

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

UNITED CHURCH OF GOD

an INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

God the Father calls whom He chooses and leads them to believe in, and submit to, Jesus Christ. Those individuals who accept that calling and who receive the Holy Spirit comprise the Church of God. God the Father has made known to the Church, His family through Jesus Christ, His intention and purpose for the creation. We do therefore establish this Constitution so that we might, as obedient children, yield to Him and see His will for the creation fulfilled.

1.0 ARTICLE 1-MISSION STATEMENT AND DEFINITIONS

The mission of the United Church of God, *an International Association*, is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations and care for those disciples.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

1.2.1 The Church

The “Church” is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is “the Church of God.” As defined in the Holy Scriptures, the Church is the Body of Christ and is greater and more inclusive than any corporate or associated organization established by human beings.

1.2.2 United Church of God, *an International Association* (UCGIA)

The United Church of God, *an International Association* (“UCGIA” or “the Corporation”), is the nonprofit religious organization incorporated on May 10, 1995, for the purpose of executing the vision, mission and responsibilities enumerated in the Scriptures, in this Constitution and in the duly adopted Bylaws of UCGIA.

1.2.3 Elder

The term “elder” (or “elders”) refers to an ordained minister of UCGIA, duly recognized and credentialed by the Council of Elders to provide care and oversight to the congregations of UCGIA and to further the vision and mission of UCGIA. The terms “elder” and “minister” are synonymous.

1.2.4 General Conference of Elders (General Conference)

The terms “General Conference of Elders” or “General Conference” as used in the governing documents means the general assembly of elders of UCGIA. Upon ordination or credentialing, every elder of UCGIA becomes a member of the General Conference unless he elects otherwise. Every elder of UCGIA who remains in good standing continues as a member of the General Conference, unless, as allowed for in this Constitution, he chooses to resign.

1.2.5 Council of Elders (Council)

The term “Council” as used in the governing documents means those established by the General Conference, and as described in this Constitution, to provide oversight and guidance within UCGIA for the preaching of the gospel, the service and care of local congregations and the administration of God’s tithes and offerings received by UCGIA.

1.2.6 Governing Documents

The term “Governing Documents” refers to the Articles of Incorporation, this Constitution, the duly authorized Bylaws and the Rules of Association of UCGIA.

1.2.7 Member of the Church

An individual who has been duly baptized and has the gift of God’s Holy Spirit is a member of the Church of God regardless of organizational affiliation (Acts 2:38-39; Romans 8:9). However, the term “Church Member” or “Member of the Church” as used in the governing documents of UCGIA applies only to an individual who has been duly baptized, and who is and remains a member in good standing of UCGIA, and may be listed on the membership rolls of UCGIA (where available). This is distinct and separate from being a “Balloting Member of the Corporation” as described in the Bylaws of UCGIA.

2.0 ARTICLE 2-FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

2.1 PREAMBLE

The following are statements regarding the fundamental beliefs of the United Church of God, *an International Association* (UCGIA). This article is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the beliefs of the UCGIA. Questions about doctrine and belief will be addressed by a process adopted by the Council of Elders (the Council) and approved by the General Conference of Elders (the General Conference).

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

2.1.1 We believe in one God, the Father, eternally existing, who is a Spirit, a personal Being of supreme intelligence, knowledge, love, justice, power and authority. He, through Jesus Christ, is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is the Source of life and the One for whom human life exists. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is the Word and has eternally existed. We believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the divine Son of the living God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born

in the human flesh of the virgin Mary. We believe that it is by Him that God created all things and that without Him was not anything made that was made. We believe in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God and of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal.

