

APPENDIX A
RESTORATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

BYLAWS ARTICLE X. DISCIPLINE

Section 1. The Nature and Purposes of Discipline

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The aims of discipline are that God may be honored, that the purity and welfare of the ministry may be maintained, and that those under discipline may be brought to repentance and restoration.

Discipline is to be administered for the restoration of the minister, while fully providing for the protection of the spiritual welfare of our local assemblies. It is to be redemptive in nature as well as corrective, and is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy.

Section 2. The Relationship Between the District and General Council Credentials Committees

The Executive Presbytery of the General Council is the Credentials Committee of The General Council of the Assemblies of God (Constitution, Article X, Sections 4 and 6). It shall have the final authority in matters of doctrine and the personal conduct of all certified, licensed, and ordained ministers. District actions related to the termination of credentials or the remedial discipline of rehabilitation are to be in the form of recommendations to the General Council Credentials Committee. All references to the discipline of ministers within this article of the Bylaws relate solely to certified, licensed, and ordained ministers.

Section 3. Causes of Disciplinary Action

Violations of Assemblies of God principles as stated in these Constitution and Bylaws may give cause for disciplinary action by the credentials committees. Among such causes for action shall be:

- a. Moral failure involving sexual misconduct.
- b. Moral failure involving pornography.
- c. Any moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct.
- d. General inefficiency in the ministry.
- e. A failure to represent our Pentecostal testimony correctly.
- f. A contentious or non-cooperative spirit.
- g. An assumption of dictatorial authority over an assembly.
- h. An arbitrary rejection of district counsel.
- i. A declared open change in doctrinal views.
- j. Immoral, unethical, or illegal practices related to personal, church, or ministry finances.
- k. A marriage in violation of our stand on marriage and divorce. (See Bylaws, Article IX, B, Section 5, paragraphs d and e.)
- l. Violations of ministerial courtesy. (See Bylaws, Article IX, B, Section 8.)
- m. Ministry without prior approval in a non-Assemblies of God church. (See Bylaws, Article IX, B, Section 9.)

n. An improper attitude toward those dismissed from the Fellowship. (See Bylaws, Article IX, B, Section 10.)

Notwithstanding the above, when more than 7 years have elapsed from an occurrence that is cause for disciplinary action, a district credentials committee may recommend to the General Council Credentials Committee that no discipline be administered when, in view of all the circumstances, it would appear that such discipline would serve only as punitive in nature rather than rehabilitative. In all such cases, final determination shall be made by the General Council Credentials Committee.

Section 4. Right of Initiative

a. Authority. Occasions sometimes arise which make it necessary to deal with ministers who for some reason seem to have reached the place where, in the opinion of the leaders, endorsement can no longer be given. Credentials committees which have the authority to ordain ministers and to recommend them for credentials also have the right to withdraw their approval and to recommend the recall of credentials.

b. Prior right of district. The officers of the district in which an alleged offense is reported to have occurred shall be recognized as having the prior right of initiative in matters of discipline.

c. Responsibility of district of affiliation. If the district in which an alleged offense is reported to have occurred for some reason cannot take action, the General Council Credentials Committee shall refer the matter, together with the facts and supporting instruments, to the district with which the minister is affiliated.

d. Responsibility of General Council Credentials Committee. In the event a district fails to take action within 90 days after a matter has been referred to it, it shall be the responsibility of the General Council Credentials Committee to see that action is initiated.

Section 5. Investigation of Reports or Complaints of Alleged Violations or Confessions of Violations of Assemblies of God Principles

a. Within the Districts of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Reports or complaints of alleged violations of Assemblies of God principles (Bylaws, Article X, Section 3) or confessions of such by a minister shall be investigated. The superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is reported to have occurred, or an appointed representative, shall conduct the investigation to determine their source and validity. It is the responsibility of the district superintendent to safeguard the church, the minister, the district, and the Fellowship. In the event such reports or complaints against a minister are filed with the General Council Credentials Committee, they shall be referred to the district in which the offense occurred for investigation. A copy shall be sent to the district with which the minister is affiliated.

(1) *Interview with complainants.* The persons involved shall be interviewed to ascertain the facts in the case and the reasons underlying the persistence of the reports or complaints.

(2) *Interview with accused minister.* The accused minister shall be given an opportunity to be interviewed to discuss the complaints received in the hope that the matter can be resolved.

(3) *Signed complaints.* In the event the investigation so warrants, a signed complaint shall be filed with the district office by each complainant describing the alleged offense.

