

Grace Communion International-USA

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION MANUAL



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PREFACE: GOVERNANCE STIPULATIONS

Grace Communion International (GCI) is a hierarchically governed organization, which means, among other things, that certain functions and operations of the church as a denomination are delegated by the Board or church executives to its local congregations and ministers or other officials. The denomination has prepared policies and procedures to direct the local congregations in fulfilling these decentralized or delegated functions and operations, including, without limitation, those found in this manual.

It is the intent of GCI that the policies and procedures set forth in this Church Administration Manual are consistent with the denomination's underlying governing and related policy and procedural documents. However, the denomination reserves to itself the sole right to correct, interpret and/or decide the meaning or effect of any statement contained herein.

Various decisions or determinations discussed in this manual and elsewhere are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations. An ecclesiastical decision/determination is one that has spiritual elements or includes spiritual considerations or requires spiritual discernment or judgment. The denominational governance has final authority to determine which decisions or determinations are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations, whether or not they are expressly labeled such in this or any other church statement, but they include, without limitation: the decision to charter a congregation, to remove a congregation's charter, to split or combine congregations, to ordain elders, to change or remove eldership or elder's credentials, and to determine the church membership status of any person. The denominational governance has final authority, in its sole and absolute discretion, to adjudicate any ecclesiastical decision/determination, notwithstanding the fact that some such decisions are provisionally delegated, in this manual or otherwise, to the denomination's elders, congregations, or members in the various roles they do or may possess.

In addition, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, in this document or elsewhere, all employees of GCI, and associated entities, whether they be lay employees or minister employees, are "at will" and may be terminated with or without cause or notice. Procedures set forth in this manual regarding grievance, discipline, and appeal processes for members, affiliates and elders pertain to, and only to, an employee's member or ministerial status, and such procedures are not required for any employment action, including, but not limited to, promotion, demotion, transfer, or termination of employment. Any exceptions to this "at will" status must be made in writing by the board of the entity for which such employee works, specifically naming the employee to be affected, and signed both by a party specifically authorized by that board and by the employee.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 Mission, vision and governance

Grace Communion International (GCI) is a Christian denomination spread across 69 countries. Our mission, *Living and sharing the gospel*, gives rise to our vision, which is summarized in the phrase *Healthy Church*. This manual describes the system of church governance by which GCI operates within the U.S., with an eye toward helping GCI-USA congregations and denominational ministries pursue the GCI mission and vision in ways that are “fitting and orderly” (1 Corinthians 14:40) in order to maintain the unity of the church (12:12) while building it up (14:12, 26) to follow the Holy Spirit in participating with Jesus Christ in the Father’s ongoing mission to the world (9:19-23).

1.2 Core values

It is our intent that all aspects of our governance faithfully reflect the dynamic, creative love and life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as expressed in the world in and through the church. Toward that end, our system of governance is grounded in the following biblically informed core values:

Ministry for all believers

We believe that God calls and gifts all believers to participate with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the Father’s mission to the world. That participation, with its focus on obedience to Jesus’ *Great Commission* to multiply and mature his followers (Matthew 28:16-20), is shaped and motivated by obedience to Jesus’ *Great Commandment* to love God and all people (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-21).

Team-based leadership

We believe leadership within the church should be structured in ways that facilitate the participation of teams of appropriately called, gifted, equipped and supervised leaders who, in love, work collaboratively in serving others. We see this team-based approach to leadership as a reflection of the loving communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leaders are faithful stewards and servants

We believe God calls and gifts church leaders to be faithful stewards of the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:1)

and servants of the people they are called to lead. Though devoted and zealous, such leaders are never abusive. Instead, they are motivated by Jesus’ love for God and for people (Mark 10:42-45).

Spirit-formed, life-changing environments

We believe the church is called to provide Spirit-formed, life-changing environments (avenues) where people are helped to encounter Jesus and join with him in his disciple-making ministry to advance the Father’s mission to the world. That ministry is a “journey with Jesus” that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, leads to the multiplication of believers, workers, leaders, ministries and churches.

1.3 Primary objectives

Grounded in these core values, our system of church governance has five primary objectives:

- 1) To conform with scriptural examples and principles relevant to structuring the church.
- 2) To operate out of a spirit of openness, service, humility and mutual accountability.
- 3) To provide clear expectations within a context of empowerment.
- 4) To protect all involved from spiritual harm.
- 5) To maintain unity in doctrine and theology while providing flexibility to respond to the Holy Spirit’s creative work in shaping our ministry commitments and practices.

1.4 Leadership offices

Fundamental to GCI’s system of church governance is the ministry of people who, in church leadership positions, administer our system in faithful response to the Holy Spirit’s superintending direction. In the New Testament church, these designated leaders included apostles, evangelists and prophets (leaders who traveled in the service of multiple congregations); along with overseers (bishops), elders, pastor-teachers and deacons (leaders who served within congregations).

In Acts 6:1-6, the apostles called upon churches to identify leaders who were appointed (perhaps as deacons) by the apostles. The apostle Paul appointed elders (Acts 14:23), authorized Titus to do

so (Titus 1:5) and implied that Timothy should choose overseers (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

From these and other New Testament examples, we conclude that in the early church, leaders with various titles were recognized, appointed, equipped and supervised by a leadership structure that often extended beyond local congregations. We seek to follow these examples in structuring our leadership offices, always with a focus on faithfully serving member congregations, the denomination, and the larger body of Christ, all for the sake of the world.

1.5 Accountability relationships

Scripture and experience tell us that appropriate accountability is essential for church health. That accountability begins with each Christian's personal accountability to the Father, Son and Spirit, then extends to accountable relationships between members, between leaders and members, between leaders at various levels, and between congregations and the denomination. Though the Bible does not mandate a particular accountability (governance) structure, it does demonstrate the use of various systems, with even greater variety emerging down through the centuries of Christian history.

1.6 GCI governance system

GCI is a *hierarchically governed* denomination with church leaders appointed and supervised by designated ecclesiastical supervisors (overseers). For example, in GCI's U.S. congregations, the lead pastor (or equivalent) is appointed and supervised by a Regional Director, who reports to a Superintendent, who reports to the denomination's President, who reports to the Board of Directors.

This accountability to one's supervisor/overseer is enhanced and balanced by governance policies and procedures that facilitate meaningful input to leaders from those they lead. For example, GCI-USA chartered churches have an Advisory Council that provides ongoing advice and counsel to the lead pastor and other Pastors/Elders serving within the congregation. Then there are forums and other channels of communication by which Pastors and other members of congregations are enabled to communicate with the denomination (typically through the Regional Director). GCI's governance system also includes a means for dealing with breaches of duty and the conflict that sometimes arises in accountable

relationships. In these and other ways, GCI's system is *hierarchial* in structure while being *collegial* in tone and application. Team-based pastor led.

CHAPTER 2

MEMBERSHIP

Though membership in the universal church (the one body of Christ) is not defined by or limited to a single denomination or congregation, it is vital that believers, when possible, participate as members in local congregations. This chapter outlines the nature of membership within GCI's congregations (designated as churches and fellowship groups).

2.1 Two membership categories

GCI congregations minister to all who, coming in peace, desire to participate in the life of the congregation. At their request, and in accordance with the policies set out in this chapter, these people may become members in one of two membership categories: *affiliates* and *members*.

Membership status is typically granted by the congregation and resides in both the congregation and denomination. Membership status is automatically transferred between congregations when an affiliate or member in good standing relocates and notifies the new congregation of their desire to participate as a member. Individuals who are unable to participate in a local GCI congregation may request membership in the GCI "home church," which is administered from GCI's International Home Office in Charlotte, North Carolina.

2.1.1 *Affiliates* are either non-baptized believers or baptized believers who, through attendance and/or financial support, affiliate with a GCI congregation but do not desire or are not qualified to become a member. Affiliate status often precedes becoming a member. Affiliates younger than age 18 are designated as *youth affiliates*.

2.1.2 *Members* are baptized believers who request and are accepted as members, having committed themselves to participation in a GCI congregation through attendance, financial support and service. Members younger than age 18 are designated as *youth members*.

2.2 Privileges extended to all

The worship services sponsored by GCI congregations are open to all who come in peace and desire to worship Jesus (with limited exceptions due to

church discipline). As they are able, congregations offer to all who ask the spiritual care, counsel, prayer and equipping provided through their ministries. Access to special services (such as financial assistance) and ceremonies (such as weddings and funerals) is extended first to members and affiliates, then to others as congregational resources permit and as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis. The right to file grievances and appeals is extended only to members and affiliates (see chapter 7). When communion is served in a worship service, all who profess belief in Christ as their Lord and Savior, regardless of age, membership, or baptism status, are welcome to partake.

2.3 Privileges extended to members

The following services and privileges generally are extended only to those classified as GCI members:

- Advanced training for leadership in a congregational or denominational office.
- Designation as a leader in a congregational or denominational office including appointment to the offices of Avenue Champion, Ministry Leader and Elder.
- The right to nominate others for leadership in the congregation where the individual is an active member.
- Youth members have all the privileges of members, excluding eligibility to be appointed as Avenue Champions, or Elders.

2.4 Responsibilities of affiliates

GCI affiliates (including youth affiliates) commit to living and growing in Christian community in accordance with the following stipulations:

2.4.1 Acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, which may or may not have been confirmed through water baptism.

2.4.2 Agreement with *The Statement of Beliefs of Grace Communion International*, avoiding divisive behavior in any areas of disagreement.

2.4.3 Support of the leaders of the denomination and of the congregation where the member regularly attends.

2.4.4 Behaving in ways that show Christian love

for those who attend their congregation.

2.4.5 Conformance with GCI policies and procedures related to church discipline as set forth in chapter 5 of this manual.

2.5 Responsibilities of members

GCI members (including youth members) commit to living and growing in Christian community in accordance with the following stipulations:

2.5.1 Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord confirmed through water baptism (or other means such as confirmation when the individual had been baptized as an infant).

2.5.2 Support of the GCI congregation they attend, as evidenced by active attendance, prayer, service and financial giving (“active” is subject to ecclesiastical determination related to mitigating circumstances in the life of the member including health, income and commuting distance).

2.5.3 Behavior that reflects agreement with *The Statement of Beliefs of Grace Communion International*, avoiding divisiveness in areas of disagreement, and seeking pastoral counsel to discuss any areas of significant disagreement.

2.5.4 Support of the denomination’s leadership and of the congregation in which membership is held.

2.5.5 Behaving in ways that show Christian love for those who attend their congregation, and that offer a Christ-like witness in the community.

2.5.6 Conformance with GCI policies and procedures related to church discipline as set forth in chapter 5 of this manual.

2.6 Becoming an affiliate

Affiliates are those who, with their consent, are entered on a list of affiliates within the GCI congregation where they attend. Generally, the lead pastor of a congregation appoints to affiliate status those who are fairly regular in attendance and/or fairly regular in donating to the congregation. Granting of affiliate status is not generally announced publicly, though a lead pastor may choose to do so with the affiliate’s permission.

The congregation that makes the appointment registers the affiliate’s status using the online member records system. Minors (those under age 18) may be accepted as affiliates (including youth affiliates) only with the approval of a parent or legal guardian. It is appropriate for the lead pastor to invite youth affiliates at age 18 into an adult level of affiliation.

2.7 Becoming a member

Members are those who request and are accepted into membership based on the individual’s commitment as evidenced by compliance with the aforementioned stipulations. Congregations are encouraged to routinely publicize the process for acceptance into membership, inviting potential candidates to apply by contacting the lead pastor. Applicants for membership should then be counseled by the lead pastor (or other pastoral leader) concerning the privileges and responsibilities of being a member outlined in this chapter.

One of the requirements for membership is water baptism (GCI accepts and practices both adult and infant baptism). Because baptism pictures both communion with Christ and with his body, the church, it is appropriate (though not mandatory) that baptisms be performed in the presence of the congregation where the person being baptized will attend. In GCI, baptism is normally by full immersion in water (with exceptions made for medical or other extenuating circumstances and in baptizing infants).

If a candidate for membership has been baptized in another Christian denomination or congregation, they need not be re-baptized unless they personally are convicted of the need to do so. If an applicant for membership has not been baptized, they may become a member upon such baptism.

Minors (those under age 18) may be baptized and/or become members (including youth members) only with the approval of a parent or legal guardian. When a youth under age 12 is baptized, a parent or legal guardian must be present at the ceremony. It is appropriate for the lead pastor to invite youth members at age 18 into adult membership.

2.8 Transfer of membership

If a member or affiliate in good standing relocates from one GCI congregation to another, their membership or affiliate status will be transferred to the new congregation at their request and with the participation of both the receiving and the former (“sending”) lead pastor.

2.9 Leaving membership

The participation of members and affiliates in GCI and its congregations may be ended or reclassified in the following ways:

2.9.1 A member may be reclassified as an **affiliate** when they reduce their level of participation in a GCI congregation from that of member to that of affiliate. Such circumstances may be addressed between the member and the lead pastor, and the membership records will be adjusted accordingly.

2.9.2 A member will be reclassified as a **former member** when they cease all GCI participation for a period of a year or more, or when they request removal from membership.

2.9.3 A member or an affiliate will be reclassified as **disassociated** (disassociated member or disassociated affiliate) if their member or affiliate status is revoked by ecclesiastical decision/determination of the church for the disciplinary reasons outlined in chapter 5 between the member and the lead pastor, and the membership records will be adjusted accordingly.

CHAPTER 3

CONGREGATIONS

3.1 Benefits of being a GCI congregation

GCI congregations derive multiple benefits from being part of the GCI denominational family:

- **An incarnational Trinitarian foundation.** GCI beliefs and practices are grounded in two core doctrines of the historic, orthodox Christian faith: the Trinity and the Incarnation.
- **Collegial, family-like connections** with other congregations through shared beliefs, theology, mission and vision.
- **Training/education** provided by GCI's denominational ministries, which equip GCI congregations for participation in the mission of our triune God in the world.
- **Administrative support** provided (as applicable) by GCI Home Office services including legal, insurance, employee benefit-payroll administration, computer and other forms of technical support.
- **Support and supervision** of the congregation's lead pastor provided by the congregation's Regional Director.

3.2 Becoming a GCI congregation

Congregations become part of Grace Communion International as church plants or when established congregations join the denomination.

3.2.1 Planting a GCI church

GCI-USA actively facilitates the starting of new congregations through its church planting initiatives.

3.2.2 Joining the denomination

GCI welcomes into the denomination established non-GCI congregations that embrace GCI's theological vision, core doctrines, sense of mission, and system of church governance (outlined in this manual and in the companion *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*). Acceptance into the denomination is typically acknowledged through credentialing of the congregation's clergy and granting to the congregation a GCI charter as either a chartered church or a chartered fellowship group (see below).

3.3 Three types of GCI congregations

GCI has three ways to structure and designate its congregations in the United States:

- **Chartered churches.** These congregations hold weekly worship services where the average weekly attendance is 25 or more adult and/or youth members/affiliates. These congregations provide multiple ministries and operate using the GCI-USA standard financial management system.
- **Chartered fellowship groups.** These congregations may meet less often than weekly and average 10 to 24 in attendance. Though the number of ministries they offer is limited, they operate using the standard financial management system.
- **GCI Home Church (US).** This congregation is for those who want to stay connected to GCI and receive a weekly sermon message, bi-monthly Update and monthly Prayer Guide. This congregation is administered from the Home Office.

3.4 Requirements specific to chartered congregations

To receive and maintain their GCI charter, chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups meet the requirements noted below (with certain differences noted between churches and fellowship groups). Due to the varying sizes and configurations of these congregations, there are numerous (and flexible) ways to meet the requirements. If a congregation is unable to do so, the Regional Director will help them explore options for coming into compliance.

3.4.1 Provide congregational leaders

All chartered congregations have a lead pastor who help nurture and lead the congregation. In all cases, the lead pastor serves as the congregation's *Contact Person* who is the primary point of connection between the congregation and the denomination (see 3.7). In addition, there are the other leaders noted below.

3.4.1.1 Leaders specific to chartered churches

Within chartered churches, there are two types of pastoral leaders:

- **Elders**, who being granted this title through ordination, are appointed to serve the congregation as a Lead, Associate or Assistant Pastor (see 3.8).
- **Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions**, who being granted this title through commissioning, are appointed to lead one or more of the congregation's core ministries (see 3.9).

The primary pastoral leadership in chartered churches is provided by a lead pastor. The lead pastor participates in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program as outlined in Appendix E.

Chartered churches led by a lead pastor have an *Advisory Council* that provides advice and counsel to the Pastor (see 3.13).

A lead pastor may only oversee one chartered congregation or chartered fellowship group.

3.4.1.2 Leaders specific to chartered fellowship groups

Given their small size, chartered fellowship groups do not have Advisory Councils. Their primary pastoral leader is referred to as the group's *Facilitator* (if the Facilitator is an Elder, they may use the title of *Pastor*). All prospective fellowship group facilitators must fill out an application form, which includes passing a criminal background check prior to their appointment.

Though fellowship group facilitators are not expected to participate in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program (see Appendix E), they are encouraged to do.

3.4.2 Provide worship services

Chartered congregations and fellowship groups are to hold in person worship services each week (with only rare exceptions).

3.4.3 Provide financial management

All chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups are to have in place the standard financial management system stipulated in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*. That system includes a Finance Committee (see 3.14) with a Church Treasurer and Lead Counter. To meet operational expenses (including the denominational apportionment), these congregations must generate sufficient

operating income through donations, fund raisers, etc. They are to manage that income utilizing the standard financial system.