- 2.1.2** We believe that Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, is God's revelation, and His complete, expressed will to humanity. Scripture is inspired in thought and word, infallible in the original writings, is the supreme and final authority in faith and in life, and is the foundation of all truth.
- 2.1.3** We believe that Satan is a spirit being who is the adversary of God and the children of God. Satan has been given dominion over the world for a specific period of time. Satan has deceived humanity into rejecting God and His law. Satan has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons who are rebellious angels, spirit beings, who followed Satan in his rebellion.
- 2.1.4** We believe that humanity was created in the image of God with the potential to become children of God, partakers of the divine nature. God formed humanity of flesh, which is material substance. Human beings live by the breath of life, are mortal, subject to corruption and decay, without eternal life, except as the gift of God under God's terms and conditions as expressed in the Bible. We believe that God placed before Adam and Eve the choice of eternal life through obedience to God, or death through sin. Adam and Eve yielded to temptation and disobeyed God. As a result, sin entered the world, and through sin, death. Death now reigns over all humanity because all have sinned.
- 2.1.5** We believe that sin is the transgression of the law. The law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good. The law defines God's love and is based upon the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor, and is immutable and binding. The Ten Commandments are the ten points of God's law of love. We believe that breaking any one point of the law brings upon a person the penalty of sin. We believe that this fundamental spiritual law reveals the only way to true life and the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy. All unhappiness, misery, anguish and woe have come from transgressing God's law.
- 2.1.6** We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He gave His only begotten Son, who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh. That Son, Jesus Christ, died as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. His life, because He is the Creator of all humanity, is of greater value than the sum total of all human life. His death is, therefore, sufficient to pay the penalty for every human being's sins. In paying this penalty He has made it possible, according to God's plan, for each person and humanity as a whole to have their sins forgiven and to be released from the death penalty.

- 2.1.7** We believe that the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead after His body lay three days and three nights in the grave, thus making immortality possible for mortal man. He thereafter ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.
- 2.1.8** We believe that all who truly repent of their sins in full surrender and willing obedience to God, and who by faith accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have their sins forgiven by an act of divine grace. Such individuals are justified, pardoned from the penalty of sin, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which literally abides within them and supplies the divine love that alone can fulfill the law and produce righteousness. They are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, which is the true Church of God. We believe in a true change in life and attitude. Only those who have the indwelling presence of and are being led by the Holy Spirit are Christ's.
- 2.1.9** We believe in the ordinance of water baptism by immersion following repentance. Through the laying on of hands, with prayer, the believer receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ.
- 2.1.10** We believe that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we are commanded to rest from our labors and worship God, following the teachings and example of Jesus, the apostles and the New Testament Church.
- 2.1.11** We believe in observing the New Testament Passover on the night of the 14th of Abib, the anniversary of the death of our Savior.
- 2.1.12** We believe in the commanded observance of the seven annual Holy Days given to ancient Israel by God and kept by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church. These Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation.
- 2.1.13** We believe that those meats that are designated "unclean" by God in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are not to be eaten.
- 2.1.14** We believe that Christians are forbidden by the commandments of God from taking human life, directly or indirectly, and that bearing arms is contrary to this fundamental belief. Therefore, we believe that Christians should not voluntarily become engaged in military service. If they are involuntarily engaged in military service, we believe they should refuse conscientiously to bear arms and, to the extent possible, to refuse to come under military authority.
- 2.1.15** We believe in God's enduring righteousness. That righteousness is demonstrated by God's faithfulness in fulfilling all of the promises He made to the father of the faithful, Abraham. As promised, God multiplied Abraham's lineal descendants so that

Abraham literally became the “father” of many nations. We believe that God, as promised, materially prospered Abraham’s lineal descendants Isaac and Jacob (whose name He later changed to Israel). We believe that God, through Abraham’s Seed, Jesus Christ, is making salvation available to all humanity regardless of their physical lineage. Salvation is not therefore a right of birth. It is freely open to all whom God calls, and those who are regarded as descendants of Abraham are those of the faith, heirs according to the promises. We believe that the knowledge that God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill the physical promises made to Abraham and his children, and is fulfilling the spiritual promise through Jesus Christ, is critical to understanding the message of the prophets and its application to the world in which we live.

2.1.16 We believe God’s purpose for mankind is to prepare those whom He calls, and who elect through a life of overcoming sin, developing righteous character, and growing in grace and knowledge, to possess the Kingdom and to become kings and priests reigning with Christ on this earth after His return. We believe that the reason for mankind’s existence is literally to be born as spirit beings into the family of God.

2.1.17 We believe that the Church is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is “The Church of God.” We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the gospel (good news) of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations as a witness, and to help reconcile to God such people as are now being called. We believe that it is also the mission of the Church of God to strengthen, edify and nurture the children of God in the love and admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2.1.18 We believe in tithing as a way of honoring God with our substance and as a means of serving Him in the preaching of the gospel, the care of the Church, attending the festivals and helping the needy.