(4) *Conditions for ministry during investigation.* Conditions of continuing ministry may be subject to restriction during the time of investigation at the discretion of the appropriate district officers on the basis of evidence at hand and the nature of the alleged offense. Such conditions are subject to review in 3-month intervals until such investigation has been completed resulting in either clearing the person of the allegations or filing formal charges.

b. Outside United States. In case the alleged misconduct occurs outside the United States in an area under the general oversight of Assemblies of God World Missions, that division shall take the initiative to file complete data with the district of the minister's affiliation. Any hearing or trial affecting that individual's ministerial credentials shall be held in the district of the minister's affiliation. Assemblies of God World Missions shall convey all information available to the said district as follows:

(1) *Report to district of affiliation.* At the earliest date after Assemblies of God World Missions receives a report of misconduct, such report shall be conveyed by telephone and by letter to the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated.

(2) *Confidential file.* A confidential file shall be submitted to the superintendent, conveying all information as it becomes available to the division. A final complete file shall be prepared under the direction of the field director of the field involved and shall be presented to the district superintendent for use in any action the district may take.

(3) *Additional information.* When in the judgment of Assemblies of God World Missions or the district involved, basic information is lacking (which information may be available at the site of the alleged misconduct), arrangements may be made for the gathering of such.

Section 6. Preparation and Filing of Charges

If after due investigation it is determined that charges should be made, proper charges shall be prepared and filed in the district office. If no one appears to sign the charges, the district officers making the investigation may file charges based on the evidence in their possession. The person against whom charges have been filed shall be informed in writing by certified mail, at the last address furnished to the district, of the charges made in keeping with Bylaws, Article X, Section 3.

Section 7. District Hearing and Discipline

a. District hearing. In the event the reports or complaints cannot be dealt with privately to the satisfaction of all concerned, the superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is said to have occurred, or the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated, shall arrange for a hearing by the district credentials committee for the accused minister. The minister shall be required to appear at the hearing in the hope the matter can be resolved.

b. Forfeiture of rights of accused. A hearing shall not be considered as final disposition of the case until the accused be present and be allowed all rights and privileges granted herein. However, an accused member may be found guilty of charges and disciplined for failure to appear at the hearing, or if proof is found of willful neglect to take advantage of rights and privileges provided in these Bylaws.

c. Discipline

(1) *Cause for discipline.* A minister who has been found guilty of violating any of the Assemblies of God principles set forth in Bylaws, Article X, Section 3, either by a confession of the minister involved or by deliberation of the district presbytery, shall be subject to disciplinary action.

(2) *Determination of discipline.* It shall be the responsibility of the credentials committees to determine whether the circumstances of the case merit rehabilitation or dismissal. The credentials committees shall weigh decisions on: (a) the basis of the offense itself, (b) the manner and thoroughness of repentance, (c) the attitude of the offending minister toward the discipline, and (d) the willingness manifested to cooperate.

(3) *Administering discipline redemptively.* If the district determines that guilt has been established, discipline shall be administered prayerfully and in the fear of God, in accordance with the Scriptures, and as set forth in the Constitution and Bylaws of this ecclesiastical body (Bylaws, Article X, Sections 8 and 9).

d. Surrender of credentials. Disciplined ministers shall be required to surrender their ministerial credentials and their current fellowship card to the district office. In the event of rehabilitation the credentials shall be held in the district office. In the event of dismissal the district shall forward the credentials to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Refusal to surrender ministerial credentials and current fellowship card may result in placing an additional charge against the minister.

Section 8. Rehabilitation

Recognizing that the underlying principle involved in discipline is redemptive, and that man's conscience frequently brings him to judgment and confession, and that justice can sometimes be best served with mercy, an effort should be made to lead the offending minister through a program of rehabilitation, administered in love and kindness. The following provisions for rehabilitation shall apply.

a. Basis. Those found to have violated any of the Assemblies of God principles (Bylaws, Article X, Section 3) may request a program of rehabilitation as an alternative to dismissal. Rehabilitation is a privilege granted out of mercy and not a right to be expected or demanded. The primary purpose is to restore a person to God, spouse, and family, with the results leading to possible restoration to ministry. Granting such request shall be at the discretion of the district and General Council credentials committees.

b. Procedure and requirements. The following procedure shall be used by the district presbytery in determining the specific requirements for rehabilitation for the individual minister.

(1) *Rehabilitation requirements.* The specific terms and conditions of the rehabilitation program as recommended by the district credentials committee are to be forwarded to the General Council Credentials Committee for approval. After such approval they shall be given to the minister.

(a) *Suspension.* The minister shall be considered to be under suspension during the entire period of rehabilitation.

(b) *Terms and Conditions*

(1) *Period of time.* The program for rehabilitation shall continue for not less than 1 year except when the violation involves misconduct defined in Bylaws, Article X, Section 3, paragraph a, in which case it shall continue for not less than 2 years.

(2) *Authority.* The General Presbytery shall be authorized to establish guidelines and policy in regard to terms and conditions of rehabilitation. Such guidelines and policy shall be consistent with provisions of the Bylaws.