3.4.4 Provide standard reporting

All chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups are to submit to the denomination the following reports, filed at online.gci.org.

- **Monthly congregation report.** The Contact Person files with the denomination a report by the 15th of each month. This report summarizes details concerning assemblies of the congregation for the previous month and provides information concerning church health and development.
- **Financial reports.** The Contact Person, typically through the congregation's Treasurer, files with the denomination quarterly and year-end financial reports (including reporting on required audits). These reports are due by the deadlines and with the content noted in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*.

3.4.5 Provide safe and healthy assemblies

While no congregation can perfectly ensure the physical safety and health of its members and guests, each should use care to protect individuals in congregational assemblies (worship services, social activities, etc.) from bodily harm. This means taking care not to expose people to potentially harmful circumstances including food poisoning and infectious diseases. Congregations are prohibited from transporting members, affiliates and guests on church-sponsored trips in 15 passenger van models produced prior to 2018. This includes vans that have been made 12 passenger vans by removing the back seat. Usage may be permitted for models produced 2018 and after if the driver has a commercial license or has undergone a safe driving course and follows GCI's insurance carrier's safety requirements. Please contact humanresources@gci.org for more information.

3.5 Naming congregations

When initially naming or renaming a congregation, GCI-USA asks its churches and fellowship groups to utilize a name that couples the denomination's name with the congregation's geographic location. Here are two examples:

- *Grace Communion International, Mapleton*
- *Grace Communion Mapleton* (Note: when used in informal communication, these names may be

foreshortened to “GCI Mapleton” or “GC Mapleton”).

The name a congregation preliminarily selects is to be submitted to the Regional Director for approval before the name is used publicly. With that approval, the congregation then submits the selected name to the Home Office where it will be entered into the official records. If the congregation is incorporated the lead pastor should contact the legal department regarding a name change.

When a chartered church or chartered fellowship group is initially established, the congregation is also to submit to the denomination the EIN (employee identification number) or TIN (taxpayer identification number) of the registered bank account they will be using in their financial system. When this information is received by the Home Office, the denomination will issue the congregation a charter and will notify the IRS to include the congregation under its GROUP tax exemption.

3.6 Contact Person

All congregations (chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups) are to provide a member in good standing to serve as the congregation’s *Contact Person*—the primary point of connection between the congregation and the denomination. The Contact Person in chartered churches is always the lead pastor. In chartered fellowship groups the Contact Person is always the group Facilitator.

The Contact Person must meet the qualifications of a Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion (see 3.8) and be accountable to the denomination in seeing that the congregation operates in accordance with the requirements set out in this manual relevant to its congregational type. The Regional Director will assist the Contact Person in designing structures and systems to help the congregation meet these requirements in ways that best align with the congregation’s circumstances and resources.

3.7 Elders

Through the ordinance of *ordination*, GCI confers on appropriately qualified men and women the biblical title of *Elder*. At the time of ordination, and subsequently as their role changes, Elders are titled by the denomination to serve as *Pastors* of various types.

3.7.1 Ordination of Elders

Within GCI-USA, Elders are officially appointed through *ordination*—a process that involves the denomination’s review and approval through the Home Office staff. The denomination has this oversight because Elders constitute GCI’s official “Clergy” (a status with ecclesiastical, legal and cultural ramifications).

The ordination process typically is initiated by the congregation’s lead pastor, who recommends an individual for ordination to the ecclesiastical office of Elder. In order to confirm that God is calling that man or woman to serve in that way, the lead pastor discusses the matter with the candidate to determine ability and willingness to serve; then the lead pastor discusses the matter with the congregation’s Advisory Council and other leaders. If this preliminary screening indicates that ordination should proceed, the lead pastor invites the candidate to complete an *Ordination and Appointment Application and Questionnaire* (downloadable from online.gci.org (under “Resources”). Completion of this application will include a criminal background check and volunteer paperwork initiated and reviewed by the Home Office.

The completed application is reviewed and approved first by the candidate’s lead pastor, then by the Regional Director, and last by the Home Office. If all levels approve, the lead pastor will be authorized by the Home Office to ordain the candidate on behalf of the denomination. The lead pastor may ask other Elders to participate in the ordination ceremony (found in the GCI *Ceremonies* book). Typically, the ceremony will be performed in the presence of the assembled congregation.

An Elder’s ordination continues to be valid within GCI unless revoked due to disciplinary action of the denomination, or if surrendered by the Elder, or if the Elder is reclassified due to inactivity (thus automatically becoming an *Elder Emeritus*—see below).

An Elder’s ordination status is transferable between GCI congregations so long as the Elder remains a GCI member in good standing (note, however, that the pastoral role of the Elder in the new congregation is determined by the lead pastor of that congregation, in consultation with the Regional Director).

3.7.2 Titling of Elders

Concurrent with ordination, and in accordance with what is approved by the denomination via the Elder ordination application process, the Elder is granted a title descriptive of his/her pastoral leadership role within the congregation. These titles include lead pastor, Associate Pastor and Assistant Pastor (see 3.10 and 3.11). The title may be changed from time to time as the Elder's pastoral function changes. Changes in function and title are to be pre-approved by the Regional Director and communicated to the Home Office.

If an Elder becomes unable to actively fill a pastoral leadership role within the congregation, their pastoral title automatically becomes *Elder Emeritus*. An Elder Emeritus retains his/her Elder ordination credentials and the title *Elder Emeritus* so long as they continue to remain a GCI member in good standing (see 2.5), which includes adherence to GCI's Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C).

3.7.3 Elder qualifications and responsibilities

Individuals approved for ordination and for continuing service as Elders are to adhere to the following qualifications and responsibilities (additional stipulations related to specific pastoral leadership responsibilities are noted elsewhere):

3.7.3.1 Adherence to the standards for Elders set forth by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders in Grace Communion International (Appendix C).

3.7.3.2 Recognized leadership ability, including spiritual giftedness and skill in the area(s) of assigned pastoral ministry. Candidates for ordination as an Elder will usually have served first as a Ministry Leader.

3.7.3.3 GCI membership in good standing, including attendance in a GCI congregation on a regular basis, and consistency and generosity (proportionate to income) in giving to that congregation.

3.7.3.4 Willingness and availability to serve in the responsibilities of an Elder as assigned by the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor.

3.7.3.5 Participation in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program (Appendix E) is expected of Elders appointed to serve as lead pastors. Other Elders are encouraged but are not required to participate.

3.7.3.6 Individuals who have been convicted of a crime involving any type of abuse of a minor or the sexual abuse of an adult are excluded from being ordained or continuing to serve as an Elder.

3.7.3.7 In conducting ministerial responsibilities, Elders are not to meet alone (out of public view) with an individual adult of the opposite sex nor with an individual minor of either sex when that individual is not a member of the Elder's immediate family.

3.7.4 Duties of Elders

Elder ordination confers delegated authority and responsibility to perform official Clergy functions on behalf of the denomination as defined by the appointees' supervisor(s) in accordance with the governance system set forth in this manual. The scope of these functions involves pastoral leadership, including oversight of the spiritual nurture, care and development of members and affiliates within the area assigned to the Elder. In these responsibilities, Elders typically serve as teachers, preachers, pastoral counselors and administrators of church discipline and accountability processes.

3.7.5 Conducting church ceremonies

As the denomination's designated Clergy, GCI Elders, within the parameters specified in this section, are authorized by the denomination to conduct and to supervise the denomination's church ceremonies, which constitute the official religious worship of the denomination. Those ceremonies are as follows (with most described further in the GCI *Church Ceremonies* book):

- **Worship services**
- **Funerals** (conducted on behalf of the church)
- **Baptisms** (conducted on behalf of the church)
- **Weddings and renewal of wedding vows** (note that there often are legal requirements for officiating weddings set by local law)
- **Ordaining Elders and installing Pastors in GCI congregations** (note that all Elder ordinations and Pastor installations must be pre-approved by the denomination through the standard application process)
- **Commissioning of Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders**
- **Anointing the sick with oil** (in conjunction with prayer for healing)
- **The blessing of little children** (when this ceremony is part of an official worship service)

- **The Lord's Supper (Communion)**

Elders currently serving actively in a pastoral role are authorized by the denomination to conduct these official church ceremonies. However, if the Elder conducting the ceremony is not the lead pastor of the congregation involved, the lead pastor is to be informed in advance. Those who are Elder Emeritus (i.e. not actively serving in a pastoral role) may also conduct church ceremonies with advance permission from the applicable lead pastor.

Church members in good standing who are not Elders may conduct church ceremonies (unless prohibited by law, as is the case for officiating a marriage ceremony in some locales) so long as they are *pre-authorized* by and under the *direct supervision* of an active GCI Elder in that locale. If the ceremony involves members of an established congregation, the lead pastor of that congregation is to be notified in advance.

3.7.6 Authority and accountability of Elders

Ordination as an Elder grants delegated ecclesiastical authority from the denomination to the Elder and is subject to the delegation and supervision of the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor(s). The Regional Director is the direct ecclesiastical supervisor for any Elder serving as the Contact Person in a congregation. The ecclesiastical supervisor for other Elders is their immediate supervisor, the lead pastor within the congregation.

3.7.7 What Elders may expect from their ecclesiastical supervisors

Those who supervise Elders will provide support as well as just and fair treatment, striving to:

- Be accessible, promptly responding to requests from Elders.
- Provide sound and clear spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
- Openly and respectfully communicate any serious complaints brought against the Elder.
- Provide reasonable time for feedback to requests for information from Elders.
- Handle sensitive and confidential information about an Elder in a responsible manner.
- Be sensitive to the personal and family needs of Elders.
- Be open and responsive to questions from Elders.

3.7.8 Removal from the office of Elder

An Elder may be removed from office for disciplinary reasons (see chapter 5). Removal involves revocation of the status and title of Elder and the functional pastoral title that has been given. This action is usually initiated by the Elder's immediate supervisor and must be approved by the Regional Director (when applicable) and the Home Office.

Upon revocation of the status of Elder, the individual ceases to be authorized to perform the ecclesiastical responsibilities of an Elder and is to surrender their ordination certificate to their ecclesiastical supervisor. If an Elder believes they have been removed from office inappropriately, recourse is available through the official appeals process (chapter 5).

3.7.9 Resignation from the office of Elder

It is appropriate for an Elder to resign from office when they believe they are no longer able, in good conscience, to meet the requirements stipulated for Elders. Upon resignation, the individual ceases to hold the title of Elder and is no longer authorized to perform the ecclesiastical responsibilities of an Elder. Notice of resignation and the Elder's ordination certificate are to be sent to the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor.

An Elder who is able to continue to meet the requirements for being an Elder but is no longer able to serve actively in a pastoral leadership role, may, at their request, or by the action of the lead pastor, be reclassified as *Elder Emeritus* (see 3.7.2).

3.8 Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions

In GCI-USA, the title of Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion is conferred on men and women officially appointed through *commissioning* to serve as leaders of individual ministries within congregations. Such commissions are time-limited and renewable at the discretion of the congregation's lead pastor.

3.8.1 Responsibilities of Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions

The responsibilities of a Ministry Leader and Avenue Champion are at the discretion of their supervisor in accordance with the standards for certain roles set forth in this manual. Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions coordinate the work of others in

conducting congregational ministries. Their diverse responsibilities are reflected in functional titles that are granted at the time of commissioning at the discretion of the lead pastor. Examples of such titles include Worship Ministry Leader, Youth Ministry Leader, Women's Ministry Leader, Faith Avenue Champion, Hope Avenue Champion, and Love Avenue Champion. The title of Pastor is reserved for Elders serving in pastoral roles. A Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion should not be given the title of Pastor unless they are an Elder.

3.8.2 Qualifications of Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions

Qualifications for service as a Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion are noted in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (where the title "Deacon" is used). Specific qualifications and responsibilities include spiritual maturity; willingness to serve; GCI membership in good standing (including consistency in attendance, financial giving and serving); recognized leadership ability; spiritual giftedness; and skill (or willingness to learn) in the area(s) of anticipated service. Those commissioned as Ministry Leaders or Avenue Champions normally will have served first as ministry workers within the congregation where their ability and desire to lead is tested and confirmed.

3.8.3 Selection and commissioning of Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions

A proposal to commission a Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion is typically initiated by the lead pastor (or equivalent), though any member may recommend a person for commissioning by contacting the lead pastor. The details of the evaluation and confirmation process rest with the lead pastor, though lead pastors are encouraged to discuss the matter with the candidate, the Advisory Council and other leaders.

3.8.4 Authority and accountability of Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions

Being commissioned confers the title of Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion and grants delegated authority from the lead pastor to the one commissioned. That authority is limited to the specific scope of the assignment as defined by the Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion's supervisor(s) within the parameters set forth in this manual. The commission is valid only within the GCI congregation where it was granted—it is not transferable to other congregations.

It is recommended that commissions be granted for stipulated durations (three years is suggested but not mandated). At the end of the term, the Ministry Leader or Avenue Champion ceases to hold the title unless re-appointed. Such reappointments may be made informally or in a commissioning ceremony. Some congregations hold an annual ceremony for commissioning and re-commissioning Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions.

The service of Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions within the congregation where they are commissioned is subject to the oversight and supervision of the lead pastor (or designee). Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions may be removed from office by the discretionary action of the lead pastor. In making decisions concerning such removals, the lead pastor would usually seek the input of other leaders and the Advisory Council.

3.9 Three Avenues

Healthy churches start with healthy leadership. In GCI, we emphasize Team Based – Pastor Led congregations and fellowship groups. This [article](#) explains the difference between pastor-led, team-based, and Team Based – Pastor Led.

3.9.1 Hope Avenue

The Hope Avenue is worship. Worship is our response inside of Christ's perfect response. We participate in the objective reality of Christ's vicarious life of faith, prayer, worship, thanksgiving, and self-offering to the Father. Jesus is our eternal high priest who sweeps us up into divine worship. The Hope Avenue is a calling on the ministry to inspire and bring hope to the congregation on a Sunday worship.

3.9.2 Faith Avenue

The Faith Avenue is discipleship. Christian discipleship is the disciplined habit of thinking and acting in Christ. Discipleship is growing closer to Jesus, becoming more like him, and moving deeper into Christian community with other believers. The calling on the ministry is to create spaces where disciple-making and spiritual growth can be nurtured. The Faith Avenue is where community is built through small groups, Bible study, missional and recreational activities.

3.9.3 Love Avenue

The Love Avenue is witness – sharing God's love and life with others. The GCI mission statement is

Living and Sharing the Gospel. The sharing part includes reaching out to others and showing the love of Jesus to neighbors in practical ways. The Love Avenue is the person and presence of Jesus calling us to love, inviting us to join him in making new disciples, and empowering us through his Spirit to build the church and expand the kingdom. Pastors and ministry leaders are called upon to engage the community with tangible acts that reflect the love of God. It is the love of Jesus that compels us to proclaim the message and connect with those who don't yet know they are reconciled.

3.10 Lead pastors

GCI chartered churches are led by an elder designated by the denomination to serve as the congregation's *lead pastor*. In such cases, the lead pastor automatically is designated as the congregation's Contact Person (see 3.6).

Lead pastors either are employed by GCI (classified as *employed pastors*, with their employment being full or part-time) or are volunteers (classified as *bi-vocational pastors*). For requirements specific to employed pastors, see the *GCI-USA Employees Manual*.

3.10.1 Lead pastor: responsibilities

All lead pastors must meet the qualifications and responsibilities of elders (including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders—see Appendix C).

A man or woman serving as a lead pastor is the primary spiritual and administrative leader in their congregation. They have various responsibilities (outlined below) including equipping, mobilizing and coaching teams of servant-leaders who work with the lead pastor's direction to lead the congregation in pursuit of its mission. The exact form of this leadership will vary depending on the congregation's specific organizational structure, size and needs, the gifting and "style" of the lead pastor, and various local and regional demands, customs, constraints and opportunities.

3.10.2 Lead pastor: accountabilities

Under GCI's system of governance, lead pastors are directly accountable to their Regional Director. In addition to this denominational accountability, they are to work closely with and seek the advice and counsel of other leaders in their congregation including other Elders, their Avenue Champions, Ministry Leaders and Advisory Council. They also

are to stay in close touch with their *Finance Committee*, carefully overseeing the work of the congregation's Treasurer (see the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual* for details).

While these various leaders, councils and committees are directly accountable to the lead pastor, they also are responsible to the congregation and the denomination to act on direct knowledge or allegations of significant offense by the lead pastor. Such action is to be in accordance with the processes outlined in chapter 5.

3.10.3 What a lead pastor can expect from the denomination

Lead pastors can expect their Regional Director and the Home Office to maintain open lines of communication with them, seeking their advice and input and keeping them informed about decisions that affect their duties and congregation. They will also provide lead pastors with instruction, assistance, support and supervision as set forth in this manual.

3.10.4 Lead pastor: specific responsibilities

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and elders (including the Code of Ethics for Elders—see Appendix C), the lead pastor's primary role in a team-based, pastor-led church is to provide an overview for the Elders, Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders to follow, rather than dictating their every action. We want our pastors to set the pace through this overview by helping their congregations achieve health through what we refer to as the three avenues of ministry (see 3.9)

- Provide a caring pastoral presence in the members' lives, present at times of significant life transition including serious illness, serious conflict, funerals, weddings, etc.
- Provide sermons, Bible studies, discipleship classes and other forms of biblical instruction that is Christ-centered and gospel-focused, in harmony with the *GCI Statement of Beliefs* and GCI's Incarnational Trinitarian theology. Note that the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C) requires upholding denominational teachings. Sermons should be well-prepared, transformational, and typically expository (rather than topical). The Revised Common Lectionary should be followed.
- Lead the congregation in actively participating in Jesus' ministry, which multiplies believers, workers, leaders, ministries and churches.