2.1.19 We believe that the only hope of eternal life for mortal humans lies in the resurrection through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that at the return of Jesus Christ a resurrection to spirit life will take place for all who have been God’s faithful servants. We believe that, after Jesus Christ has ruled on this earth for 1,000 years, there will be a resurrection to physical life of the vast majority of all people who have ever lived. We believe that, after these people have had an opportunity to live a physical life, if they become converted, they too will receive eternal life. We also believe that those who reject God’s offer of salvation will reap eternal death.

2.1.20 We believe in the personal, visible, pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule the nations on earth as King of kings and to continue His priestly office as Lord of lords. At that time, He will sit upon the throne of David. During His thousand-year reign upon the earth, He will restore all things and establish the Kingdom of God forever.

3.0 ARTICLE 3-THE CHURCH

3.1 PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

God's purpose for His Church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations, teach and care for those disciples and prepare them for the return of Christ.

3.2 FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH

There is one body, the Church, which is a spiritual organism. The Church has many members, to each of whom God has bestowed a measure of faith through the Holy Spirit. Through that Spirit, our Father has made us one in the Body of Christ, and, individually, members one of another. He has given us gifts that differ according to His will and has entrusted His Spirit to each of us so that we might exercise those gifts with humility, gentleness and patience in submission, first to Jesus Christ, and then to one another. By the establishment of this Constitution, we acknowledge the truth of Scripture that members serve in different functions within the Church, and that it is our Father who determines each member's function within the Church.

3.2.1 God's Purpose for Diverse Functions Within His Church

The purpose for the various functions established within God's Church is to equip each member to perform the work of service: first to the Church and when the Church has the opportunity, to all humanity. The proper working of each individual member in accordance with his or her function causes the Church to grow.

3.2.2 Administrations Within the Church

We acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord, the Apostle of our faith and the Head of the Church. We acknowledge that God, in order to fulfill His mission and purpose for His Church, has appointed some to carry the gospel to the world, some to pastor local congregations, some to teach, some to help, and some to administer. To the end that all members may exercise the grace given to them by God as He has willed, the following administrations within UCGIA *are* hereby established:

3.2.2.1 National Councils

A council or board that is established to meet the requirements for legal recognition of UCGIA *or* serves the administrative needs of UCGIA in nations other than the United States of America, is a national council. A national council shall conduct itself in accordance with Scripture, this Constitution, the national council bylaws, the Rules of Association and applicable law.

3.2.2.2 The Local Congregation

An assembly of members, wherever located, recognized by UCGIA, and governed by UCGIA's published Rules of Association, shall constitute a local congregation of UCGIA. Each local congregation, where possible, is guided and

shepherded by a pastor, assisted by elders, deacons and deaconesses. A congregation may establish one or more local advisory councils to assist the ministry in serving the needs of the local congregation, UCGIA as a whole and, as they have the opportunity, their local community. The local congregation also works in conjunction with the Council, the home office and the national council (if applicable) to administer the established policies and procedures of UCGIA.

3.2.2.3 General Conference

The General Conference of UCGIA is as defined in this Constitution. The General Conference is responsible to God to ensure that UCGIA fulfills the purpose stated in this Constitution and that His people are served and their needs attended to. The General Conference shall, with prayer and fasting, set apart from among themselves a Council consisting of twelve (12) elders. The General Conference shall have such other specific duties and responsibilities as are enumerated in Article 4 of this Constitution. The General Conference shall conduct itself in accordance with Scripture, this Constitution, the duly adopted Bylaws, the Rules of Association of UCGIA and applicable law.

3.2.2.4 Council

The Council of UCGIA is as defined in this Constitution. In accordance with the directive of the General Conference at its inaugural meeting held in Indianapolis, Indiana, from April 30, to May 2, 1995, UCGIA was incorporated for the purpose of executing UCGIA's responsibilities. The Council is the duly appointed corporate board for UCGIA and is equivalent to a board of directors. As such, it shall have such other specific duties and responsibilities as are enumerated in UCGIA's corporate Bylaws. The Council shall conduct itself in accordance with Scripture, this Constitution, the duly adopted Bylaws, the Rules of Association of UCGIA and applicable law.

3.2.2.5 Home Office

The Home Office is the principal place of business and its personnel who serve UCGIA by implementing and administering operations and policies adopted and approved by the General Conference or Council or as delegated in the Constitution and Bylaws of UCGIA.

