes by providing to the pastor and the church the counsel and encouragement needed for working together to overcome the difficulties.

Sometimes a pastor may seek a change to another church because his ministry is not being successful and he thinks he has fallen into disfavor with those over him in the Lord. When a church and pastor are passing through a difficult time, the pastor ought not to be made to feel that he no longer has the goodwill of his district overseer. If there is ever a time when a pastor needs an affirmation of his personal worth and the worth of his ministry, it is when his work does not seem to be meeting with success. In such times the district overseer can encourage the pastor to “not be weary in well doing” (Galatians 6:9). The pastor needs to be reassured that faithful service to the Lord will be rewarded in due time.

What else can the district overseer do to facilitate long-term pastorates? He can encourage the pastors on his district to be patient with the people they serve. Sometimes the pastor expects too much too soon from the congregation. They need time to learn how to work with the pastor and to understand and appreciate his vision for the church. The pastor who is impatient with his congregation will become discouraged and leave before his work is complete.

The district overseer can encourage the pastors on his district to be realistic about their gifts, abilities, and knowledge. The pastor who thinks he must have all gifts, unlimited abilities, and unbounded knowledge will have a short-term pastorate. No pastor can solve all problems, answer all questions, and meet all needs. The realistic pastor will learn to be patient with himself and his ministry. He will seek the help of others to do what he cannot do. (Often the help the pastor needs is present in the people of his congregation, but they must be taught and inspired by the pastor to use their gifts to work with him.)

The district overseer can encourage the pastors on his district to be persistent about doing the work of the ministry. Every pastor may wish for an ideal situation in which to carry on his work for the Lord. But since ideal circumstances for serving the Lord are rare, the pastor must learn to persist in doing the best he can with what he has and

where he is. By such persistence, by the grace of God and unfailing effort, the whole situation can become better.

The district overseer can encourage the pastors on his district to have faith in God. It is not easy to have faith when even small achievements seem to be out of reach. No one knows better the difficulty of believing than the pastor who thinks he stands alone, abandoned by all would-be supporters. For those pastors who are sinking in despair, the district overseer can be a reminder to keep faith in God. He can be a reminder that the work of the ministry is a spiritual work that must be done by faith in God and in the power of His Spirit. The district overseer can remind the pastor that those who keep the faith are kept by the faith.

Finally, the district overseer can encourage long-term pastorates by setting an example. Stability, commitment, and wise leadership on the part of the district overseer will inspire the pastors under his oversight to want to follow his example.

### **How to Encourage a Discouraged Pastor**

Despite his high calling, discouragement in varying degrees comes to every pastor at some point in his ministry. Attendance may have reached a plateau or is declining slightly. Ministry and the proliferation of family tensions and problems all combine to tell a pastor he is not producing at the level of everyone else.

Discouragement feeds on other elements as well. Supposed expectations from general and state/regional offices, expectations from friends and acquaintances, and especially personal expectations contribute to this state of mind.

As district overseer, you can assist by making contact with the pastor as soon as you learn about the situation. A phone call is good, but a personal contact is better. You should spend some time with the pastor and allow him to "open up" and share his frustrations. Listen to him! His discouragement is unique to him. Do not make comparisons, and do not imply that his concerns are minor, insignificant, or unimportant.

During your fellowship time, point out that he has special and unique ministry gifts which are vital to the kingdom of God. If he is called of God, it is because no one else can do what the Lord needs him to do. Consequently he has been successful in his own unique

way. He has led sinners to Christ and disciplined parishioners that would never have been prepared for heaven without his help.

It is vital to point out that success is not measured in just church attendance, dollars reported, buildings built and programs projected. Success is measured in faithfulness and obedience to God. Help him see and understand this above all other things.

Finally, let him know you love him and care for him. Spend time with him at state and general meetings so he will feel he is a vital part of "what's happening." And please follow up. Contact him weekly to get "progress" reports. An initial call and no further contact sometimes adds to discouragement.

**Note:** The district overseer would be wise to keep a log of telephone calls, visits, and conversations related to the resolution of church problems on his district. Such a record may be useful or even necessary for future reference.

The district overseer can be a lifeline to a pastor who feels like he is sinking. He can often make the difference as to whether or not a pastor stays at his church, or perhaps even in the ministry.