- Provide inspiring Christ-centered and gospel-focused worship services that reflect input from the congregation and are sensitive to preferences/cultural norms within the community the congregation seeks to reach through the worship services.
- Administer church ceremonies: baptism, The Lord's Supper (Communion), weddings, funerals, anointing of the sick, blessing of children, etc.
- Counsel congregants on spiritual matters.
- Provide classes for prospective members, candidates for baptism and candidates for confirmation.
- Model/teach/facilitate spiritual formation (including spiritual disciplines that facilitate spiritual growth, including missional involvement).
- Represent the church at community functions.
- Visit members, affiliates and prospective members.
- Facilitate the participation of members in small groups where they are discipled, and non-members are reached. Toward that goal, see that small group leaders are identified, trained and supervised.
- Model and teach relational evangelism, seeking to make outreach a key part of the congregation's life.
- Model and teach generous stewardship of one's time, talent and treasure. Financial giving should be facilitated as an act of worship. It is GCI policy that all pastors, in accordance with the expectation of all Elders, be consistent and generous (proportionate to income) in financial donations to the congregations where they serve.
- Identify, develop, mentor and empower leaders. Develop additional Elders, Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders.
- Supervise the congregational leaders through the lens of the 4 Es – Engage, Equip, Empower and Encourage.
- Facilitate regular meetings of the congregation's Leadership Team, Advisory Council and Finance Committee. Practice team-based leadership.
- Administer GCI's disciplinary, grievance and appeals processes within the congregation (see chapter 5).
- Supervise the maintenance of member files using standard online systems. See to it that online member lists are kept up-to-date.
- Supervise the administration of the congregation's financial management system in compliance with the GCI-USA *Financial Management Manual*. Ensure that required financial reports are complete and filed on time.
- Report monthly to the Home Office using the standard online monthly church report form.
- The lead pastor (or equivalent) is to be consistently present at weekly worship services unless on vacation or due to a work conflict (such as when the lead pastor is not employed full-time by GCI).
- Lead pastors in chartered churches are expected to participate in the GCI Pastoral Continuing Education Program outlined in Appendix E.

3.10.5 Lead pastor transition process

When a transition from one lead pastor to another is anticipated, the congregation's existing lead pastor (or in the absence of a lead pastor, the congregation's emergency contact—see below), is to contact the Regional Director to discuss steps in a transition process. The Regional Director will guide the process, working closely with the existing lead pastor (or emergency contact) and a transition committee made up of representatives from the congregation's Leadership Team and Advisory Council.

To facilitate these transition processes, it is vital that each congregation have in place an internal ***emergency pastoral leadership transition plan*** that specifies which of the congregation's leaders will fill in temporarily for the lead pastor in the case of death, resignation or disability. The transition plan should designate one leader in the congregation to serve as the congregation's ***emergency contact*** who will serve during the transition process as the congregation's Contact Person (see 3.6).

Though GCI-USA does not have a mandatory retirement age for its lead pastors, it is vital to consider this issue early-on so that eventual succession is prepared for by both the congregation and the denomination. Therefore, upon turning 62, all lead pastors are to consult with their Regional Director to discuss plans related to leadership succession. Out of this discussion will come a succession plan that will include relevant goals and target dates for identifying, equipping and, eventually, installing a new lead pastor (or equivalent). That plan will be the joint work of the lead pastor and their Regional Director with appointment of a new lead pastor made by the denomination at an appropriate future time in accordance with the processes set forth in this manual.

3.10.6 Lead pastor time off/incapacitation

When taking vacation, lead pastors employed by GCI are not to miss more than two consecutive weekly worship services. Longer absences are to be pre-authorized by the Regional Director. When a lead pastor (employed by GCI) knows in advance that they will be absent from their pastoral duties they should request the time off via the ADP portal. Unpaid lead pastors should send an email to their Regional Director requesting time off in advance include the anticipated beginning and ending dates of the absence and a phone number where they may be reached.

Should a lead pastor become incapacitated or otherwise unable to fulfill any of the duties specified in this manual, the Regional Director and Home Office are to be notified immediately.

3.11 Associate and Assistant Pastors

In order to provide spiritual oversight within the congregation, to advance team-based leadership, and to provide for smooth leadership succession, it is GCI's goal that its chartered churches have multiple pastors (such as a lead pastor working with multiple Assistant Pastors).

Appointments to the offices of Associate and Assistant Pastor are typically made by the lead pastor at the time the person is ordained an Elder (using the standard ordination application process, see 3.7). Changes to those appointments may be made by the lead pastor with advance approval of the Regional Director. At local discretion, Associate and Assistant Pastors may be given more descriptive pastoral

titles such as Administrative Pastor, Executive Pastor, Youth Pastor, Children's Pastor, Teaching Pastor, Worship Pastor, Care Pastor, etc.

As a condition of appointment, Associate and Assistant Pastors are to meet the responsibilities of members as well as the qualifications and responsibilities of Elders, including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C). Additional responsibilities are noted below.

3.11.1 Associate Pastors

Associate Pastors may be employed by the denomination or may be bi-vocational (volunteer). They are directly supervised by their lead pastor and normally assist in the full range of the lead pastor's responsibilities, typically serving in a larger congregation. The lead pastor defines the exact scope of an Associate Pastor's responsibilities in accordance with the guidelines in this manual.

3.11.2 Assistant Pastors

Assistant Pastors typically are bi-vocational (volunteer). They are directly supervised by their lead pastor or an Associate Pastor. Assistant Pastors normally oversee a specific pastoral ministry within the congregation and often are given related functional titles such as "Youth Pastor," "Seniors Pastor," etc. The lead pastor defines the exact scope of an Assistant Pastor's responsibilities in accordance with this manual.

3.12 Advisory Councils

To facilitate team-based leadership and mutual accountability, all chartered churches are to have an Advisory Council. The congregation's lead pastor is responsible to see that the Advisory Council is appointed and then operates as set forth here. Due to their small size, chartered fellowship groups need not have an Advisory Council.

3.12.1 The role of the Advisory Council

The role of the Advisory Council is to offer focused, on-going advice, perspective and counsel to the lead pastor and other Pastors (Elders) serving the congregation. Members of the Advisory Council should be engaged members who represent a cross-section of the church (and not those currently serving in leadership roles). The Advisory Council is supervised by and directly accountable to the lead pastor.

The Advisory Council is NOT constituted to direct the day-to-day management of the congregation.

That work is the responsibility of the congregation's "staff" (the Pastors, Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders). Furthermore, the Advisory Council is not constituted as a board of directors to govern the congregation. Primary oversight of the administrative leadership of the congregation is the responsibility of the lead pastor who is directly accountable to the Regional Director and the Home Office.

The lead pastor works in a team-based (collegial, consensus-based) way to share governance responsibilities with others, including other Elders, Ministry Leaders, Avenue Champions and the Finance Committee, with the advice, counsel and perspective given by the Advisory Council.

The scope of the advice and counsel offered by the Advisory Council concerns significant policy and administrative matters related to the following three spiritual oversight concerns:

- The needs and interests of the congregation, including its overall vision, mission and strategy, and the particular needs and interests of its members, affiliates and guests.
- The needs and interests of the community (or communities) where the congregation ministers (including potential members as well as the larger body of Christ).
- The needs and interests of the denomination (including GCI values, mission, vision, doctrine/theology, policies and practices).

Within these three areas of concern, any of the congregation's Pastors may bring to the Advisory Council specific issues for review and consideration. The lead pastor together with any other Pastors need to carefully (and prayerfully) consider the Advisory Council's consensus advice, counsel and perspective on these matters, which are to regularly include, as a minimum, the following specifics:

- The development and execution of the congregation's vision document (values, mission, vision and goals).
- The congregation's annual budget (prepared by the lead pastor working with the Ministry Leaders, Avenue Champions, and the Finance Committee) and any revisions to that budget.
- Advance review of any expenditures not provided for in the annual budget.

- Review of quarterly and annual financial reports prepared by the Finance Committee in accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Management Manual*.
- The congregation's annual activity calendar including significant changes to that calendar.
- Significant administrative matters such as the congregation's meeting place, day and time, significant worship service format changes, etc.
- The basic organization of the congregation's primary ministries (and any substantial changes to that structure).
- Consideration of candidates for ordination as Elders and commissioning as Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders.

3.12.2 Advisory Council meetings

The Advisory Council typically meets once each quarter. The lead pastor, Associate Pastor or Assistant Pastor may chair Advisory Council meetings, or a chair may be appointed from the Advisory Council's membership as approved by the lead pastor. The same chair may serve each meeting, or the chair may be rotated.

Normally, the lead pastor is to be present at all Advisory Council meetings (though the council may meet without the lead pastor present when he/she gives advance consent) so that they remain actively involved with the council in order to support, validate, receive and carefully consider the council's advice, counsel and perspective. The lead pastor is also responsible to see that the council is provided with needed information, training and coaching so that it is equipped for its work.

3.12.3 Resolving disagreements

In the case of significant, unresolved disagreements between the lead pastor and the Advisory Council, either party may initiate the grievance process outlined in chapter 7.

3.12.4 Qualifications for Advisory Council members

Advisory Council members are to be selected based on ability and availability to serve. They are to be members in good standing, noted for wisdom and insight and ability to work with people. They are to be regular in attendance and generous in giving (in accordance with financial ability). Any such mem-

ber of the congregation, age 16 or older, male or female, is eligible to serve on the council. Elders who are actively serving in a pastoral role in the congregation are not eligible to serve on the council since the council exists to advise the Pastors.

Some congregations automatically appoint certain congregational leaders to the Advisory Council including the Treasurer (when the Treasurer is not an Elder), Elders Emeritus (i.e. Elders not serving as Pastors), and/or Ministry Leaders and Avenue Champions. Such appointment strategies are at the discretion of the lead pastor. Note that it is helpful (even vital) that the council include non-leaders so that the perspective of non-leaders is well represented. Whatever strategy is used in forming the Advisory Council, care should be taken to not duplicate roles and not overload people's schedules. Moreover, care should be taken to maintain diversity on the council to reflect (where possible) the diversity of the congregation in spiritual giftedness, gender, race, ethnicity, age, location of residence and socioeconomic background.

3.12.5 Appointment of Advisory Council members

Members of the council may be nominated by the membership as a whole with final selection by the lead pastor or the lead pastor may make the nominations with final selection by a vote of the members (including youth members). Either way, the members are actively involved in the selection process, and the lead pastor is able to assist in screening out candidates not meeting the qualifications noted in this section.

Following is a suggested process for selecting Advisory Council members (the lead pastor may vary the process to fit local needs so long as a participatory process is utilized).

- Distribute nomination ballots to members.
- Appoint a secretary to handle all tabulations. Tabulate the ballots and place the top ten names on a second ballot, listed in random order.
- At the next worship service, distribute the second ballot. Each member will then choose three persons from the list of ten.
- Tabulate the second ballot and give the lead pastor a list of the top seven names in order of preference. From these names, the lead pastor will select several members to serve. A council of five is suggested (there may be as few as three in

small congregations and more in larger). The lead pastor determines the number.

- Announce and post the names of those appointed at the next worship service.
- The Advisory Council and the Pastors will arrange to begin meeting at regular times.

3.12.6 Term of office for Advisory Council members

There is no set length of service for Advisory Council members. The lead pastor, in consultation with the other Pastors and the Advisory Council, will determine how often new members are to be appointed. It is recommended that term limits be set in advance and be staggered so that only part of the council is replaced at any one time (a maximum term of three years is suggested).

An Advisory Council member may resign from office prior to completion of their term. A member may be removed from office by the discretionary action of the lead pastor. In either case, the process for choosing a replacement may follow the procedure above, or the replacement may be selected by the lead pastor from the final pool of nominees identified in a recent balloting process.

3.13 Finance Committees

Each chartered church and chartered fellowship group is to have a Finance Committee that implements and administers the denomination's standard financial management system for congregations set forth in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*. The work of the Finance Committee is to be overseen closely by the lead pastor (or equivalent). Membership on the Finance Committee is by appointment of the lead pastor with the advice of the Associate and Assistant Pastors and (as applicable) the Advisory Council. The congregation's Treasurer and Lead Counter are automatically members of the Finance Committee, which is also to include at least one general member. For more information about Finance Committees, refer to the *Financial Management Manual*.

3.14 Restructuring and closing congregations

There are times when, due to insufficient human and/or financial resources, congregations find it impractical or even impossible to continue operating

as they have been. In such circumstances, the Regional Director will work with the congregation's Contact Person and other leaders to explore options and take steps, typically involving restructuring or closing.

3.14.1 Restructuring. As noted in section 3.3, GCI-USA has three types of congregations. In some cases, it will be helpful for a congregation to change to a different congregational type—moving, for example, from chartered church to chartered fellowship group.

3.14.2 Closing. When restructuring is not a viable option, the Regional Director will help the congregation close. This step is taken with utmost care, recognizing that once a congregation closes, bringing it back likely will not be possible. Given the sensitivity of closing, the Regional Director will involve the congregation's members in evaluating this option. Here are the typical steps:

- The Contact Person of the congregation confers with the Regional Director before discussing closing with the membership.
- If consideration of closing proceeds, the Regional Director will ask the Contact Person to discuss various options with the Advisory Council and other leaders. Results of these meetings are to be shared with the Regional Director before proceeding.
- If warranted, the Regional Director will direct the Contact Person to meet with the congregation's members to discuss the matter, including presenting options authorized by the Regional Director. In that meeting, members will be given opportunity to express their concerns and preferences and to suggest other options. If possible, the Contact Person will give all members three weeks advance notice of this meeting. The results of these contacts are to be reported to the Regional Director before a final decision regarding closing is made by the denomination in partnership with the congregation. Discussion concerning closing will include possible transfer of members to other GCI congregations or to the GCI Home Church (US). The Contact Person of the sending congregation will assist in such transfers.
- If a congregation closes, any property (contents of bank accounts and other financial instruments included) owned by the congregation and/or the denomination are to be transferred immediately to the denomination as instructed by the Regional

Director. The denomination shall choose one or more of its other chartered congregations or ministries to receive this property. All financial records (including computer files) are to be transmitted immediately to the denomination's Financial Services where they will be placed with denominational records and retained according to the records retention and destruction policy.

It is recommended that a congregation that is closing hold a special final worship service that provides a meaningful and appropriate opportunity both to grieve the loss of the congregation and to celebrate its history. The Regional Director may be consulted for advice on how to conduct this service.

3.15 Security Guidelines

The link below is from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance with helpful protocols on security and preventing crime.

<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-articles/disasters-emergencies-and-health/violence-at-church/360-security/>

CHAPTER 4

CHILDREN & TEEN MINISTRY HEALTH and SAFETY POLICIES

Applicability

When a program or event sponsored by a congregation involves minors (children and/or teens) the relevant policies in this chapter apply. Note also that Church Administration and Development requires that any mission trips sponsored by GCI-USA congregations that involve travel outside U.S. borders must conform to the standards for such trips set forth in this manual.

Programs and events involve activities with inherent risk. While no event can perfectly ensure the health and safety of participants, event staff are expected to use reasonable care to protect participants from harm. That care is to include close adherence to the following policies.

4.1 Screening of event staff members

Because Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers serve minors, their area of ministry has special accountability requirements. All adults who work in ministries directed toward those under age 18 must undergo a criminal background check (sometimes involving fingerprinting) and be otherwise pre-qualified and screened using the *Children and Teen Ministry Volunteer Application* (at online.GCI.org under “Resources”).

All teens working in ministries directed to minors must also be pre-qualified and screened (though a criminal background check is not required) using the *Children’s Ministry Teen Volunteer Application* (available at online.GCI.org).

This application and criminal background check process is a prerequisite for all Children & Teen Ministry Leaders and staff. Additionally, all returning leaders and workers, at minimum, must be screened annually by verifying that their names do not appear on a state sex offender registry. A directory of such registries is available on the FBI website at: <http://www.nsopr.gov/>.

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities must be screened as noted above. In addition, no person may be considered for any volunteer position involving

contact with minors until he/she has been attending with Grace Communion International for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between a new member and congregational leaders allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

Applicants (of any age) with prior criminal convictions of abuse (physical or sexual) involving minors or of crimes of a sexual nature involving adults are permanently excluded from service as Children or Teen Ministry Leaders and workers.

Before an adult (including an elder/pastor) or teen begins to serve as a camp staff member in a Children & Teen Ministry sponsored program or event where the position of service involves on-going and direct contact with a young person under age 18, the staffer must be prescreened in accordance with section 4.6.1.5 (3). In addition, all staffers working in a Children & Teen Ministry program or event must acknowledge in writing (using the Event staff acknowledgement form Appendix 3 or download from - gci.org/camp/staffack) their understanding and agreement to follow the policies set forth in this chapter.

All Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers must complete MinistrySafe’s Sexual Abuse Awareness training as a part of the on-boarding process and every two years thereafter. Current Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers who have not already completed MinistrySafe’s Sexual Abuse Awareness training must do so before serving.

4.1.1 Volunteer requirements

It is important that all staffers and participants be physically able to participate in the Children & Teen Ministry event. Though physical examinations before events are not required for staff members or for participants they are strongly recommended.