4.0 ARTICLE 4-GENERAL CONFERENCE

4.1 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The General Conference has, but is not limited to, the following responsibilities:

- (1) To approve changes in the doctrine of UCGIA.
- (2) To ratify the annual strategic plan, an annual operating plan and an annual balanced budget that pertains to those plans.

- (3) To nominate and elect the Council, with prayer and fasting.
- (4) To approve all amendments to the Articles of Incorporation.
- (5) To approve all amendments to, or repeal, this Constitution, the duly approved Bylaws and the Rules of Association of UCGIA.
- (6) To approve all mergers with other religious organizations

4.2 MANAGEMENT WITHIN UCGIA - DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

The General Conference, after prayer and fasting, shall set apart from among its members a Council and entrust them with the responsibility and authority to establish policy, to enable management to implement that policy, and to provide direction and oversight to ensure the proper management of the day-to-day affairs of UCGIA. In addition, the Council shall propose, for approval by the General Conference, the annual strategic plan, the annual operating plan and an annual balanced budget for UCGIA.

4.3 QUALIFICATION AND APPOINTMENT TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Every ordained minister of UCGIA in good standing is an elder and is a member of the General Conference (as defined in this Constitution), unless he has exercised his right otherwise, as allowed under this Constitution. Upon ordination or credentialing, the corporate secretary will cause an elder's name to be recorded on the corporate roster of the General Conference.

4.3.1 Good Standing

An elder is in good standing if he is and remains a member and minister of UCGIA, is of good reputation and above reproach in his community, and continues to meet the scriptural qualifications for the ministry as outlined in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and other scriptures. Whether an elder continues to meet these requirements shall be determined by the Council based upon such biblical standards and principles.

4.3.2 Corporate Secretary and Treasurer

In the event that the corporate secretary or the corporate treasurer are not elders and thus not members of the General Conference, they shall, notwithstanding, in the course of their duties attend meetings of the General Conference. They shall not be entitled to ballot unless they have in the interim been ordained as ministers in UCGIA.

4.4 RIGHTS OF ELDERS

Members of the General Conference shall have the right to ballot with respect to those matters enumerated in this Constitution, and with respect to any other matter where balloting by the General Conference is required.

4.5 INELIGIBILITY TO BALLOT

Suspension, termination or expulsion - If, during the process of a General Conference ballot in which an absentee ballot may be submitted, or during the process of a written ballot without a meeting of the General Conference, an elder is suspended, terminated or expelled from the General Conference in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, that elder is not

eligible to cast a ballot; and, if he has cast a ballot during the process, his ballot is made null and void. The only exception shall be if the ballot occurs within the allowed time to bring, or while an actual appeal of such suspension, termination or expulsion is pending.

Death of an elder - If a member of the General Conference who had previously submitted a ballot dies during the absentee ballot process or the process of a written ballot, his ballot is null and void.

Ordination or credentialing after Call and Notice - Only those elders whom the Secretary has officially been notified as being ordained or credentialed, at least one (1) day before Call and Notice is sent, are eligible to cast a ballot. Such Call and Notice includes either an absentee ballot or a ballot without a meeting. If Call and Notice is for the Annual Meeting of the General Conference, such elder may attend the meeting but is not eligible to cast a ballot, whether at the meeting or by absentee.

4.6 CESSATION OF RIGHTS

All rights of membership in the General Conference cease upon the elder's death, his resignation from the ministry, his resignation from the membership of UCGIA, or his resignation from the General Conference under the rights granted in this Constitution.

4.7 SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION OF MEMBERSHIP

A member of the General Conference may be suspended or expelled by the Council. An elder who has been suspended or expelled, may exercise no rights under this Article or the duly approved Bylaws of UCGIA except as provided in this Constitution.

4.7.1 Causes of Suspension or Expulsion

An elder may, based on scriptural teaching or a breach of ministerial codes of ethics, be suspended for misconduct for a period of time determined by the Council. Any elder who fails to meet the scriptural qualifications of a minister based on biblical standards and principles may have his ministerial credentials revoked by the Council, in which case he is automatically expelled from the General Conference. While an elder is suspended or once he has been expelled from the General Conference, he is immediately precluded from performing any ministerial functions or duties in any congregation of UCGIA.