### **How to Help a Pastor Overcome Faith Fatigue**

As a district overseer, you will see and hear at times of the frustration and faith failure in the pastors on the district. You can understand the weight of ministry, because your experiences have taken you into life's main arena. Ministers see people struggle with ultimate issues such as birth, life, death, sickness, broken homes, and the unexplainable tragedies of life. People expect us to have answers to these life issues. Because of these stresses, many pastors have lost faith in themselves and their calling. The sense of passion and fulfillment is gone. How can a district overseer help a minister recapture this lost passion for ministry and help him discover a dynamic faith?

- 1. Pray for him.** Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). In your prayer schedule, set aside a time to pray for your pastors. List the names of your pastors in your prayer journal, and put your finger on a man's name and pray for him. By doing this, you will help release God's power in his life.

- 2. Encourage him to take time off.** A pastor should take off at least one day a week, if possible, and become involved in some physical activity. Exercise renews the body and mind. Encourage your pastors to start an exercise program or activity they enjoy.
- 3. Provide fellowship.** Offer times of togetherness so he can be with other pastors and their spouses. You may occasionally have a Saturday breakfast at one of the pastors' homes. Pastors will leave these fellowship times encouraged in the Lord.
- 4. Practice listening.** Extend a listening ear to a troubled pastor. Assure him of confidentiality. Men can discover solutions and find renewal sometimes by simply verbalizing their hurts and disappointments to a loving, caring person. Be that person.
- 5. Growth activities.** Plan exciting training times for your pastors. Sometimes one good idea will spark a brother's faltering faith into flame. You might use Dr. Paul Walker's videotapes titled *Leadership* over a period of weeks. Pastors love these times, and it inspires new faith. Sometimes, a pastor becomes fatigued because he doesn't have any new ideas.
- 6. Emphasize gifts.** Talk to a pastor about his gifts and potential for growth. Some pastors just need reassurance. Study a person's gifts and point them out to him.
- 7. Be there.** Let him know he can count on you. Just be there.

### **How to Help Pastors Avoid Burnout**

Some don't want to admit it, but burnout in the ministry is indeed a problem. You can help the pastors on your district by being watchful and stepping in to assist them. Read the steps-to-action below in the word BURNOUT.

Building programs, remodeling, and financial pressure cause stress. Be alert to these pitfalls and give encouragement/advice. Each pastor is different. Understand individual situations—family conflict, working and pastoring, limited finances. Don't wait until a pastor approaches you. When you observe a stress sign, talk to him with tenderness

and love. The foundation for being able to help pastors is having a strong personal relationship. You build this by being real, caring and available.

When you talk with a pastor, don't pinpoint the problem without giving encouragement and guidance. Show the options that are available. Always give attention to God's promises. Some pastors fail to appropriate them because of binding situations or other stresses which are presently upon him or the family.

- **Be Alert to Stress Pitfalls**
- **Understand Individual Situations**
- **Respond Without an Invitation**
- **Nurture Personal Relationships**
- **Offer Encouragement and Guidance**
- **Underscore Positive Possibilities**
- **Turn Attention to God's Promises**

At times, we all look burnout in the face. The support of a colleague can make the difference. Being there, listening, discussing needs and solutions can give hope for a new day.

### **How to Mentor Young Pastors on Your District**

The New Testament pattern for church growth and the development of leadership is built on the process of discipleship. Jesus set the pattern. He selected 12 men to invest His vision in and to train to minister the gospel around the Mediterranean world. They continued this process after Pentecost.

Paul endorsed this concept of "preparing God's saints for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11, 12 NIV). "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2 NIV). This is what being a mentor is all about.

District overseers have the perfect opportunity to help develop young pastors on their district. Here are three practical ways to help you in this mentoring process.

**1. Regular group meetings.** Monthly meetings with the pastors on your district provide opportunities for fellowship and relationship building. Those relationships become bridges over which experienced pastors can share valuable insights with their less experienced counterparts. Meetings of this type can help pastors learn how to handle pressures, finances, building projects, family needs, etc.

**2. Travel together.** Take your group meetings on the road periodically. Jesus spent three years traveling with His disciples. Paul spent a huge amount of time on missionary journeys. He virtually always involved himself in taking along companions that he was helping disciple. Training conferences, seminars, and visiting other churches provide you with modern opportunities to do the same. The relaxed environment of traveling together fosters learning and sharing.