4.2 Training of event staff members

A trained staff is essential for effective Children & Teen Ministry events. Staff training is a challenge due to limited time for staff training both before and

during such events. Nonetheless, staff training is essential and all staffers are to participate in whatever training is provided unless excused by the program director. Staff training will often consist of a review of the policies set forth in this manual as well as a discussion of the tools and techniques that lead to successful events. For example, what happens if someone has a seizure or an allergic reaction, or suffers from hypothermia?

Camp directors are responsible to develop these procedures together with the camp nurse, facilities managers and other responsible and accountable persons. The plan should then be reviewed by local agencies, health care providers, etc.

Additionally, all Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers must complete MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness training as a part of the onboarding process and every two years thereafter. Current Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers who have not already completed MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness training must do so before serving.

4.3 Parental Permission

Events often involve under-age (minor) children. It is essential that their involvement be pre-approved by both parents or legal guardians.

When an event involves one or more overnight stays, such pre-approval is to be confirmed and documented in writing by including in the event application or in a separate parental permission form, the explanatory text followed by a line for both parental or guardians signatures (see **Appendix 1**).

4.4 Health care protocols

When a sponsored event involves one or more overnight stays, the following health-care protocol requirements apply:

4.4.1 A qualified nurse or other appropriately licensed health care professional is to be part of the event staff. This individual is to be responsible for administering prescribed medications for any minor participants or minor staff members at the event. The need for the administration of such medications is to be noted in the event application, which must include signed parental permission (see section 4.2).

4.4.2 The event health care professional is to understand and comply with applicable state and local regulations related to the administration and/or management of medications and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases. Such regulations would include pharmacy regulations, nurse practice legislation, regulations of physicians' regulatory bodies, and regulations for ancillary providers used by the event. In addition, regulations associated with the licensing of the particular event facility may influence procedures.

4.4.3 In addition to the above requirements, each camp, mission trip or event is to have on file a written health-care policy statement setting forth protocols concerning how the event health care professional and others under their direction will:

- Administer medications
- Respond to medical emergencies
- Handle other related health-care issues including taking steps to minimize the spread of infectious diseases (including cleaning up any spillages of bodily fluids).

4.5 Public View; Two adult rule

In conducting ministry to children and teens, an individual Ministry Leader or worker—even when such Ministry leader or worker has satisfied screening and training requirements—is *never* to be alone (out of public view) with an individual minor (of either biological sex) who is not a family member. To avoid this situation, ministry activities should *always* be conducted within public view or within the presence of at least two supervising adults, each of whom have satisfied screening and training requirements.

4.6 Prohibition of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and improper discrimination

Special care must be taken so that Children & Teen Ministry participants or staff members are not subjected to sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and/or improper discrimination. These three forms of behavior will not be tolerated during any Children & Teen Ministry program or event (including travel to and from those programs or events when such travel is being supervised by a Children & Teen Ministry staff member).

These behaviors will not be tolerated between staff members, between staff members and participants, or between participants. This section defines these

three types of prohibited behaviors and sets forth policies and procedures with regard to reporting and investigating such behaviors and administering disciplinary action when warranted.

4.6.1 Sexual misconduct

4.6.1.1 Definition

Sexual misconduct as defined within the context of a Children & Teen Ministry event or program is any type of sexual contact (including, but not limited to, all illegal sexual conduct) between non-married individuals (whether perpetrated by a staff member or a participant). Examples of sexual contact include inappropriate touching, inappropriate displays of affection (such as prolonged hugging and/or kissing, sometimes referred to as “petting” or “necking”), and other forms of intimate sexual contact including oral sex and sexual intercourse of any type.

4.6.1.2 Reporting

Anyone who believes that they are the victim of sexual misconduct or otherwise are witness to an apparent act of sexual misconduct, should report the misbehavior to the pastor or the program director. If the individual experiencing or witnessing the prohibited behavior is not comfortable reporting to the pastor or the program director, the individual may report to any program staff member who then has a duty to immediately report to the pastor or program director on behalf of that individual.

When a staff member witnesses an apparent act of sexual misconduct, receives a report of alleged sexual misconduct or otherwise has a reasonable suspicion that act of sexual misconduct, that staff member must immediately report the misbehavior to the pastor or program director.

A pastor or program director receiving any report alleged sexual misconduct must immediately notify the legal department of the incident.

GCI prohibits any form of retaliation against a person who reports sexual misconduct or otherwise provides information concerning any alleged sexual misconduct.

4.6.1.3 Investigating

All reports of alleged sexual misconduct are to be investigated promptly with impartiality and as much confidentiality as possible under the circumstances. Immediately upon notification of any sexual miscon-

duct, the legal department is to be informed and consulted about how to proceed, including about the need, if any, to report the alleged conduct to authorities in accordance with applicable laws. In response to notification, the legal department in most cases will provide written instructions with respect to conducting the investigation and reporting the alleged misconduct to the authorities. In all such investigations, special care is to be taken to maintain as much confidentiality as possible; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised nor, as a practical matter, maintained in all cases due to the nature of the investigation process.

The foregoing reporting and investigation procedures are in no way intended to prevent an alleged victim, staff member, pastor, or program director from reporting an alleged incident of sexual misconduct to law enforcement, child protective services, or an abuse hotline directly. Rather, they are intended to facilitate reporting, protect alleged victims of sexual misconduct, and support those individuals who may not feel able, willing or sufficiently knowledgeable to report on their own. Therefore, any alleged victim, staff member, pastor, or program director may, without permission from GCI or its legal department, make a report directly to law enforcement, child protective services, or an abuse hotline. Unless contrary to applicable state law reporting requirements, reporting directly to legal authorities does not relieve a staff member of the duty to report to a pastor or program director or a pastor or program director of the duty to report to the legal department.

4.6.1.4 Disciplinary action

Any breaches of the policies and procedures noted in this section concerning sexual misconduct are subject to appropriate disciplinary action as determined by appropriate officials of GCI.

4.6.1.5 Avoiding sexual misconduct

To avoid sexual misconduct, the following rules are to be adhered to in all Children & Teen Ministry programs and events.

(1) Never alone. A staff member (who is not a parent or legal guardian of the minor being supervised) is NEVER to be alone (out of public view) with a minor (a person under 18) participant or staff member in the program. “Public view” means that the persons involved are never in a situation where they are not continuously being observed by other supervising adults. Being in an automobile without additional passengers is NOT in “public view.”

(2) **Supervising groups.** Ministry activities involving groups of minors should *always* be conducted within the presence of at least two supervising adults, each of whom have satisfied screening and training requirements, especially when that group will remain for more than a few minutes outside of public view. If only one adult is supervising a group of minors for more than a few minutes, it is recommended that measures be taken to keep the group in public view, or if that is not possible, to have a supervising adult frequently monitor the group through random “drop-in” checks. The goal is to minimize the risk of one adult supervisor having opportunity to abuse one or more minors in a group. The danger of this happening increases as the age of the minors in the group decreases. Great caution is in order.

(3) **Exclude sexual offenders from participation.** It is GCI policy to exclude from Children & Teen Ministry programs and events (in leadership, staff or participant roles) any person (of any age) who has:

- Been convicted of the abuse of a minor (either physical or sexual abuse) or any other civil or criminal offense that would make the individual unsuitable to be in close proximity to minors. To enforce this exclusion at the leadership and staff level, all first-time staff applicants for events that include overnight stays, are to be cleared through use of a national criminal background check. Subsequent checks are then required every year for returning, previously cleared staff members. For example, at minimum, once every year, all staff members are to be cleared by confirming that their names do not appear on the national registry of sexual offenders (check online at <https://www.nsopw.gov/en>).
- Admitted prior sexual abuse of a minor (whether prosecuted or not).
- Received a diagnosis of pedophilia, exhibitionism or voyeurism as defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA).
- Exhibited or presented risk indicators relating to inappropriate sexual motives with respect to children.

4.6.2 Sexual harassment

4.6.2.1 Definition

Sexual harassment can involve either a male or female harasser or either a male or a female victim. Moreover, the harasser and victim may be of the same or of the opposite biological sex. Sexual harassment may be between an adult and a minor or

peer-to-peer. In all such circumstances, the common denominator is that the harasser’s conduct is unwelcome by the recipient (victim) and is so frequent and severe that it creates a hostile environment which a reasonable person should not be expected to endure. A simple act of teasing, an offhand comment, or an isolated event (particularly when not sexual in nature) does not by itself necessarily rise to the level of sexual harassment.

Whenever unwelcome and frequent and/or severe, the following conduct potentially constitutes sexual harassment (the list is illustrative only and not exhaustive):

- Physical contact of an inappropriate type (that does not rise to the level of sexual misconduct)
- Sexual flirtation, touching, advances or propositions.
- Sexually demeaning, insulting, intimidating or suggestive comments about an individual’s dress or body.
- Sexually demeaning, insulting, intimidating or suggestive written, recorded, or electronically transmitted messages (including distribution of Internet pornography).

4.6.2.2 Reporting

It is GCI’s policy to inform participants that we do not permit any form of sexual harassment, whether specifically listed above or not, and that participants should report any such behavior according to the procedures outlined here.

Anyone who believes that they are a victim of sexual harassment or otherwise are witness to apparent sexual harassment should report it to the pastor or to the program director. If the individual experiencing or witnessing the prohibited behavior is not comfortable reporting to the pastor or the program director, the individual may report to any program staff member who then has a duty to immediately report to the pastor or program director on behalf of that individual. When a staff member witnesses sexual harassment or receives a report that sexual harassment has occurred, that staff member must immediately report the misbehavior to the pastor or program director. A pastor or program director receiving any report of sexual harassment must immediately notify the legal department of the incident.

GCI prohibits any form of retaliation against a person who reports sexual harassment or otherwise

provides information concerning any alleged sexual harassment.

4.6.2.3 Investigating

All reports of alleged sexual harassment will be investigated promptly with impartiality and sensitivity, and with as much confidentiality as possible under the circumstances.

Immediately upon notification of any sexual harassment, the legal department is to be informed and consulted about how to proceed, including about the need, if any, to report the alleged conduct to authorities in accordance with applicable laws. In response to notification, the legal department in most cases will provide written instructions for conducting the investigation. In all such investigations, special care is to be taken to maintain as much confidentiality as possible; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised nor, as a practical matter, maintained in all cases due to the nature of the investigation process.

4.6.2.4 Disciplinary action

Any breaches to the policies noted in this section concerning sexual harassment are subject to appropriate disciplinary action as determined by appropriate officials of GCI.

4.6.3 Improper discrimination

4.6.3.1 Definition

Improper discrimination involves words or actions that create a negative, improperly discriminatory environment or effect for the direct recipient of the discrimination and/or that create a negative, improperly discriminatory environment for onlookers. Examples of the words and actions that potentially constitute improper discrimination include (but are not limited to):

1. Racial, gender or ethnic slurs.
2. Inappropriate comments about people with a mental or physical disability.
3. Offensive references to stereotypes.

4.6.3.2 Reporting

It is GCI's policy to inform participants that we do not permit any of the forbidden discriminatory behaviors listed above and that participants should report such behavior. Anyone who believes they see or are a victim of discrimination should report it to the program director or another staff member. If any staff member receives a report of such harassment

or discrimination from a participant, the staff member must report it to the program director who will investigate the matter.

4.6.3.3 Investigating

All reports of alleged discrimination will be investigated promptly with impartiality and as much confidentiality as possible under the circumstances.

Immediately upon notification of any improper discrimination, the legal department is to be informed and consulted about how to proceed. Whether or not the circumstances indicate that further investigation is required, special care is to be taken to maintain as much confidentiality as possible; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be promised nor, as a practical matter, maintained in all cases due to the nature of the investigation process.

GCI prohibits any form of retaliation against a person who reports discrimination.

4.6.3.4 Disciplinary action

Any breaches of the policies noted in this section concerning discrimination are subject to appropriate disciplinary action as determined by appropriate officials of GCI.

4.6.4 Reporting abuse of minors

Any staff member of a GCI program or event who receives a report of alleged or observed abuse of a minor or has a reasonable suspicion that a minor has been abused or is suffering from neglect must immediately report such alleged abuse (or neglect) to the pastor, or in the absence of a pastor, to the program director. The pastor or program director must then immediately consult with the legal department for further direction. Different states have different statutes concerning reporting of abuse (and neglect) and the legal department will advise the pastor, program director, and/or staff member of required and/or recommended next steps. It is essential that all staff members be briefed concerning this policy.

The foregoing procedures are in no way intended to prevent a staff member, pastor, or program director from reporting alleged or suspected abuse or neglect law enforcement, child protective services, or an abuse hotline directly. Rather, they are intended to facilitate proper reporting, protect alleged victims of abuse or neglect, and support those individuals who may not feel able, willing or sufficiently knowledgeable

able to report on their own. Unless contrary to applicable state law reporting requirements, reporting directly to legal authorities does not relieve a staff member of the duty to report to a pastor or program director or of a pastor or program director of the duty to report to the legal department.

4.7 Substance abuse

Using, transferring, distributing, manufacturing or possessing alcohol, unauthorized drugs, intoxicants, drug paraphernalia, and illegal or inappropriate use of controlled substances or prohibited drugs, or any combination thereof, is prohibited at any Children & Teen Ministry camp or event. Controlled substances are medications prescribed by medical doctors, including narcotics, stimulants, and sedative hypnotics. Prohibited drugs include all street drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, heroin and all other illegal drugs. Use or possession of prescription drugs consistent with a physician's directions is not considered a violation of this policy.

Any staff member or participant at a Children & Teen Ministry event failing to conform to these rules will be subject to disciplinary action at the sole discretion of the program director with the review of GCI. GCI reserves the right to search and inspect staff members and participants on Children & Teen Ministry event premises, whether those premises are owned, leased and/or rented. Attendance at such an event, as either a staff member or participant, constitutes consent to such searches and inspections, foregoing any expectations of privacy to the contrary.

4.8 Firearms

Whenever firearms are present on site, they are to remain under the continuous, direct supervision of persons who are legally authorized to bear arms and are duly trained for the intended use of such firearms. This includes use of firearms in events (such as a rifle range), and the bearing of firearms by duly authorized security personnel. In the case of the latter use, firearms should be carried only by security personnel who are currently certified law enforcement officers.

4.9 Insurance

GCI has a group accident insurance policy that helps pay for medical expenses that arise from accidental injuries suffered by participants or staff members during Children & Teen Ministry events.

This coverage is secondary to family or personal insurance coverage and is subject to all of the terms

and conditions of the policy. This coverage is also limited to accident-related medical expenses with no provision for expenses related to treating illnesses and there is no coverage for general damages (i.e., pain and suffering).

With respect to insurance coverage for camp staff members, all staff applications are to include a clause that reads as follows: "I understand that the church *does not* provide personal medical or health insurance, and that it is my responsibility to provide personal insurance."

4.10 Reporting accidents/incidents

Whenever an accident or other incident occurs that results in injury to any camper, staff member or participant in a Children & Teen Ministry camp or mission trip, the nature of that event and the action taken is to be documented using the accident/incident reporting form: www.gci.org/camp/accident. Copies of these reports are to be kept in the camp's or mission organization's files for no less than seven years.

4.11 Prohibition re: 15-passenger vans

Congregations are prohibited from transporting members, affiliates and guests on church-sponsored trips in 15-passenger van models produced prior to **2018**. Likewise, 15-passenger van models produced prior to **2018** may not be used for transportation in connection with Children & Teen Ministry events. This prohibition includes vans that have been made 12-passenger vans by removing the back seat. Usage may be permitted for models produced in 2018 and after if the driver has a commercial license or has undergone a safe driving course and follows GCI's insurance carrier's safety requirements. Please contact humanresources@gci.org for more information.

4.12 Guests at events

Though guests benefit from visiting Children & Teen Ministry events, they can distract staff and participants. It is therefore the policy at Children & Teen Ministry events to limit guests. All guests must register upon arrival and staffers are to limit contact with guests to times when the staffer is not on active duty. Exceptions must be cleared beforehand by the program director.

4.13 Baptizing minors at children & teen ministry events

At the program director's discretion, a baptism service may be provided at events (such as camps). If

provided, the event program director is to see that all baptisms conform to the following requirements:

(1) All those to be baptized at the event are to receive adequate pre-baptism counseling, which includes a clear presentation of the gospel (including explaining that salvation is a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Christ, not on the basis of personal merit or works of any kind). The counseling is also to include a discussion concerning the meaning of baptism (a joyful, public response to the person's growing awareness of the Father's love and salvation revealed in Jesus Christ), along with a) the importance of active participation in a local church and b) the appropriateness and advantages of waiting to be baptized in the presence of that local church. If the candidate is not already connected to the local church, they should be counseled concerning this issue and assisted in getting connected.

(2) If a minor (a person under age 18) is to be baptized at the event, the following procedure is to be followed in all cases:

- Obtain *pre-approval* for the baptism from the candidate's parent or legal guardian. This pre-approval may be obtained verbally or (preferably) in writing (including email). The person receiving verbal approval must make a written summary of the conversation noting the date, time, names of the parties to the conversation, and content of the conversation. This summary is to be kept on file with other records.
- If the baptism candidate is under age 12, at least one parent or legal guardian **MUST** be present at the baptism ceremony whether or not the parent would give permission for the baptism in their absence. This requirement is to help avoid accusations of undue influence in the life of a pre-adolescent child.