4.7.1.1 Council of Elders Determination

A Council determination that a member of the General Conference is suspended or expelled from the General Conference, shall always be based on biblical and spiritual criteria, is within the sole discretion of the Council, and is conclusive except for such review as is provided for in this Constitution.

4.7.2 Right of Appeal

Within twenty-one (21) days of the date that notification of suspension or expulsion is sent to him, an elder who is suspended or expelled from the General Conference, may

appeal according to a procedure adopted by the Council and approved by the General Conference. The decision of the General Conference to uphold or rescind an elder's suspension or expulsion from the General Conference is within the sole discretion of the General Conference and, in accordance with said procedure, as adopted, is conclusive. During the twenty-one (21) day period within which an appeal may be initiated, and during the entire period for which the determination by the General Conference of a timely appeal is pending, the elder bringing the appeal shall retain the right to ballot on General Conference matters. However the elder bringing the appeal shall continue to be relieved of all ministerial functions or duties during said periods.

4.7.3 Resignation

An elder may resign from the General Conference at any time. Despite such resignation, an elder may continue to perform the duties of an elder unless he has also resigned from the ministry, or has had his ministerial credentials revoked. An elder who has resigned may not exercise any rights of membership under this Article or the Bylaws.

4.8 TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP RIGHTS

No elder of the General Conference may transfer or assign his right to ballot or any right arising from membership in the General Conference.

4.9 MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

The time, place, manner of calling and conduct of meetings shall be provided for in the duly approved Bylaws of the Corporation.

4.10 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Elders in the employ of UCGIA are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend the annual meeting of the General Conference. Employed elders unable to attend in person, and non-employed elders, may submit their ballots by any means permitted in the duly approved Bylaws of UCGIA.

5.0 ARTICLE 5 - GOVERNANCE

5.1 AMENDMENT OF GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

The Council shall propose to the General Conference a procedure whereby matters of governance within UCGIA can be brought before both the Council and the General Conference for consideration with respect to whether UCGIA's governing documents require amendment. That procedure must be approved by simple majority of the General Conference and must provide a means of gathering input from the local congregations.

5.1.1 Majorities Required for Amending the Governing Documents

Proposed amendments to the governing documents of UCGIA shall require the approval of the General Conference as follows:

(1) An amendment to any article of this Constitution shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the valid ballots cast by the elders of the General Conference in attendance at a duly called meeting of the General Conference, or when an amendment to this Constitution is submitted in writing for action without a meeting. The exception to this is the Article respecting the Fundamental Beliefs of UCGIA, which may not be amended by less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the valid ballots cast at the time of a duly called meeting of the General Conference.

[On May 15, 2016, the General Conference of Elders interpreted this section as only requiring two-thirds (2/3) of the valid ballots cast to amend 5.1.1 (1).]

(2) An amendment to the Articles of Incorporation, the corporate Bylaws or the Rules of Association, shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the valid ballots cast by the elders of the General Conference in attendance at a duly called meeting of the General Conference, or when an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation or the corporate Bylaws is submitted in writing for action without a meeting.

(3) The dissolution of the Corporation or the repeal of the corporate Bylaws shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the valid ballots cast by the elders of the General Conference in attendance at a duly called meeting of the General Conference. Under no circumstances can this action be taken by written action without a meeting.

(4) The repeal of this Constitution shall require a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the valid ballots cast at the time of a duly called meeting of the General Conference. Under no circumstances can this action be taken by written action without a meeting.

(5) Repeal of the Rules of Association shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the valid ballots cast by the elders of the General Conference in attendance at a duly called meeting of the General Conference. Under no circumstances can this action be taken by written action without a meeting.

“In attendance” as used in this Article means physically present at a duly called meeting of the General Conference or, if not physically present, submitting an absentee ballot as allowed by this Constitution.

5.2 PARLIAMENTARY RULES FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

The Council shall propose rules to be approved by a simple majority of the General Conference, which rules shall govern the conduct of all meetings of the General Conference.

5.3 EXTENSION OF TIME TO PERFORM

Whenever the time for the performance of any action or condition under this Constitution, or under rules, procedures, processes, appeals, resolutions or other proceedings promulgated or created pursuant to this Constitution, falls on a Saturday (Sabbath Day), Sunday, a Holy Day, or a legal holiday for the United States of America, such time shall be automatically extended to the next business day.