**3. Hands-on training.** Many inexperienced pastors are uneasy about tackling some of their pastoral responsibilities. A district overseer can help these pastors by using the same process Jesus did with His disciples. It is simple. "Watch me do it. Help me do it. You do it." Funerals, weddings, baptisms, baby dedications, council meetings, and sermon preparation are just a few areas in which instruction can be rendered.

Every district overseer has more than enough responsibilities in his own church to keep him busy. However, try to take a little time each month to invest in the other pastors on your district. This will pay rich dividends for the ministry of the kingdom of God.

### **Increasing District Service Participation**

Fellowship and joint participation in worship are two good reasons to come together in district services. Some tried-and-proven methods to increase district participation are:

**1. Create ways to make pastors on the district owners of the services.**

Have a planning session with pastors at the beginning of the year and let the pastors make the decisions on what kind of district services to have. Let the pastors feel ownership of the services.

**2. Plan and carry through with exciting, appealing, relevant, and even unusual services. Plan district services where ministry takes place.**

Some suggestions include district Valentine's Day services, Y.W.E.A. district service, Easter district service, district camp meeting, Women's Ministries district service, district Christmas banquet, and district world missions service. Have a cooperative missions effort or let churches on the district sponsor a missionary.

Make district services a ministry. Evangelism, youth, ladies, children, missions, and home missions make district services more than just fellowship. See that ministry takes place in the district services, and people will feel a greater need to participate in them.

Involve youth groups and children's groups from the local churches and plan exciting services where children and youth are involved. Parents will come to these services when their children are involved. Participation will increase.

### **3. Advertise the district services.**

- Posters advertising the district meetings can be sent to the churches monthly.
- A letter from the district overseer to each church two weeks in advance of each district service is a helpful reminder.
- A telephone call or email can be made to each local pastor in time for the pastor to have the weekend services to promote the district meeting the following week.
- Use social media such as Facebook.

### **4. Offer incentives for the faithful.**

Provide incentives—perhaps recognition certificates of appreciation for pastors and churches who are faithful in attendance and participation.

During the Christmas season, have a district banquet and recognize the pastors and their churches who have faithfully participated in the district service.

Have a monthly fellowship meal for pastors and spouses. Have good fellowship, pray together, and express appreciation to all of the pastors and their churches for participating in the services.

## 5. Select a local contact person.

This person can work with the pastor to suggest ways to increase district participation, and can help advertise and promote district services. Ownership, again, is a key. Involve this key person with planning, as well as promotion.

Good district services include ministry opportunities, evangelism, and mission. Key words to participation are ownership, planning, excitement, ministry, and fellowship.

### Property Insurance

Pastors and churches are required to keep all property under their care adequately insured. The pastors of local churches should also be advised that they may need tenant insurance on personal household possessions in the parsonage if the insurance coverage on the parsonage extends only to furnishings which belong to the church.

### Keeping the Oversight of Church Properties

The district overseer's duty of keeping the oversight of all church properties on his district is for the protection and benefit of the local churches. All churches must have the official approval of the district overseer and the state overseer for all property transactions. The district overseer must provide leadership and counsel in the selection, purchase, and construction of all church properties on his district. With proper supervision, many errors and expensive mistakes can be avoided by local churches.

For example, these are some things that can happen if proper care is not exercised regarding church properties:

1. Buildings may be erected on land which is still owned by other parties.
2. Real estate deeds may be improperly researched or recorded.
3. Real estate deeds may have complicated provisions, restrictions, or clauses which allow property to revert back to original owners.

**Note:** The Church of God adopted deed form is to be used in purchasing real estate for church property, except in states that require using their own deed form. In this event,

the essential clauses of our uniform deed are to be inserted. All deeds on new local church property are to be submitted to the district overseer and the state overseer for approval before they are recorded in their respective counties.

In all contractual agreements regarding church property, it shall be clearly understood that Church of God Boards of Trustees at the international, state, and local level act as representatives of the church; and all Church of God property is to be held, managed, and controlled exclusively for the use and benefit of the Church of God. If a local Board of Trustees shall cease or fail to function on behalf of the church, then a state Board of Trustees appointed by the state overseer shall be authorized to transact business on behalf of the local church.

4. Expensive lawsuits against the church may result from misunderstandings or negligence in the drawing of contracts.

5. Huge sums of money may be wasted through faulty or improper construction. (Be aware of building codes.)

6. A congregation of people can become saddled with large debts they did not fully expect or did not understand they would have.