(3) In the case of all candidates (of any age), the chaplain is to contact the candidate's pastor (or other local church staff member) to discuss the following issues:

- The appropriateness of the baptism. Individuals are not to be baptized at the event if their pastor (or other church staff member) feels it would not be appropriate.
- Participation by the pastor or staff member in the baptism at the event (they should be made to feel welcome to attend and participate).

- The content of the pre-baptism counseling and a recommendation that this counseling continue back home in order to take the newly baptized person through a membership class, basic discipleship training, etc. The reason for this is to help facilitate the transition of the newly baptized person into fuller participation in the local church where they will attend.
 - Suggest that there be a celebration in the home congregation of the person baptized following the event. The purpose of this celebration is to publicly announce/celebrate the baptism and to encourage acceptance of the newly baptized person into full membership within the local church. Such celebrations could include presenting the person before the congregation, a time of prayer for that person, a recounting by that person of their faith journey, etc.
- (4) A certificate of baptism is to be given by the chaplain to all who are baptized at the event.

CHAPTER 5

RECORD RETENTION POLICY

Throughout the CAD manual various records are required in matters pertaining to financial records, staff applications, background checks, camp incident reports and the like. Here are requirements for the retention of these records:

- Donation records (envelope tabs, donation logs, deposit slips and donation reports) are to be bundled by month and kept for seven years and then shredded.
- Disbursement records (purchase orders, receipts, etc.) are to be kept for seven years and then shredded.
- Bank records (cancelled checks, bank statements and reconciliation reports) are to be kept for seven years and then shredded.
- Monthly and quarterly reports are to be kept for seven years and then shredded.
- Records relating to the acquisition and disposition of property (real and personal, including investments) are to be kept for seven years after the disposition of the property and then shredded.
- Staff and camper applications are to be kept for seven years and then shredded.
- The following are to be kept permanently: annual statement of financial position, background checks, camp incident reports involving serious injury or alleging abuse. Copies of these records should be kept by the camp in perpetuity, stored in a confidential file and not shared with others beyond those with an immediate “need to know.”

If a camp closes, these records are to be sent to GCI’s Legal Department at the denomination’s Home Office for storage-destruction per GCI’s corporate record retention policy.

CHAPTER 6

DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP

As an international Christian denomination, Grace Communion International is diverse, yet united in pursuing the mission, vision and objectives outlined in this chapter.

GCI MISSION:

Living and sharing the gospel

We seek to fulfill the Great Commission by living and sharing the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ.

GCI VISION:

Healthy Church

We seek to be a fellowship of *Christ-centered, missional churches* that faithfully and creatively engage in what Jesus is doing in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Father's mission to the world.

GCI OBJECTIVES:

At the denominational level, GCI advances this mission and vision by pursuing five objectives:

- 1) Multiplying healthy, Christ-centered, missional congregations where God is worshipped, and people are nurtured and helped to mature as followers of Jesus Christ.
- 2) Providing sound biblical teaching through congregations, media and personal outreach in relevant, meaningful forms for people of diverse backgrounds and ages.
- 3) Expressing the love of God to all through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- 4) Equipping people for Christian service so that the gospel can be known, understood, and experienced.
- 5) Sharing in the work of the gospel with the broader Christian community, acknowledging that we can learn from one another, and that Christ's love goes beyond denominational boundaries.

6.1 GCI denominational leadership

In pursuit of the aforementioned mission, vision and objectives, and in accordance with its governance system, GCI operates using the Elder-led denominational leadership structure outlined in the rest of this chapter.

The GCI Board of Directors is the denomination's highest governing authority. It is charged with overseeing the international and domestic (U.S.) organization of the church. Board members serve four-year (staggered) terms. They must remain GCI Elders in good standing throughout their time in office.

The Board has a standing nominating committee that is tasked to provide a list of possible candidates to the general Board when it is time to add a new member. The candidates are reviewed, and final candidates are interviewed by the Board Chair and finally voted on by the Board to become new members.

Led by the Board Chair, with assistance from the Board Vice Chair, GCI's Board makes essential ecclesiastical and fiduciary (fiscal) decisions on behalf of the denomination.

The Board selects and appoints the Board Chair and the Board members and approves the Board Chair's appointment of the Board Vice Chair. The Board also establishes the denomination's doctrinal direction by appointing (as needed) a Doctrinal Committee that is led by the Board Chair.

The Board selects, appoints and supervises the denomination's President and approves the President's appointment of the denomination's Vice President and Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer.

The GCI President appoints and oversees a team of administrative leaders and support staff that aspires to operate with integrity, honesty and faithfulness to the Word of God, with a focus on providing GCI congregations around the world with the following key services:

- Help in participating with Jesus Christ in fulfilling the mission of God to the world.
- A clear and compelling denominational identity.
- Doctrinal and theological integrity.

- Effective biblical instructional materials, church news and information.
- Maintenance of GCI's official history.
- Preparation, training, selection, continuing education and supervision of competent, Christ-centered, Spirit-led Pastors.
- Skilled administrative, accounting, human resources, insurance and legal services in support of congregations.
- Church administration and church development functions to ordain Elders and recruit, train and supervise those who are serving as lead pastors, Church Planters and Church Facilitators; and to support other Pastors, Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders; advance youth and children's ministry; and advance church planting (see 3.2).
- The CFO/Treasurer's office that superintends a system within congregations and the denomination to account for and receipt donations in compliance with all federal and state regulations regarding donations, church expenses and disbursements of funds. This system also provides accounting services for all pastoral salaries and benefits and accounting and legal services for denominational offices.
- Administrative support for denominationally sponsored conferences.
- The GCI.org denominational website and related websites.
- Maintenance of the denomination's Home Office and other church-owned facilities and operations.
- Maintenance of membership in appropriate Christian organizations and partnership with other denominations in denomination-level mission-directed initiatives.

6.2 Church administration and church development teams

In support of its congregations and ministers, the GCI Home Office provides church administration and church development services through two teams.

6.2.1 Church administration team

- **Church operations coordinator.** This individual reports to the GCI President and coordinates all operations related to GCI's congregations and provides services related to scheduling, meeting planning, budgeting, accounting, printing, resource distribution and record-keeping. This person can be reached at 980-495-3976 and by email at home.office@gci.org.
- **Superintendents.** These individuals oversee GCI operations within a global area, which typically includes one or more nations. The Superintendents report to the GCI President.
- **Regional Directors.** These individuals provide support, resourcing and supervision to congregations within their region. Regional Directors report to their Superintendent.

6.2.2 Church development team (in the U.S.)

This team consists of three component ministries, each led by a National Coordinator or a point person who manages the service. The Development Team members report to the GCI President in the U.S. (or to a Superintendent in other areas).

- **Church Multiplication Ministries (CMM).** This ministry provides equipping and support for birthing new churches and for re-launching established ones. The Regional Directors are the point of contact.
- **Ministry coaching.** This ministry supports Pastors and Church Planters by training, certifying and deploying Ministry Coaches. (<https://resources.gci.org/coaching>)
- **GCI Ministry Intern and Pastoral Resident Program.** This ministry interns young adults in accord with GCI's leader development vision for training Pastors, Church Planters and other ministers of the gospel. (<https://resources.gci.org/intern-program>)

CHAPTER 7

GRIEVANCE, DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS PROCESSES

This chapter sets forth values and procedures related to dealing with grievances, extending church discipline to offenders, and hearing appeals regarding disciplinary actions. This section does not limit in any way the “at will” status of all GCI employees as outlined in this manual in the section titled “*Preface: Governance Stipulations*”

7.1 Core values

By their very nature, grievance, discipline and appeals processes involve conflict. Because of the challenges that conflict brings, and to promote the health and unity of the church and its members, it is vital that the administration of the processes outlined in this chapter be grounded in the following biblically-based core values:

Love

Love for God and for people motivates the church to invite Jesus to correct his body, the church (Rev. 3:19). The church must act out of the base of Jesus’ love, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as it administers grievance, discipline and appeals processes. Love causes the church to seek to protect the weak and innocent even as it seeks, in a spirit of love, to hear grievances against the accused and then extend appropriate discipline to those who are shown to be offenders.

Grace

The administration of such processes must also be motivated by God’s grace—his positive regard, lavish care and generous provision for those who, by faith, place their trust in Christ (Eph. 2:8-10). Through God’s Spirit of grace, all people, including offenders, are treated with dignity and respect despite their lack of personal merit.

Healing

Such processes must be administered in ways that advance restoration and healing (Gal. 6:1) rather than to punish and exact revenge (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). When discipline is administered with the intent of restoration and healing, harm (2 Cor. 7:8-13; 1 Cor. 5:5), death (James 5:19-20) and condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32) are avoided for those disciplined,

even while others are protected from an offender’s sinful acts.

Holiness

Because the church is called to participate in the holy, triune relating of the Father, Son and Spirit (Heb. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:7), the administration of such processes must seek to enhance and promote the personal morality and ethical conduct of believers who are being sanctified through the indwelling Word (Eph. 5:25-27). If the church abdicates its responsibility to discipline, its testimony in the world will be hindered, particularly with regard to its influence for good.

Unity

The administration of such processes must be for the advancement of unity in the church. Unity is enhanced when major divisions in belief, practice and attitude are reconciled (Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Titus 3:10; Phil. 4:2).

Confidentiality

In administering such processes, it is important for the privacy, dignity and protection of the parties involved that appropriate confidentiality be maintained (1 Pet. 4:8; Prov. 17:9). Though, at times, circumstances are such that absolute confidentiality is not possible (and thus cannot be guaranteed), the processes outlined in this chapter provide for the maintenance of confidentiality in ways that are biblically appropriate without promoting an inappropriate atmosphere of secrecy.

7.2 Addressing offenses: general process

In Christian community, offenses inevitably arise. Whatever the precise nature of such offenses, it is essential that they be addressed in accordance with the biblically appropriate procedures set forth in this chapter. Through these procedures, grounded in the aforementioned values, conflict is minimized, the concerns of the offended are given a fair hearing, the innocent are protected, and appropriate action is taken to hold offenders accountable and to seek their

restoration. Because Christ’s love in a believer’s heart “covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8), most offenses are quickly forgiven and forgotten with no need for a formalized grievance procedure. However, there are times when *significant* grievances arise that divide members, risk the well-being of the innocent, and/or threaten the effectiveness of the church in its mission. In such instances, it may be appropriate, or even mandatory, for members and/or church leaders to initiate the formal grievance process outlined in this section. Note, however, that this process must not be used for *insignificant* (trivial) offenses or to pursue a spirit of unforgiveness, revenge or intolerance. Rather, it is given to provide a measured, orderly way to seek *mediation* in pursuit of *reconciliation* concerning *significant grievances* that arise from significant offenses.

This mediation-reconciliation process is informed by the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew 18 and in other scriptures that address grievances and administering discipline within the body of Christ. Note that the process as outlined applies most directly to peers of generally equal standing and/or authority within the church. *In situations involving those of unequal standing and/or authority (such as between members and Pastors, children and adults, etc.), the process is adjusted accordingly.* Note also that a congregation itself (usually through the lead pastor) may initiate the process when circumstances warrant.

As individuals participate in the mediation-reconciliation process, it is essential that all submit prayerfully to the leadership of our High Priest and Lord, Jesus Christ. All participants are urged to approach the process with Jesus’ love, compassion and grace and with a willingness to be mutually accountable, seeking together to find reconciliation that strengthens the lives of all concerned.

7.3 Handling grievances: formal mediation-reconciliation process

The need to initiate the following formal mediation-reconciliation process begins with a significant grievance arising from an alleged significant offense. “Significant” is, of course, a subjective term—what one views as “insignificant” may be quite “significant” to another. This process (with the following five sequential steps), is reserved for ad-

dressing *significant* grievances that arise from allegations of *significant* offenses, not insignificant, minor ones.

7.3.1 Step 1: private counsel (Matthew 18:15)

In approaching this step in the mediation-reconciliation process, Scripture places the burden for seeking reconciliation on all parties related to a grievance. For example, offenders are urged to contact those they believe they have offended to seek forgiveness and reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24). At times, however, offenders may be unaware of the offense, or may simply be unwilling to initiate contact with the offended party. In such situations, it may be appropriate (or even mandatory) for the offended party to contact the (alleged) offender for private counsel.

The offended party will usually initiate the formal grievance process through one-on-one contact with the alleged offender (assuming it is safe and otherwise appropriate to make contact in this way—meeting in a public place is recommended). Such contact is for the purpose of gentle, yet direct confrontation in humility (Matt. 18:4) while maintaining confidentiality. The purpose for this contact is to seek reconciliation that involves appropriate accountability and forgiveness. If the alleged offender refuses to meet or if the outcome of this meeting is not satisfactory to the aggrieved party, step two may be pursued.

7.3.2 Step 2: mediation (Matt. 18:16)

The next step is for the aggrieved party to arrange for another confidential meeting with the alleged offender—this time taking along one or two others to assist. The reason for these additional persons is not to “gang up” on the accused but to offer a broader perspective, wise counsel and appropriate witnesses. The purpose of this second meeting is to gain agreement on the nature of the offense and to agree upon a course of action to advance appropriate accountability, forgiveness and reconciliation. If the alleged offender is unresponsive, step three may be initiated.

7.3.3 Step 3: arbitration and disciplinary action (Matt. 18:17a)

In this step, the aggrieved party officially notifies the church of the offense by contacting the alleged offender’s ecclesiastical supervisor (their lead pastor or equivalent, or, when the alleged offender is the lead pastor, their Regional Director). That supervisor will then discuss the matter with the alleged

offender and others (as appropriate) to help find an appropriate resolution.

If needed, and otherwise appropriate, the supervisor will render a judgment on behalf of the church. This judgment may include a determination concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the policies set forth in this chapter. If the alleged offender, now determined to be an offender by the church, is unresponsive, step four may be initiated at the discretion of the supervisor (note that step four may be part of the disciplinary action called for in step three).

7.3.4 Step 4: publication (Matt. 18:17b)

In this step, and in accordance with appropriate confidentiality concerns for the aggrieved party and the offender, members of the church may be notified of the general nature of the offense and of the disciplinary action to be administered to the offender. Before any such publication, the ecclesiastical supervisor is to consult with their supervisor and with the denomination's legal department. The breadth of any publication will be limited to the circle of knowledge and influence of the offender within the church.

If the offender refuses to submit to the mandated discipline, the offender's membership may be suspended or terminated (including the suspension or termination of any leadership offices as applicable). If the offender successfully completes the discipline (including a mandated plan for restoration), step five will be initiated.

7.3.5 Step 5: restoration (Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5)

When the offender has fulfilled any mandates for restitution and/or rehabilitation, the offender will be restored. If the offender's discipline was previously announced (in step 4), the restoration will be announced to as wide an audience as the announcement of the offense. Full involvement of the offender in certain duties within the church may be withheld temporarily or permanently depending on the nature of the offense. Restoration does not always imply a return to teaching or other public ministry responsibilities, including leadership.

7.4 Specific processes for arbitration and disciplinary action

In the course of pursuing the general grievance process within a GCI congregation, the church may become involved at various points. In some cases, the church (usually through the lead pastor) files the initial grievance. In other cases, the church first becomes involved at step three by providing arbitration and, if necessary, administering church discipline. The church's participation in the grievance process follows one of two procedural systems: one for members/affiliates (including leaders who are not lead pastors) and one for lead pastors. The reason for two systems is that lead pastors are supervised by and accountable to their Regional Director and the Home Office, while other members (including those serving as leaders within congregations) and affiliates are accountable to their lead pastor (or equivalent). Note also that there are special stipulations in the process when the member who is an alleged offender is an Elder.

7.4.1 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offender is a member or affiliate

When the alleged offender is a member or an affiliate (including leaders, with the exception of lead pastors) and the grievance process reaches the point when the church becomes involved, the official representing the church as arbiter will be the lead pastor (or equivalent) or an appropriately qualified individual designated by the lead pastor. The arbiter will seek to understand the facts in the situation and then determine if an appropriate process, in accordance with the guidelines of Matt. 18, has been followed up to that point. If appropriate, the arbiter may instruct the parties to return to an earlier step in the process.

Following a finding of facts, the arbiter will seek to help the parties find a resolution of the grievance that is satisfactory to all, with the reconciliation of relationship between the parties being the desired goal. Particular concern will be shown for the protection of the innocent and weak. If circumstances warrant, the arbiter will call for disciplinary action. Such action must be approved by the lead pastor and may involve one or more of the following measures involving the offender:

1. Further counseling
2. Suspension from membership or affiliation
3. Disassociation from membership or affiliation
4. Probation or revocation of official church titles (when the title being suspended or revoked is

that of Elder, the suspension or revocation must be approved by the Superintendent).

As a disciplinary action, disassociation from membership or affiliation is used only in limited and significant situations. One such situation is a compelling need to protect the church from harm (including spiritual harm caused by divisive behavior). Another such situation is the need to emphasize to the offending member or affiliate the importance of taking immediate, significant remedial action. Disassociation goes into effect when the lead pastor confirms it, with or without notification and prior to the action being recorded in the member records. The lead pastor will, however, make a reasonable effort to personally notify the person being disassociated (in person, by telephone or in writing). This notification is to include informing the offender of the opportunity to appeal the disciplinary action as set forth in the appeals process outlined in this chapter.

Member disassociations are recorded by the congregation where the action was initiated. Such recording is done by emailing notification of the action to the Home Office at home.office@gci.org. The Home Office reviews all member disassociations.