7. The pastor can lead the congregation into a risky venture for which the congregation has neither the ability nor the commitment to complete.

From his own experience, the district overseer may have a general knowledge of the requirements for the proper acquisition of properties and real estate loans. However, he is wise to inquire thoroughly into each situation on his district where a property transaction is involved.

In addition to the business side of keeping the oversight of church properties, the district overseer has an interest in seeing that church properties are kept in good repair and are attractive in the community. In most instances, it will not be necessary for the district overseer to encourage the local churches and their pastors to keep their properties in good repair and in good appearance. However, the district overseer should not hesitate to use his authority in directing pastors and churches to correct situations where the properties are falling into disrepair and bringing reproach upon the church.

Churches, parsonages, and other properties that are well-kept, neat, and clean, speak well for the church in the community. The community will judge a church, at least in part, by the condition of its properties. Moreover, God's people have a stewardship responsibility to God to maintain in good condition the material properties which He has placed in the care of the church.

## **SALE OF LOCAL CHURCH PROPERTY**

### Procedural Guidelines

The local Board of Trustees shall have full right, power, and authority to buy property for the use or benefit of the local congregation; sell, hypothecate, exchange, transfer, and convey any of the local property held by it, provided that . . .

- A. The proposition shall first be presented to a conference of the local church.
- B. The conference be presided over by the state/regional overseer or one whom he may appoint.
- C. The proposition be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of members of the congregation.
- D. The local Board of Trustees have a certification from the state/regional overseer, or one whom he may appoint.
- E. The proposition is not adverse to the interest of the Church of God.
- F. The treasurer shall forward a copy of the minutes of the local church conference to the state/regional overseer.

Any proposal to transfer local church property (parsonage, lot, and so forth) to a minister should be treated with extreme caution, and it would be wise to consider the long-term effect to the local church in terms of pastoral changes, financial responsibility, legal implications, and taxation questions. Further, a proposal to transfer local church property should not be initiated by the pastor.

## **Ministering to Pastors and Their Families**

By virtue of his office the district overseer is a pastor to the pastors on his district. This means the district overseer has a special opportunity to minister to pastors and their families. As it has been pointed out elsewhere in this manual, the district overseer should be a trusted friend and confidant of the pastors and their families.

An appropriate pastoral concern for pastors and their families should be demonstrated by the district overseer in the ordinary conduct of the business and ministry of the church, as well as in times of crises. Following are some suggestions for cultivating friendship with pastors and their families and ministering to their needs.

1. Have an annual planning session on your district with the pastors and their wives to lay out programs and goals for the coming year.
2. Meet monthly with the pastors on your district for breakfast or lunch and share triumphs and trials.
3. Have a quarterly dinner with ministers and their wives, a time of planning, sharing, and fellowship.
4. Conduct monthly or quarterly fellowship meetings on the district with special spiritual and project emphases.
5. Periodically phone pastors to let them know you are interested in them. Inquire about their family and church. Offer your assistance.
6. Send a card or letter congratulating pastors for their personal accomplishments or when something significant is done at their church.
7. Visit revivals and special services held in churches on your district.
8. Show special concern when a member of the pastor's family is sick or in trouble. Pay a visit. Have prayer. Assure them of your support.
9. Be alert to special needs of the pastor and his family. Does the pastor have adequate financial support from his church? If not, see what you can do to encourage the church to do more or find additional help for the pastor from other sources.

10. If tragedy strikes a church, such as fire or storm, offer help. The district overseer may want to receive an offering from his church and suggest to other pastors that they receive an offering to help the church in need.

11. Make yourself available to comfort and assist in every way possible when death comes to the home of a pastor on your district.

### **Motivating and Training Leaders**

There is an increasingly obvious need for recruiting and training leadership for the churches at the local level. This need can be met only if the district overseers pick up some of the responsibilities which, in the past, were thought to belong exclusively to state-level personnel. For example, it is difficult for programs which relate to the specific needs of local congregations to be developed and implemented at the state level. The major difficulty is that state officials do not have the time to be present to motivate and train leaders at the local level.

The district overseer is close to the local churches and can be more aware than the state overseer of local needs and opportunities to recruit and train leaders. There are at least three vital areas in which the district overseer needs to be involved in motivating and training leaders:

1. *Ministerial recruitment and licensing.* Because of his closeness to the churches on his district, the district overseer is in a good position to be aware of potential new ministers. The church will continue to need God-called ministers to pastor churches and to do the work of evangelism and Christian education. The district overseer should recognize people who are called to the ministry and encourage them to prepare themselves to fulfill their calling. If it appears there are no immediate openings for new ministers on the district, there is a need for new ministers in the church at large. As we look to the future, we cannot for a moment let up in our efforts to assist God-called people to fulfill their call to the ministry.

2. *Recruiting and training local leaders for traditional leadership roles.* The district overseer can develop programs to assist local pastors in the important task of recruiting and training Christian education workers, Sunday school teachers, Sunday school and family training hour administrators, musicians and singers, and those willing to be involved in ministries of visitation and witnessing. Failure to recruit and train

persons to fill these leadership roles in the local church will result in a terrible loss of people and resources.

3. *Encouraging and assisting leaders for nontraditional leadership roles.* In our rapidly changing world, doors are opening to new avenues of ministry which require nontraditional leadership. In recent years, some of the more conspicuous of these special ministries have been to single adults, single-parent families, the elderly, homeless people, juvenile delinquents, and drug addicts. All require people with special skills who are prepared to serve Christ in nontraditional settings. The district overseer may not be an expert in such areas of ministry, but he can recognize and assist individuals who are called to these ministries.

Following are several suggestions which the district overseer might use to strengthen his own leadership role, and to help motivate and train other leaders on his district.

1. Schedule meetings in which the ministers on the district can come together to share sermon ideas and resources for ministry, and discuss theological issues.

2. Organize trips to regional, state, or national church leadership meetings or training seminars. Travel together (by bus or van) with the ministers on your district to these meetings. Arrange to have part of the expenses paid from district funds.

3. Provide educational opportunities at the district level. Sponsor church training course classes for the whole district. Organize a Lee University extension class on your district.

4. Meet with the pastors and their wives to discuss and plan district evangelism crusades or training seminars. Some seminars could be exclusively for ministers and their wives. Others could be for all church leaders and those who are called but have not yet entered ministry.

5. Establish a district media center and/or library where pastors and other church leaders will have access to audio and video training tapes and other materials. Set up a book-sharing system for church leaders.

Without doubt, the district overseer who accepts the fact that part of his task is to motivate and train leaders will find many other ways to fulfill this task.

### **Planning a District Evangelistic Effort**

The district overseer has the responsibility to see that a general evangelistic effort is put forth on his district. Following are several suggestions which may be helpful in fulfilling this responsibility.

1. The district overseer should maintain an evangelistic emphasis and ministry in his own church. Pastors will be influenced by the district overseer's vision for and commitment to evangelism.
2. The district overseer can encourage and assist the spiritual and numerical growth of the churches on his district by helping them secure able evangelists to conduct revivals and by attending revivals and other special evangelistic services in the churches on his district.
3. The district overseer can lead the pastors and churches of his district in sponsoring an annual district camp meeting or other districtwide evangelistic meetings.
4. It is the responsibility of the district overseer to identify places on his district where new churches should be started and to lead the whole district in cooperating for the establishment of new churches.
5. The district overseer should endeavor to keep the world missions vision before the churches on his district. He can assist in bringing missions representatives to the churches on his district or he may lead his district in hosting world missions seminars or rallies.
6. The district overseer can encourage the pastors and churches on his district to conduct vital evangelistic ministries such as the Sunday school, family training hour, outreach, visitation, vacation Bible school, and child evangelism.

### **People-Centered Promotion**

Promotion is vital to performance! People will not become involved in a ministry program or a ministry event unless they know the details and are motivated to participate. The facts are that simple!

Your ministry as a district overseer requires effective promotion; it is mandatory for progress. There are four forms of promotion:

**Popular**—some activities and events are popular; you just tell the people what, where, and when.

**Procedural**—the approach is part of the routine, it just happens without creativity or excitement.

**Polished**—the presentation is slick, the project is made to sound bigger than life, and multiplied blessings are promised.

**Principle-centered**—an approach that is motivated by a spiritual mission.

Principle-centered promotion embodies elements from the first three forms of promotion. However, the foundation is different, the approach is based on convictions about the project, accuracy of facts, honesty about the projected outcome, and enthusiasm that springs from a desire to guide and bless. Principle-centered promotion answers three questions. Let's observe how the answers network to make a promotion productive.

**1. What is the VALUE of the program?** How will involvement in the project or purchasing the material add value to the life of the participant? Determine the value and then carefully explain the personal benefits that will be received.