7.4.2 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offender is a lead pastor

When the alleged offender is a lead pastor (or equivalent), the need for arbitration involving the church usually arises earlier in the grievance process than when the parties are peers of generally equal standing/authority. Some adults and most minors are understandably uncomfortable taking complaints concerning the actions of their Pastor to that Pastor. In such situations, the member or affiliate may contact another leader in the congregation or their Regional Director to provide arbitration, even before reaching step three in the process.

Though they are supervised by and accountable to the lead pastor, other leaders in a congregation (such as Elders, Advisory Council members, Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders) are also accountable to the congregation and to the denomination to take appropriate action when there is clear evidence of behavior by the lead pastor that constitutes a significant offense (a breach of a lead pastor's duties and/or ethical behavior as defined in this manual).

When such offenses are observed, or credible reports of such offenses are received, the other leaders are to follow the grievance procedures outlined in this chapter.

When the Regional Director learns of a grievance that alleges an offense by a lead pastor (or equivalent), the Regional Director will seek first to objectively establish the facts concerning the matter. The Regional Director may ask the involved parties to submit their account of the circumstances in writing. He may also ask them to provide (or he himself may seek out) the testimony of additional parties in accordance with 1 Tim. 5:19-21.

If, during this fact-finding stage it is determined that the person lodging the complaint has not communicated directly with the Pastor, they may be asked to do so subject to the concerns about un-equal standing/authority discussed earlier. The goal will be to encourage resolution as early as possible in the process while respecting the sensitivities of the relationship between lead pastors and their congregants and the need to protect the weak.

If it is inappropriate to try to do so, or if the parties are unable to meet and resolve the issue between them, the Regional Director will call for a meeting of the concerned parties (typically by telephone or video conference). In some instances, the Regional Director may have another church official take their place in this meeting. During the meeting, the Regional Director will seek to help the parties understand one another's viewpoints in order to, if possible, reach agreement concerning resolution of the grievance.

When deemed necessary by the Regional Director (a decision always reviewed with the Superintendent), the lead pastor will be disciplined using one or more of the following actions:

7.4.2.1 Corrective visit, letter or phone call. A visit, letter or phone call to the lead pastor is normally sufficient to address most infractions. A visit or phone call will normally be followed with an e-mail message to provide a written record.

7.4.2.2 Suspension. A lead pastor may be suspended from all pastoral duties when there is evidence of dereliction of duty that, in the judgment of the Regional Director, is cause to remove the Pastor from active duty while the matter is investigated.

Such suspension is usually short term, with a determination made fairly quickly to reinstate the Pastor, place the Pastor on probation, or terminate the Pastor.

7.4.2.3 Probation. A Pastor may receive probation rather than termination when the nature of the offense warrants it and there is also reason to believe that the Pastor can be rehabilitated in a reasonably short period of time. Probation serves the purpose of alerting the lead pastor that they are not meeting performance responsibilities and provides them with a set time frame within which they may demonstrate satisfactory improvement.

When a Pastor is put on probation, the Regional Director will confer with them to discuss the reasons for and the nature of the probation, including requirements for improvement during the probation period. This discussion will be handled in a loving and respectful way, seeking to help the Pastor meet appropriate responsibilities for their performance as Pastor.

As part of this discussion, it will be determined if the Pastor's congregation(s) should be notified about the Pastor's probation. Though notification is often not necessary, depending on the nature of the offense(s), it may be. If notification is deemed (by the Regional Director in consultation with the Superintendent) to be necessary, it will be made by the Regional Director or by his designee in a way that respects the privacy of the involved parties (including the Pastor) while appropriately informing the congregation concerning the terms of the probation.

Probation is typically for a period of three months—a duration usually long enough to provide adequate time for the Pastor to demonstrate improvement in accordance with a list of requirements that will be given to the Pastor by the Regional Director at the beginning of the probation period.

During probation, the Pastor is expected to seek input from the Regional Director regarding improving their job performance. The Regional Director or Pastor may request that another Pastor in a neighboring Pastorate be assigned to assist. At the conclusion of the probation period, one of three actions will be taken:

1) **Cancellation of probation.** If the Pastor has met requirements, probation will end.

2) **Continuation of probation.** If the Pastor has not met requirements, but has shown substantial progress, probation may be extended—up to a maximum total probationary period of six months.

3) **Termination of duties.** If the Pastor has not shown substantial progress in meeting the requirements, their responsibilities as lead pastor will be terminated.

7.4.2.4 Termination. A Pastor may be terminated from pastoral duties if, in the judgment of the Regional Director as confirmed by the Superintendent, a significant dereliction of duty and/or breach of ministerial ethics makes it inappropriate for the individual to serve as a lead pastor.

7.4.3 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offending party is a congregation

GCI congregations are officially established by action of the denomination in accordance with the policies established in this manual. Should violations of these policies occur, the Regional Director will contact the offending congregation's Contact Person seeking resolution of the problem. Often such matters are remedied through informal communication at this level. If, however, the violations continue, the Regional Director, at his discretion, may call for a meeting of the Contact Person and (if appropriate) the congregation's Advisory Council and/or Leadership Team to discuss the alleged violations. If this meeting does not lead to a cessation of violations, the Regional Director will send formal notification via letter to the Contact Person, specifying a date by which the congregation must cease violations. On that date, the Regional Director will make an ecclesiastical determination concerning the congregation's progress in ceasing the violations. If progress is deemed unsatisfactory, its church charter may be suspended or revoked. When revoked, the congregation ceases to be a GCI congregation and immediately must surrender and return (or vacate) any property owned by the denomination.

7.5 Specific processes for appealing church discipline

GCI members, affiliate members, lead pastors and chartered congregations have access to formal pro-

cesses by which they may appeal ecclesiastical rulings concerning church discipline. This right of appeal is granted both to those being disciplined and to the aggrieved (the offended party in a formal grievance procedure).

7.5.1 Process for members or affiliate members appealing church discipline

If a member or an affiliate member wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their lead pastor, they may ask their Regional Director to review the matter. Through informal discussions (often by telephone), the Regional Director will seek to help the appellant find a resolution to their concerns.

If the matter cannot be resolved this way, the Regional Director will call for a meeting (typically by telephone or video conference) where the Regional Director will seek to help the appellant and their lead pastor (or equivalent) find a mutually acceptable resolution. Should one not be found this way, the Regional Director will make a final ruling on the matter and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

7.5.2 Process for lead pastors appealing church discipline

If a lead pastor wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their Regional Director, they may ask the Superintendent to review the matter. The Superintendent will then make a final ruling and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

7.5.3 Process for congregations appealing church discipline

If a congregation wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their Regional Director, its lead pastor (or equivalent) or a member of the Advisory Council may ask the Superintendent to review the matter. The Superintendent will then make a final ruling and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

CHAPTER 8

LEGAL

8.1 Titling property

Whenever a congregation wishes to initiate the purchase of real property (such as land or a church building) or a motor vehicle, the congregation should contact the legal department to review denominational policies and procedures related both to evaluating the proposed purchase and then titling the property if it is to be purchased.

Regarding titling, two questions must be addressed: in whose name will the title be held, and how? Standard policies and procedures related to these questions are noted in the following sections.

Note that this section pertains to procedures for owning titled property. Congregations that purchase non-titled property (such as video projectors, sound equipment, furniture, and the like) automatically maintain ownership of that property as an “unincorporated association.” No special arrangements are needed in such cases, other than, perhaps to arrange for insurance coverage for such property (the denomination’s general liability insurance which covers congregations does not protect from loss or damage to locally owned titled or non-titled property).

8.1.1 Titling land and buildings. In the case of the purchase of land or a church building, the congregation making the purchase will hold the title. For this to occur, the congregation will be assisted by the denomination in incorporating as a congregation within the state in which the property is located. Note that local incorporation is reserved for this limited purpose only, GCI-USA congregations do not incorporate locally otherwise.

When a congregation wishes to purchase land or a building, that congregation contacts the regional director for assistance in making a preliminary evaluation (see 9.2). If a mutual decision is made

to proceed further, the denomination’s legal department will be brought in to assist the congregation in incorporating. This assistance will include providing denominationally approved sample articles of incorporation and bylaws, filling out and filing of appropriate forms, informing the denomination’s insurer of necessary details, obtaining an EIN, coming under the denomination’s federal tax exemption and requesting state tax exemption and setting up their Board of Directors and Minutes.

Regarding incorporating a congregation locally, a few cautions are in order. A corporation is like a marriage – easy to get into but demanding of continuous hard work if it is to succeed. Setting up the corporation, while simple, is only the beginning. Running the corporation in a legally appropriate manner takes ongoing work and commitment and the consequences of inattention are significant: Failure to operate the corporation properly will result in the loss of certain protections normally afforded to corporations (and the members who are the corporation’s directors) and worse, could result in increased liability over that which might occur if there were no corporation in the first place.

Policy and practical guidelines for the appropriate use and operation of a locally incorporated entity are outlined in the *GCI-USA Church Administration Manual*. Every incorporated local congregation is required to fully acquaint themselves with this information and abide by both church policies and applicable laws.

8.1.2 Titling motor vehicles. In the case of the purchase of a motor vehicle, the congregation making the purchase will hold title. For this to occur, the congregation making the purchase has two options:

(1) If a congregation is already incorporated (for the purpose of holding title to land and/or a building), it makes sense for that congregation to hold

title to the motor vehicle in the name of the existing local corporation.

(2) If a congregation is not already incorporated, it is easier and thus more appropriate to form a trusteeship, which can hold title to the vehicle. With a trusteeship, a few members serve as the trustees and the more cumbersome demands of local incorporation are avoided. Forms and other information regarding setting up trusteeships to hold title to motor vehicles may be obtained from the denomination's legal department.

If a congregation purchases a motor vehicle, they should contact the denomination's legal office for a set of guidelines concerning the operation of that vehicle. It is the responsibility of the local congregation to obtain liability and any other insurance on the vehicle. GCI is to be named as a beneficiary on such insurance policies.

8.2 Contracts

GCI-USA (the 'Parent Church') delegates to each local congregation the authority to commit that congregation's financial resources by the signing of contracts made in the congregation's name. Examples of such contracts include the lease of a meeting hall, the retention of contracted services, or the purchase of personal property. Note that the signing of contracts locally does not obligate the Parent Church on the contract unless the Parent Church agrees to this obligation in a letter from the Parent Church's board of directors, signed by the board's secretary.

The authority to sign such contracts on behalf of the congregation is held by only the designated lead pastor and treasurer who sign contracts in accordance with the following examples:

New Life Fellowship
By: John Doe
As: Lead pastor and Attorney-in-Fact

New Life Fellowship
By: Jane Smith
As: Treasurer and Attorney-in-Fact

Such duly authorized signatures bind the congregation to perform according to the terms of the contract. Should the congregation be asked

for proof of authority to sign a contract, the pastor or treasurer may contact the denomination's legal department for assistance.

Members of the congregation should be notified of the policy that only the lead pastor and treasurer are to sign contracts on behalf of the congregation. This notification is best made in writing through the church bulletin, newsletter, or posted on the bulletin board. Such notification helps prevent well meaning, but unauthorized church members from signing contracts and thus incurring liabilities to themselves or others, which they in fact do not intend nor wish to shoulder.

Authorization to sign contracts locally is given only when the following conditions are met in advance of signing:

1. The amount of any expenditure from the congregation's funds established in the contract is within that congregation's annual budget that has been approved in accordance with proper procedure (see Chapter 2).
2. If the contract is for a lease or renewal of a lease the contract must be reviewed by the denominations' legal department.
3. If the contract is for the purchase of goods or services for an amount exceeding \$5,000.000, the contract must be reviewed by the denomination's legal department, prior to the signing.
4. If the contract involves the purchase of real property (such as a building or land), the congregation must incorporate locally to hold title before any documents of any kind related to that purchase are signed (refer to 9.3.1.1).
5. If the contract involves the purchase of a vehicle, the congregation must establish a local trusteeship to hold title before any documents of any kind related to that purchase are signed (refer to 9.3.1.2).
6. If a contract with a contractor involves an amount in excess of \$500, it must be confirmed that the contractor is adequately licensed, insured, etc. The contractor can usually provide proof in the form of certificates or other licenses or documents. If there are questions about the contractor's general reputation, a check with the local *Better Business Bureau* may be helpful.

8.3 Confidentiality of records

It is imperative that donor records be kept confidential. Some information, like addresses and phone numbers, may be published if members give permission, but member donation records, credit card numbers, donation pledges, etc. are to be kept private and made available only to those with a need to know.

In most congregations this policy limits access to individual member donation records to only the treasurer and the lead pastor.

8.4 Avoiding private inurement and benefit

Congregations are exempt from paying income tax and have other tax benefits only so long as they strictly comply with the tax laws including those pertaining to laws forbidding private inurement and private benefit. IRS regulations state that, "A section 501(c)(3) organization must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, such as the creator or the creator's family, shareholders of the organization, other designated individuals, or persons controlled directly or indirectly by such private interests. No part of the net earnings of a section 501(c)(3) organization may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. A private shareholder or individual is a person having a personal and private interest in the activities of the organization."

1) Private inurement occurs when a congregation's monies directly, or even indirectly, flow to a member, especially one in a leadership position, when those monies are given for purposes other than paying the reasonable value of services rendered or for reimbursement of legitimate business expenses. An example of private inurement would be the congregation paying for a trip for the treasurer when the trip had no legitimate business purpose.

2) Private benefit is similar to private inurement, except it can involve congregational monies flowing directly or indirectly to the benefit of a private party or entity not affiliated with the congregation. An example of private benefit would

be the congregation making a donation to a school with which the congregation identifies philosophically, but which is in fact owned and operated as a for-profit entity for the owners as some sort of business, not as a non-profit entity.

The penalties for breaking the private inurement and benefit rules can be severe, up to and including the loss of tax-exempt status, so it is vital that they are not contravened. Furthermore, the rules are complicated, technical, and not always obvious or intuitive. Contact the legal department with any questions concerning whether the use of congregational funds might constitute private inurement or private benefit.

8.5 Gifts to leaders

Given the concerns about the related issues of undue influence, private inurement and private benefit, great care needs to be taken with regard to gifts given by the congregation or by members of the congregation to church leaders including the lead pastor, other elders and any denominational leaders. It is certainly appropriate that a small gift be given from time to time to leaders as an expression of thanks. Such gifts are not to be accepted by leaders unless they conform to the following guidelines:

1. A gift should not be accepted if it would affect a leader's judgment or hurt the congregation or an individual. Leaders must be careful that all their dealings with congregants are in the best interest of the congregation and of the individual.
2. Any one gift should be small and relatively inexpensive. A maximum value of up to \$1000 on any one occasion is suggested. (When more than \$200 is expended, the proposed expenditure should be reviewed in advance by the advisory council).
3. Nearly all gifts are subject to taxation by the IRS and must be reported. This includes cash, gift cards and some other gifts. Contact the GCI Treasurer's Office with questions.
4. A leader may be reimbursed for travel and other expenses related to church business. Such reimbursements are to be made in accordance with the stipulations set forth in this manual.
5. An elder may occasionally receive an honorarium in the form of cash for performing a wedding

or funeral. Such honoraria may be accepted and retained by the elder for his personal use and must be declared on his income tax forms for that year.

6. An employed or bivocational (volunteer) pastor may occasionally be given a bonus (if employed) or an honorarium (if bivocational) by the congregation as a gift to say ‘thank you’ for serving the congregation. See 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2

Note that an elder must be especially careful at all times not to encourage gifts to themselves. Even an innocent remark about some temporary financial crunch or concerning something he enjoys, could be construed as a subtle hint that a member or group of members should extend help. Establishing a clear track record of not accepting inappropriate gifts will reduce the likelihood of such conclusions on the part of members.

8.6 Loans to members and ministers

To avoid administrative difficulties, the denomination *strongly* discourages congregations from loaning money to members for any reason and *prohibits* the loaning of money to a pastor and/or his/her spouse.

8.7 Operating day care centers

In some rare instances, a congregation may wish to operate a day care or childcare facility. Great caution and special procedures are required in such ventures and congregations contemplating doing so are required to consult with the legal department before proceeding.

APPENDIX A

MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. REGIONAL DIRECTORS AND MINISTRY COORDINATORS

A.1 U.S. Regional Directors

GCI's Regional Directors within the United States oversee the lead pastors of GCI's U.S. congregations within geographic regions. Regional Directors report directly to the North America Superintendent and work collaboratively with the National Coordinators of GCI's Church Development Ministries. In their oversight work, Regional Directors provide relational support and supervision extended via telephone, video conferences, email coaching and occasional visits, retreats, and conferences.