**2. What is VITAL about the project?** How will the project impact, uplift, or expand the kingdom of God and the ministry of the church or district? Enlarge the picture from personal value to the vital elements of worth to God, families, and the church.

**3. What is the VICTORY of the promotion?** If we respond to the promotion as a group, a family, or a team, what will happen? List the points of victory that will be achieved.

Promotion is an essential aspect of your responsibilities. You can make it clear, colorful, and with impact by integrating the components of principle-centered promotion as you present ministry programs, projects, and activities.

### **Remembering the Children and Youth on the District**

The district overseer can assist the pastors and churches of his district to have ongoing children's and youth evangelism ministries. There are a lot of child-evangelism materials available, but the greatest need is for people who are dedicated to winning children to Christ.

It is crucial that those specializing in these ministries know where to get quality resource materials that will ground children in the Pentecostal faith. They should use only those materials which are fundamental in doctrine and will give young minds a deep respect for God and His Word.

Some of the finest material for this purpose has been put together by the International Youth and Discipleship Department. We recommend that district overseers make special efforts to promote: *Growing Pentecostal Kids* and *Developing Pentecostal Teens*, available from Pathway Press.

### **Responding to a Complaining Member**

The district overseer works closely with the state overseer. His work is more closely related to the state overseer than any other church official. The district overseer knows about the churches, the pastors, the buildings, the finances, and the potential for growth. His input is valuable. When a problem arises on his district, he is knowledgeable and is in a position to take it on.

The voluminous tasks of the general overseer and state overseer are such that there must be shared responsibilities.

When Moses was attempting to handle all the problems himself, Jethro said, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. . .select. . .able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. . . So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the

burden with you” (Exodus 18:17-22 NKJV). The district overseer fits into this shared responsibility.

The mandate is given in Acts 20:28: “Therefore take heed...to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (NKJV). Shepherding involves dealing with the problems of the sheep. Consider the following points in dealing with a complaining church member on the district.

Although simplistic, the district overseer should:

- Know the policies of the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*.
- Know the policies of the State Ministers Meeting.
- Know the policies of the state overseer.

The following sequence has been successful:

- **SIT DOWN** with the person with the problem; it’s difficult to deal with problems on the telephone.
- **LISTEN** with full attention; use more than the ears; record information.
- **FORM NO OPINION** until all facts are known.
- **INVESTIGATE** fully; get all the information possible.
- **RESPOND**. If it is petty, say so. If it is serious, tell them the guidelines set forth for a district overseer will be followed.
- **BE CONFIDENTIAL** at all stages of the process.
- **RECONCILE** the differences between the parties, if possible.
- **REPORT** the matter to the state overseer if no resolution is found and it seems advisable.
- **FOLLOW** the course of action decided upon with the state overseer.

Bring the complaint to a conclusion. Don't let it ride.

Peter refers to Jesus as “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25 NKJV). This indicates that He who is the shepherd is also the overseer of the flock. The term bishop—*episkopos*, overseer or bishop—having been used of Jesus as “the overseer of souls” would naturally be used of His ministers who in a special way continue His work.

### **Concerning Receiving Infants and Small Children into Church Membership**

It should be clearly understood that the Church of God is absolutely committed to the practice of rendering pastoral care and Christian education to every person possible—from birth, through the developmental stages of life, and to death. We have solid Biblical instructions for this practice, as well as historical experience. Usually, this includes dedication of an infant to the Lord by the parents in a special ceremony conducted by a pastor and adding the child's name to the “cradle roll” of the Sunday school.

However, we do not teach that these sacred acts qualify the infant or small child for membership in the church. Other churches, such as the Catholic or Anglican church and others, may teach that christening or baptizing an infant causes the child to be a Christian and worthy of church membership; however, we insist on the Evangelical position of “believer's baptism.” That is, we believe that the child must be mature enough to understand the basic claims of the gospel, believe on Christ as Savior and Lord, and experience the new birth before being counted as a member of the church.

Our position is stated clearly in the *Minutes of the International General Assembly*:

It is the responsibility of the pastor to see that all persons making themselves available for membership are fully informed of the doctrine, teachings, government and heritage of the Church of God.

This instruction would be virtually impossible to perform with infants and very small children. Therefore, it should be considered theologically inappropriate to add the names of infants and very young children to the membership roll of the church.