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and Elders, including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C) and Elder confidentiality issues, all Regional Directors are to meet the following ministry requirements:

1. Model a personal relationship with Jesus to encourage the ongoing spiritual formation of the Pastors.
2. Model a personal love for the lost and commitment to relational evangelism.
3. Establish relationships characterized by love and grace and encourage Pastors to lead their congregations in the same way.
4. Model the Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
5. Offer encouragement and appropriate correction when Pastor behavior/teaching is not expressive of a Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
6. Encourage Pastors and other teachers to understand and teach GCI doctrines and theology summarized in the Statement of Beliefs and in related articles posted at <https://www.gci.org/articles/>.
7. Encourage Pastors and other preachers and teachers to give transformational expository sermons and Bible studies.
8. Focus on disciple-making in accordance with the GCI ministry model including team-based
9. leadership, collaborative decision-making and the ministry of all believers.
10. Model accountability and teach Pastors to be accountable to those who supervise them and to those who minister with them.
11. Make recommendations to the Home Office concerning ordinations, pastoral hiring and the restructuring, renewing and disbanding of congregations.
12. Encourage Pastors to develop Avenue Champions, Ministry Leaders and Elders and to multiply disciple-making ministries and contribute to church planting.
13. Encourage Pastors to organize and administer their congregations using ministry teams that operate in accordance with this manual and the *Financial Management Manual*.
14. Represent denominational leadership and be a primary source of communication between congregations and the denomination.
15. Receive the lead pastor's monthly church report. Evaluate the report and follow up as needed.
16. File with the Home Office a monthly report that addresses region needs, problems and opportunities.
17. Receive from the Home Office a review of the quarterly and annual financial reports submitted by each congregation. Follow up as needed.
18. Administer grievance, disciplinary, and appeals processes within the region in accordance with chapter 7 of this manual.
19. Be prepared to answer questions from Pastors and others concerning this manual, the *Financial Management Manual*, the *Church Building Manual*, and the *Employee's Handbook*. If needed, questions may be referred to the Home Office or other GCI department such as Information Technology, Legal Services, the Treasurer's office, etc.

A.2 U.S. Ministry Coordinators

Within the United States, GCI has several denominational church development ministries. The coordinators of these ministries report directly to the GCI President and work collaboratively with Home Office staff, the North America Superintendent, and the U.S. Regional Directors.

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and Elders (including the Code of Ethics for Elders—Appendix C), the Ministry Coordinators are to meet the following ministry requirements:

1. Model a personal relationship with Jesus to encourage the ongoing spiritual formation of trainees and co-workers.
2. Model and teach love for the lost and commitment to relational evangelism.
3. Establish loving, grace-based relationships with trainees and co-workers.
4. Model and teach the Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
5. Encourage trainees to practice and teach stewardship as an act of worship in all aspects of the use of their time, talent and treasure.
6. Model gospel-centered teaching. All training is to be in agreement with GCI doctrine as summarized in the *Statement of Beliefs* and with GCI Trinitarian, incarnational theology as presented in doctrinal articles posted at GCI.org.
7. Model and teach principles of disciple-making ministry including team-based leadership and the ministry of all believers in accordance with the introduction to this manual and the details set forth at <https://resources.gci.org/pathway>.
8. Work with Home Office staff and the U.S. Regional Directors to schedule training in regional conferences and sub-regional gatherings. Involve the Regional Directors in this training as appropriate.
9. Serve as a relational representative of the denomination to the trainees: explain and answer questions regarding the denomination's doctrines, theology, policies and procedures (including matters covered in this manual, the *Financial Management Manual*, the *Church Building Manual*, and the *Employee Handbook*).

10. File with the Home Office a monthly report that addresses the activities of the ministry in the prior month.

APPENDIX B

INCORPORATING CONGREGATIONS LOCALLY

The chartered congregations of Grace Communion International in the United States are officially established through the granting of a charter in which the denomination sets forth the basics of the relationship between the denomination and its chartered congregations (refer to Appendix D). Among other rights and privileges, these congregations have the ability to issue tax-deductible receipts for most donations using the denomination's IRS group tax exemption (refer to the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual* for details).

Chartered fellowship groups never incorporate locally and chartered churches do so only in limited, special circumstances using the procedure outlined in this Appendix. Local incorporation generally serves no practical purpose and usually adds significantly to a chartered church's work in order to maintain the corporation and its records in a prudent and lawful manner.

For these reasons, chartered churches should *not* incorporate locally except in the case of congregations who already own or who have decided to purchase a church building or other real estate. In these limited cases, local incorporation is necessary to establish a corporation to hold title to the real property for the benefit of the congregation. This corporation allows the title to be held locally and helps shield the pastor, the congregation and the denomination from certain liabilities and adverse consequences associated with real property ownership by a local congregation which is not incorporated.

B.1 Forming a local corporation

If a congregation has decided to purchase a church building or other real estate, the lead pastor is to contact the Regional Director to discuss the matter. Prior to this contact, the Pastor should review the *Church Building Manual* and the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*.

Following this consultation with the Regional Director, if the congregation decides to proceed with the purchase of a building or other real property (such as land on which to build a church building), the lead pastor is to contact the denomination's legal department legal.office@gci.org or 980-495-3982

to arrange for local incorporation. The legal department will assist the congregation in drafting and filing appropriate documents and forms that meet relevant legal and denominational requirements.

Note: a congregation is NOT to sign any documents related to the purchase of real property until AFTER the congregation is incorporated locally.

Local incorporation involves being incorporated within the state of California as a non-profit religious corporation and then being registered as a California non-profit corporation within the state where the congregation is located. Such incorporation involves the naming of corporate officers and a Board of Directors whose roles within the congregation are explained in this appendix.

B.2 Properly operating a local corporation

Although detailed instructions are beyond the scope of this appendix, following are basic instructions concerning operation of a local corporation under relevant California law and denominational church governance policies.

The GCI standard articles of incorporation and by-laws of denominationally-chartered corporations ("Corporate Documents") require that directors, officers, and committee members of the corporation all be "spiritually affiliated" with the denominational church. This language means they must be *members* in good standing during their tenure, rather than merely *affiliates*. The Corporate Documents state that loss of member status, voluntarily or involuntarily, results in the immediate and automatic removal of the director or officer from their position.

The Officers and Board of Directors of the local corporation conduct the primary work of that corporation. These responsibilities are carried out within the congregation's local governance structure set forth in this manual. Congregations that incorporate locally modify this structure as noted in this appendix. It will be noted that, with local incorporation, certain congregational leaders take on certain corporate responsibilities and duties.

B.2.1 Requirement of church membership status for directors, officers, and committee members of local corporations

The Corporate Documents require that directors, officers, and committee members of such corporations all be “spiritually affiliated” with the denominational church. This language means that they must be GCI members in good standing during their tenure, rather than GCI affiliates or non-members. The articles state that loss of member status, voluntarily or involuntarily, results in the immediate and automatic removal of the director or officer from their position.

B.2.2 Corporate officers

The current procedure established by the denomination calls for the lead pastor to be designated the President and Chair of the Board of the local corporation, and for the lead pastor to then appoint the Board’s Directors and Officers. Each local corporation is to have three corporate Officers as follows.

B.2.2.1 President and Chair of the Board. As just stated, the lead pastor of the congregation is designated by the denomination to be the President of the corporation and Chair of the Board of the corporation.

B.2.2.2 Treasurer. The treasurer of the congregation is appointed by the President (lead pastor) to be the treasurer of the corporation.

B.2.2.3 Secretary. The President (lead pastor) of the congregation appoints the Secretary of the corporation. The congregation’s Financial Secretary (if there is one) is a logical choice.

B.2.3 Board of Directors

The President (lead pastor) of the congregation appoints the Board of Directors of the corporation. The articles and bylaws of the corporation in current use by the denomination stipulate that the corporation has a minimum of three and a maximum of seven directors at all times. It is recommended to have an odd number of directors. It is GCI policy that the following individuals be appointed to the Board:

- The congregation’s lead pastor who then serves as the Chair of the Board (note also that the lead pastor serves as the corporation’s President).
- All members of the congregation’s Finance Committee and general members the Pastor chooses to appoint.

- Because the Board often deals with property (church building) issues, it is appropriate that the congregation’s director of facilities (building manager), if there is one, be appointed to the Board.
- Other directors may be appointed by the lead pastor who may (at his discretion) solicit advice concerning these appointments from the Advisory Council (though such advice is not legally mandated). Such additional directors would normally be selected from among the congregation’s Elders (Pastors), Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders.

B.2.4 Scope of the Officers’ and Board’s responsibilities

In locally incorporated congregations, the Elders (Pastors), Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders supervise the day-to-day ecclesiastical operations of the congregation. Business operations are then handled by the Officers and Board of the local corporation. Both the ecclesiastical and business functions are under the direct supervision of the congregation’s lead pastor.

The business operations handled by the Officers and Board of the local corporation are those of the regular financial/business affairs of GCI congregations as set forth in the *Financial Management Manual*, slightly amended in this appendix for locally incorporated congregations. The board makes decisions on such matters through a vote—that decision then being recorded as the official action of the Board.

B.2.5 Compliance with formal procedures

In order to properly run the corporation so as to avoid as much as possible any issues of personal liability later on, the Officers and Directors should be aware of the following basic duties and procedures which operating the corporation entails.

B.2.5.1 Board meetings. The Board of Directors should conduct sufficient meetings to adequately manage the affairs of the corporation. Meetings should be held at least as often as state law requires.

B.2.5.2 Approval of decisions by Board or Executive Committee. No major transactions should be entered into without action by either the Board or the Executive Committee (which is a committee of the Board authorized by resolution or bylaws to make many decisions without a meeting of the full Board).

B.2.5.3 Meeting minutes. Proper minutes of these meetings should be kept, reviewed and approved by the Board.

B.2.5.4 Resolutions and authority. Acts of the corporation should be authorized first. For example, if a decision is reached to re-roof the building someone needs to be authorized to contract for the same. GCI governance authorizes the lead pastor and Treasurer to sign contracts, but only if the contract is approved as described in B.2.5.2.

B.2.5.5 Signing documents. Documents signed on behalf of the corporation should be signed clearly showing the corporate entity is the one being bound. For example, if a contract is signed to re-roof the building, the party should sign in their corporate capacity, such as:

Name of congregation
By: Jane Doe
President, and Agent in Fact.

B.2.6 Standards of conduct for officers and directors of the corporation

The officers and directors of the corporation (and any committees of the Board) must meet the standards of conduct in fulfilling their duties that are imposed upon them by law. If they meet these standards, all other things being equal (i.e. the corporate veil is not pierced for some other reason), they can probably avoid personal liability for good faith business decisions – even those that may have an unintended bad result.

The law does not require every business decision to be perfect for the officers and directors to be protected, which would be impossible, but only that they meet the appropriate standards of conduct in reaching their decisions. For example, the directors of a corporation who borrow money for the corporation are protected from ever having to repay the loan from their personal assets – even if the corporation cannot repay – unless it is later proved the directors did not meet their duty of care in making the decision to borrow.

The various standards and duties for officers and directors of a corporation are usually explicitly declared in the state statutes under which the local corporation is formed.

By way of example, the appropriate statutory language for a California religious corporation is, in

part, as follows: “A director shall perform the duties of a director... in good faith, in a manner such director believes to be in the best interests of the corporation and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, as is appropriate under the circumstances.”

Although the exact wording of such standards of conduct and the precise elements of such standards vary, they can be broken down into three areas: the duty of loyalty, the duty of care and reliance upon the tenets of church faith and doctrine as set forth in this section. Note, however, that it is impossible to convey here all the information needed to properly educate Officers and Board members about these duties. Therefore, the officers and directors of the corporation are advised to engage in an on-going educational process. As part of this process, the denomination’s legal department should be contacted for specific questions and for general guidance regarding corporate and legal affairs.

B.2.6.1 Duty of loyalty. When conducting the affairs of the corporation, officers and directors have a duty not to engage in transactions where they put their own interests above those of the corporation. This is known as self-dealing. State statutes usually define conflicts of interest. Refer to the statutes for definitions and resolutions of such conflicts (using the California statutes for California corporations registered in your state). The basic principles related to operating in accordance with the duty of loyalty are as follows:

- **Exercise “good faith.”** Officers and directors have a duty to fulfill their obligations in what is called “good faith.” Good faith means subjective, internal honesty. It is being genuine instead of duplicitous.
- **Operate “in the best interests of the corporation.”** This means the decisions of the officers and directors must be in the best interests of the corporation – as opposed, for example, in the best interests of some third party, the Pastor, or even in the best interests of one member of the congregation at the expense of the others or of the corporation as an entity.
- **Avoid conflicts of interests and self-dealing.** Officers and directors have a duty not to use their positions in the corporation to further their own financial interests. State statutes often give procedures to follow when the subject matter of a

proposed corporate action involves a conflict with a director.

B.2.6.2 Duty of care. When conducting the affairs of the corporation, officers and directors have the responsibility to operate according to a “duty of care” that is defined by the following principles. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive.

- **Exercise appropriate care.** Although statutes vary, the law often requires directors to discharge their duties with the care a person in a like position would reasonably believe appropriate under similar circumstances.
- **Attend meetings regularly.** Directors of a corporation have a duty to see to the corporation’s business and should, of course, show a pattern of adequate attendance.
- **Obtain sufficient information.** Directors should seek to gather, or have presented to them, all the relevant facts so that they may make sound, well-informed decisions.
- **Make necessary inquiry.** Directors are expected to be fully engaged in the business that comes before them and to ask relevant questions and receive adequate answers to those questions so as to fully understand the positive and negative potential consequences of their decision.
- **Seek outside counsel or advice when necessary:** Many, perhaps even most, decisions made by the Board are routine and the course to take is obvious to all on the Board. However, there is the right, and sometimes a duty, for directors to get inside and/or outside financial and legal opinions on special or unusual matters that require outside information or expertise before acting or making a decision.

B.2.6.3 Reliance upon church faith and doctrine. For religious corporations, (e.g. California religious corporations) directors sometimes have the right to rely upon the tenets of faith, the opinions of clergy, and spiritual discernment in making their decisions. It cannot be emphasized enough that directors of churches should always include in their deliberations and decisions, and in documenting those decisions, the fact that spiritual considerations are involved, and the decision is consistent therewith. The reasons this is important, among

others, is that civil courts can and will evaluate decisions of directors from a business and legal perspective but are not permitted to evaluate the decisions on a spiritual or ecclesiastical level, thus giving greater protection to the Board in the (hopefully very rare) case where the decision seems imprudent without the spiritual or ecclesiastical considerations.

B.3 Governance in congregations that are locally incorporated

When a congregation incorporates locally, it alters its governance structures to merge standard GCI church governance roles with certain corporate roles. The Officers and Board of the corporation manage the “business” affairs of the congregation, while the leaders established by the standard church governance structures manage the “ecclesiastical” affairs of the congregation. The nexus of the ecclesiastical and business elements of the church is the lead pastor (or equivalent) who supervises both. For example, suppose an Avenue Champion or Ministry Leader overseen by the lead pastor wishes to start a summer camp for teens. The Board, headed by the lead pastor as Chair and President, would then pass appropriate resolutions to receive applications, grant a budget, empower the signing of appropriate contracts, and lease facilities, etc.

Note: the two charts that follow this page show how standard GCI church governance roles are merged with corporate roles in congregations that are locally incorporated.

B.3.1 Management of the *ecclesiastical* affairs of the congregation

Ecclesiastical governance role	The responsibilities for each ecclesiastical governance role
lead pastor (working with the other Pastors [Elders] in the congregation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees all matters in the congregation • Is accountable to the Regional Director and Home Office in all matters • Receives the advice and counsel of the Advisory Council • Establishes basic direction (vision) for the congregation in collaboration with other congregational leaders • Oversees teaching within the congregation with respect to compliance with GCI doctrine/teachings • Administers disciplinary and grievance processes • Recommends individuals to the denomination to be ordained as Elders • Commissions Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders • Oversees development of the congregation’s strategic plan • Provides significant input into the development of the annual budget
Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the ministries of the congregation • Are accountable to the lead pastor • Appoint, train and supervise the ministry workers in the respective ministry teams • Develop a strategic plan for their respective ministries that is in harmony with the strategic plan for the congregation • Coordinate financial matters related to their respective ministries with the Church Treasurer
Finance Committee	With local incorporation, the role of the Finance Committee is taken on by the Board of Directors of the corporation (which includes the lead pastor)
Advisory Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides advice and counsel to the lead pastor and any other Pastors including advice and counsel related to the annual budget which is prepared and approved and administered by the Board of the corporation

B.3.2 Management of the *business* affairs of the congregation

Corporate governance role	This corporate role is filled by the congregation's existing...	The responsibilities for each corporate role
President of the corporation	Lead pastor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoints Treasurer, Secretary and Board of Directors • Chairs Board meetings
Treasurer of the corporation	Church treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps the financial books of the corporation and oversees internal financial systems
Secretary of the corporation	No church corollary—could be filled by the Financial Secretary (if there is one) or another person appointed by the lead pastor. The Secretary is normally also a Board member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps minutes of Board meetings • Makes reports
Board of Directors of the corporation	Lead pastor plus the Finance Committee (which is made up of the Treasurer, Lead Counter and Financial Secretary [if there is one], plus, in some cases, additional members).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers and votes on the business of the corporation • Reviews and approves the minutes of meetings of the corporation • Establishes and approves the annual budget (and any amendments thereto) • Oversees the Treasurer, who receives, processes, banks, disburses and monitors the congregation's finances. In this financial work the Treasurer works closely with the congregation's Avenue Champions and Ministry Leaders, but the primary financial oversight responsibility is that of the Board.

APPENDIX C: CODE OF ETHICS FOR ELDERS

C.1 Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Elders is designed to edify the body of Christ. We pray it will be embraced by all Elders of the church serving in any and all congregational or administrative responsibilities. The code is intended to be a living document that helps shape our character as we constantly seek to make it better reflect Christ's will for us as Elders in his church.

Ethics provides a framework for how people make decisions and judgments and how we act on them. Decision-making for the Christian is ethical when it is firmly grounded in the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, for it is only in these that we find a basis for understanding the will of God.

As church leaders, we must submit ourselves to the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the application of ethical principles of Scripture. Our Christian conduct must be based on the life and teachings of Jesus, the teachings of biblical writers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament calls for the highest standard of reputation, ethics and conduct for us as Elders.

As Christian leaders, we recognize that Jesus Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. We ask him to change us so that the reality of his resurrected life is evident in our thoughts and actions. The ethical guidelines and principles in this Code of Ethics for Elders are set forth to tie in the realities of our ministerial activities with this transcendent reality of our Christian lives.

Therefore, as Elders in the body of Christ, we must endeavor to conduct our lives according to the spirit of the ethical guidelines and principles set forth in this Code of Ethics for Elders.

C.2 Responsibility to God

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the living Head of the church, I will strive to conduct myself in a manner that brings glory to him. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible servant of God.
- exercise faithful stewardship in my devotional life through the use of spiritual disciplines, the gifts of the Spirit and acts of service.
- exercise faithful stewardship of financial, physical and intellectual resources.
- accept accountability for all my actions and avoid situations that could reflect negatively on the name of Jesus Christ.
- maintain sexual purity.
- exercise Christ's servant-leadership.

C.3 Responsibility to family

I will place my family responsibilities at the highest level of my priorities, second only to my relationship to God. This means I will strive to:

- spiritually, emotionally and physically support my family.
- be faithful to my spouse.
- be a responsible and dedicated parent to my children.

C.4 Responsibility of denominational leadership to Elders

In the spirit of Christian brotherhood, denominational supervisors are responsible to provide support as well as just and fair treatment for Elders. This means if I am in a supervisory position, I will strive to:

- be accessible and promptly respond to requests from Elders.
- provide sound and clear spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
- openly and respectfully communicate to Elders any serious complaints brought against them.
- provide reasonable time for feedback to requests

for information from Elders.

- handle sensitive and confidential information about an Elder in a responsible manner.
- be sensitive to the personal and family needs of Elders.

C.5 Responsibility to the denomination

As an Elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility of loyalty to ecclesiastical supervisors. This means I will strive to:

- patiently and prayerfully study all doctrinal materials presented by the denomination.
- support and carry out all administrative decisions and policies of ecclesiastical supervisors. If I cannot in good conscience do this, I will immediately notify my supervisors.
- cooperate with, and seek assistance from ecclesiastical supervisors, peers and members of my congregation(s) in order to acquire information and to receive training that is relevant to my assignment as an Elder.
- respect my denomination and be responsible and respectful in discussions about fellow leaders—past and present.
- support and promote the global mission of the church.

C.6 Relationship with the congregation

I will lead with justice and mercy, striving to express proper balance between strength and gentleness in all situations. This means I will strive to:

- provide sound and clear pastoral, spiritual leadership.
- help members develop spiritual gifts and mentor spiritual leaders in the congregation.
- give sermons that are biblically based, in theological agreement with the church and relevant to the life of the church.
- be committed to prompt reconciliation of interpersonal conflicts. I recognize that I must have personal courage, exercised with appropriate tact in facing opposition. I will encourage members of my congregation to seek help from my ecclesiastical supervisors if necessary.

- be trustworthy in all areas of confidentiality, except as I am legally bound to disclose. I will not betray the trust of a member by disclosing personal information about that person to others without that person's knowledge and consent.
- beyond spiritual counsel and understanding my limitations I will refer to professional services.
- be fair and consistent in my dealings with parishioners.
- honor and respect other cultures, genders and races.

C.7 Responsibility to fellow Elders

As an Elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility to respect and honor my colleagues. I will strive to cooperate with and support my fellow Elders as we work together to further the work of Christ in the church. This means I will strive to:

- respect my fellow Elders and will not speak against them publicly or privately, considering them partners in the work of God.
- respect the administrative boundaries of another Elder's area of responsibility.
- treat the office of an Elder in a manner so as not to be competitive or enhance my own status or position.
- serve my colleagues with counsel, support and personal assistance.

C.8 Responsibility to the greater body of Christ

Elders and members of Grace Communion International are a part of the greater Christian community. This means I will:

- avoid recruiting members out of other churches.
- seek to work in harmony with other Christian leaders and programs to strengthen the body of Christ and advance the kingdom of God.
- uphold the theology and doctrine of Grace Communion International without slandering Christians who hold other views.

C.9 Responsibility to the local community

The local church is an integral part of the society in which it resides. An active, appropriate role in the community serves as a Christian example of love and is a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible member of my community.
- accept reasonable responsibilities for community service, recognizing this is a function of my public ministry.
- encourage the involvement of the congregation in appropriate community events.
- comply with the laws of my government as long as they do not conflict with the teachings of Jesus.
- take care not to allow political issues to create polarization within the congregation, or to be a focus in sermons, Bible studies, or other church meetings.

APPENDIX D: CHARTER FOR CHARTERED CHURCHES

Here is the text of the standard charter issued to GCI-USA chartered churches.
The charter for chartered fellowship groups is similar.

BE IT KNOWN TO ALL BY THESE PRESENTS: That, pursuant to an act of Grace Communion International, a California nonprofit religious corporation with hierarchical governance, (hereinafter the "Denominational Church"), with the consent and approval of the Board of Directors, the Denominational Church hereby issues this Charter to the above-named local church congregation (hereinafter the "Local Congregation").

BE IT FURTHER KNOWN: That, by issuance of this Charter the aforementioned Local Congregation is hereby solemnly declared, pronounced and proclaimed a duly Chartered and authorized subordinate entity of the Denominational Church. Said Local Congregation is entitled to all the benefits, privileges, and honors thereunto appertaining, and is likewise subject to those responsibilities incumbent upon such a Local Congregation, including, but not limited to, adherence to the various proclamations, directives, and doctrinal tenets of the Denominational Church.

MOREOVER: Since the Bible, the Word of God, clearly and unequivocally pronounces unity one of the chief essential characteristics of the Church of God, this Charter evidences, and declares, that said unity does and of a right ought to exist by, between, and among, the Local Congregation, the Denominational Church, and all other duly Chartered local congregations of the Denominational Church wherever and whenever they may be found.

THEREFORE: Based upon these fundamental truths, the Local Congregation is hereby authorized and directed to perform the spiritual duties pursuant to such a status including: to perform sacerdotal functions, conduct worship services, engage in evangelism, aid those in need through ministries in accordance with its mission, and to otherwise proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, all under the aegis of the Denominational Church.

The purposes of this Local Congregation are exclusively religious. No substantial part of the activities of this Local Congregation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and it shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

All assets of the Local Congregation are irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes. This Local Congregation is a nonprofit entity, and its assets may not, either while said Local Congregation is in existence or if and when it is ever dissolved, inure to the benefit of any private individual.

All decisions regarding charters and the makeup and recognition of congregations, including, without limitation, the granting of charters, the removal of charters, the combining of congregations into one congregation, and the splitting of one congregation into more than one congregation are ecclesiastical decisions and/or ecclesiastical determinations, as those terms are defined by Denominational Church law, and are in the sole and absolute discretion of the Denominational Church. Upon revocation of this Charter, all assets in which the Local Congregation shall have any interest, tangible and intangible, real, personal and mixed, and wherever located, shall be distributed to the Denominational Church, providing it remains a nonprofit corporation exempt under IRC § 501(c)(3), and provided it expressly agrees to accept such assets. Should it agree to accept the same, the assets shall be distributed to the Denominational Church in its own right and not in any representative capacity. The Denominational Church shall in turn distribute such assets, either in kind, or the proceeds from the sale thereof, after deducting all costs and expenses incurred in arranging and carrying out such distribution, to one or more of its chartered, tax exempt, religious congregations, as they are deemed to have need or for other mission-related expenses of the Denominational Church.

In the event the Denominational Church does not, or cannot take title for any reason, then the assets shall be distributed to any religious organization exempt under IRC § 501(c)(3) that the Denominational Church determines in its sole judgment has the same or similar purposes.

In the event two or more chartered congregations are merged by a decision of the Denominational Church, the assets of all affected congregations shall be merged and become the assets of the congregation identified by the Denominational Church as the receiving congregation, or if the merger results in a new congregation distinct from those merged, the assets become those of the congregation identified by the Denominational Church as the new congregation.

In the event a congregation shall split into more than one chartered congregation as a result of a decision of the Denominational Church, the Denominational Church shall determine the proportion of the assets each newly formed congregation shall receive.

All decisions regarding the disposition of assets of a congregation whose charter has been revoked, of a congregation which has been merged with another congregation, or of a congregation which has been split into more than one congregation are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations, and the form in which the assets are accepted, distributed, when they are distributed and how, and the selection of the recipient shall be within the sole and absolute discretion of the Denominational Church, albeit in accordance with this Charter.

By issuing this Charter, the Denominational Church has exercised its spiritual authority and discretion under its internal Denominational Church law, and has taken this action confidently, proudly, and in the good faith belief that this Local Congregation will continue uprightly and in unity with the Denominational Church and all of its local congregations. However, if for any reason the Denominational Church revokes this Charter, said Charter immediately becomes null and void (except for the provisions regarding the distribution of assets), the status it confers is thereby lost, the privileges arising under it cease and the Local Congregation shall forthwith surrender the same.

APPENDIX E:

GCI Pastoral Continuing Education Program Guide

(for pastors in GCI-USA chartered churches)

Utilizing the program outlined in this appendix, Grace Communion International in the United States (GCI-USA), facilitates the continuing education of the primary lead pastor within its chartered churches. The program has two primary components: conferences and academic studies.

E.1 Conferences

Regional Directors host regional and sub-regional conferences and/or spiritual retreats to nurture and equip the lead pastors within their regions. The lead pastor of each chartered church is expected to attend at least one of these conferences each year and is encouraged to bring other congregational leaders with them when appropriate.

E.2 Academic studies

GCI facilitates academic studies for the lead pastor of each chartered church through online courses offered by Grace Communion Seminary (GCS) and Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM). All lead pastors are expected to take no less than two courses each year from one of these institutions (or pre-approved equivalent). Here are the pathways for fulfilling this expectation:

- Lead pastors with a bachelor's degree or special admittance are expected to enter a GCS master's degree program and complete within eight years, which means taking two GCS courses per year, to complete the required 14 courses in the allotted time.
- Lead pastors who do not have a bachelor's degree, are expected to take ACCM courses and work toward earning the ACCM diploma of Christian ministry. It is expected that lead pastors take two classes each year and complete the diploma within five years.

Once a lead pastor has earned a GCS master's degree or an ACCM diploma, they are encouraged to continue their academic studies by taking pastoral education courses (credit or non-credit—one every two years).

Notes:

1. It is appropriate that the lead pastor be reimbursed by their congregations for costs incurred in meeting the Pastoral Continuing Education Program expectations set forth in this appendix. Reimbursable costs include tuition, textbooks and travel.
2. Regional Directors will monitor the continuing education compliance of the lead pastor in accordance with what is outlined in this appendix.

Appendix 1: Parental permission form

When a GCI event involves one or more overnight stays, all staff members and participants who are under age 18 must submit a signed and dated copy of the following parental permission form prior to or at the start of the event. It is recommended that the wording of this form with the signature box included be incorporated into the event application.

As parent/guardian, I hereby give my permission for _____,
(full name of child)

who will be age ____ on the day the event begins, to participate in the _____,
(name of event)

which is to be held on ___/___/___ to ___/___/___. With my dated signature in the box below, I grant this permission and certify the statements and information provided in items 1 through 7 that appear below above my signature.

1. **GENERAL PERMISSION:** I understand and agree that this event is sponsored by Grace Communion International, and depending upon circumstances, and without limitation, may involve both:

(a) physical/athletic activities such as sports, hiking, camping, arts & crafts and, (b) spiritual or religious activities, such as Christian living or education classes, religious worship services, and the like. I give my permission for my child to engage in all such activities.

2. **ACCEPTANCE OF EVENT CONDITIONS:** I understand and agree to the condition of the event venue as described in the information provided. I give permission for my child to participate under these conditions.

3. **DISCLOSURE OF SPECIAL HEALTH CONDITIONS:** The following is a list of my child's special health conditions and needs of which event staff need to be aware (list here such things as medications, history of seizures, motion sickness, allergies, etc.—use back side of this sheet if needed): _____

4. **RELEASE OF LIABILITY REGARDING SPECIAL HEALTH CONDITIONS:** I submit that the above mentioned special health conditions and instructions are needed for my child while at the event. I understand that, although event personnel will seek to help accommodate these special conditions, such as by giving medications and/or by seeking to take appropriate precautions, etc., nonetheless, by sending my child to the event with these special health conditions:

- I acknowledge that I understand the event is not equipped to monitor or supervise such special conditions or needs as would the parent if he/she were present.
- I certify it is safe for my child to participate in all event activities notwithstanding the special conditions, and notwithstanding any possible lapse in medication, or possible interaction with other people or circumstances that may affect the special conditions.
- I release and indemnify the event and its sponsor from all claims and liability stemming from the special conditions, including, without limitation, any claim, illness, or injury, resulting from the event's failure to properly administer medicines for the special conditions, failure to recognize a situation which might be potentially harmful to a person with the special conditions, or failure to recognize the onset of an episode of the special conditions.

5. **PERMISSION TO SECURE EMERGENCY SERVICES:** I give permission to event staff to secure usual and customary medical and/or legal services for my child if needed in an emergency circumstance at the event. I as parent/guardian will be responsible for the costs of such services if not covered by my insurance.

6. **INSURANCE COVERAGE:** My child is covered by medical insurance: ___YES___ NO
If yes, list the name of the insurance company: _____ and the policy number: _____.

I understand that if my child has no health/accident/medical insurance coverage, I will be responsible for the payment of all expenses, which may be incurred due to treatment at the event of an illness or injury.

7. **EMERGENCY CONTACTS:** During the event, I may be contacted day or night, as follows:

(name) () ()
(night phone number) (day phone number)

If I cannot be reached in an emergency, the following two individuals will know of my whereabouts and/or have my permission to represent my wishes regarding medical or other emergency care for my child:

(name) () ()
(night phone number) (day phone number)

(name) () ()
(night phone number) (day phone number)

Signed _____ Date _____
(signatures of both parents or both legal guardians)

Appendix 2: Standards for staff members

Following are the standards used to select and evaluate staff members.

A Jesus follower known for being...	A team player who helps create a camp environment characterized by...	A committed worker who possesses the following attitudes, skills and related characteristics:	A diligent servant who will be consistent and persistent in accomplishing the following tasks during camp:
Grace-based	An atmosphere of love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly relational: accepting, approachable, humble and teachable • Able to serve sacrificially in a spirit of love in a camp setting • Able to foster an atmosphere of grace among campers and staffers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places people above programs—emphasizing the building of loving relationships at all levels • Takes appropriate actions and precautions to ensure safety of campers
Christ-centered	The adoration of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active worship participant • A baptized and growing believer • A life centered in Jesus in an age appropriate way • Open about their personal commitment to Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is present and worshipfully engaged in all worship events (including chapels) • Contributes to whatever needs to be done at chapels so that they flow smoothly
Spirit-formed	Prayerful dependence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devoted to personal prayer and willing to pray with others • Demonstrates whole life stewardship in the non-camp year • Participating in Camp doesn't negatively effect employment, education, or family responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates actively in personal and group devotions • Practices personal spiritual disciplines during camp week

A Jesus follower known for being...	A team player who helps create a camp environment characterized by...	A committed worker who possesses the following attitudes, skills and related characteristics:	A diligent servant who will be consistent and persistent in accomplishing the following tasks during camp:
Word-directed	Communication of the Word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands Jesus to be the Living Word who is revealed in Scripture • Understands the Bible to be God's written Word • Demonstrates familiarity with the Bible • Is ministry focused—able to create and use “teachable” moments—including simple and relevant object lessons in their activity that point to Christ • Is active in personal spiritual enrichment through the camp process • Is able to respond to camper questions and issues with Scriptural truths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings personal Bible to all appropriate activities • Supports counselor, solo time leaders and debrief leaders as requested • Demonstrates attentiveness in all worship gatherings (including chapels) • Honors Jesus as Lord and Savior in all Discussions
Disciple-making	Commitment to contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentionally reaches out to the disconnected and disengaged • Intentionally forms relationships with other staffers and campers rather than focusing only on personal friends • Able to clearly share the basic gospel message including personal testimony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivates a sense of belonging for campers through activities that promote team building • Intentionally reaches out to disconnected and disengaged campers and staffers to give them a sense of belonging • Mentors staff assistants to help train them for future staff positions
Fellowship-building	A biblical church image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive small group and large group participant in a local church • Demonstrated willingness to follow through with all pre-camp requirements in a timely and responsible manner • Sets a tone of cooperation with the camp vision and rules at all times in both supervised and non-supervised settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes actively to a sense of community within the camp by creatively involving all campers in the assigned activity and in other camp interactions • Is fully responsive to and compliant with camp leadership, activity schedules and camp rules

Appendix 3: Event staff acknowledgement form

This form is to be signed by each Children & Teen Ministry staff member and kept on file by the Program Director or Pastor.

I, _____ (staff member), acknowledge receipt of Chapter 4 (Children & Teen Ministry Health and Safety Policies) of the CAD Manual. I acknowledge that I am subject to all the stipulations set forth in that chapter that pertain to my conduct as a camp ministry staff member.

I acknowledge further that I am accountable to conduct myself in my staff role in accordance with these stipulations and that my role may be ended by the program director or pastor, at his/her sole discretion, with or without cause, and without advance notice.

I acknowledge further that I am aware that in serving on the event staff I forgo any expectation of privacy during the duration of the event and that my personal property may be searched at any time by duly authorized staff leaders.

Staff member signature

Date