(c) *Extent of ministry.* The extent to which ministry may be permitted, if any, shall be determined by the district presbytery, subject to the approval of the General Council Credentials Committee and compatible with the guidelines and policy established by the General Presbytery.

(d) *District membership.* The minister shall not be permitted to transfer his or her membership to another district during the period of rehabilitation.

(e) *Publication.* While the minister's credentials are in a state of suspension, the minister's name shall not be removed from the ministerial roster, nor shall the minister's disciplinary status be published in either the General Council or district council official publications.

(f) *Credentials renewal.* The minister shall renew his or her credentials annually in the regular manner.

(g) *Supervision.* In the event his or her ministerial activity has been terminated, the minister must become established in a local church working under the supervision of a pastor or presbyter.

(h) *Reports.* The minister must submit reports quarterly to the district superintendent.

(i) *Ministerial benefits.* During the program of rehabilitation the minister shall continue to be eligible for benefits such as the ministers' group insurance and Ministers Benefit Association.

(j) *Program administration.* The approved rehabilitation program shall be administered by the district presbytery.

(2) *District progress reports.* The credentials committee of the district shall submit to the General Council Credentials Committee on February 1 and August 1 of each calendar year a progress report relative to the rehabilitation of ministers under discipline.

(3) *Completion of rehabilitation.* When the rehabilitation program has been satisfactorily completed, the suspension shall be lifted and the minister shall be restored to good standing.

(4) *Transfer of information.* A rehabilitation information form for district use, prepared and distributed by the general secretary, shall be completed by the district in which the rehabilitation occurred when the rehabilitated minister requests a transfer to a new district. The completed rehabilitation form shall accompany the Certificate of Transfer to another district. A disciplined minister shall, as a condition of entering a rehabilitation program, sign a Limited Disclosure Agreement approved by the General Presbytery allowing the basis of his or her rehabilitation program to be disclosed by the district superintendent or district secretary of a transferring district. The information shall be preserved for future reference in the files of the district in which the rehabilitation occurred and the General Council.

c. Eligibility of previously dismissed. In the event a minister who has been dismissed requests reinstatement, the district shall first obtain permission from the General Council Credentials Committee before submitting an appropriate rehabilitation program as prescribed in Section 8 of this article. The dismissed minister shall not be eligible for reinstatement until the requirements for rehabilitation have been completed. Consideration may also be given to a minister if in the opinion of the credentials

committees he or she has satisfactorily fulfilled the remedial requirements of such rehabilitation.

Section 9. Referral for Action to the General Council Credentials Committee

a. District recommendation

(1) *Rehabilitation.* When a minister is to be placed in a rehabilitation program in accordance with Section 8 of this article, the district shall forward to the General Council Credentials Committee the specific charges and recommended terms of rehabilitation. The district shall inform the minister involved of its action and, where applicable, the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation.

(2) *Dismissal.* When a minister has been found guilty of violating any of the Assemblies of God principles as set forth in Bylaws, Article X, Section 3, and it is determined that rehabilitation is not feasible or fails, a minister's credentials are to be terminated by dismissal. The district shall forward to the General Council Credentials Committee the specific charges and its recommendation for dismissal. The district shall inform the minister involved of its action and, where applicable, the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation.

(3) *Subsequent dismissal.* Should evidence come to light following a minister's resignation, or the lapse of his or her credentials, of conduct occurring prior to his or her resignation or lapse of credentials that would constitute grounds for disciplinary action under Article X, Section 3, of these Bylaws, the district at its discretion may request the General Council Credentials Committee to change that minister's status from lapsed or resigned to dismissed. The district shall inform the minister involved of its action and, where applicable, the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation. All rights of appeal will apply.

b. General Council Credentials Committee action. The General Council Credentials Committee shall consider the recommendation of the district and shall concur if in its judgment the district was justified in the action taken. If the General Council Credentials Committee does not concur, it may remand the case, together with its recommendations, back to the district for review and reconsideration. The district shall report the results of its recommendation to the General Council Credentials Committee for final disposition.

c. General Council to hold information. All pertinent information relating to the disciplinary action taken against a minister shall be preserved for future reference in the office of the General Council Credentials Committee.

d. Final disposition. The general secretary shall notify the minister and the district(s) involved of the final disposition of the case

Section 10. Right of Appeal

a. Filing of appeal to the General Council Credentials Committee. The right of appeal applies to all actions of discipline and termination of credentials other than lapsing or resigning on the initiative of the minister. An accused minister shall have 30 days from the date notification of the General Council Credentials Committee decision was mailed to appeal to the General Council Credentials Committee. The minister shall be apprised officially of this right at the time notification is given to the minister of the decision of the General Council Credentials Committee. The appeal is to be sent to the office of the general superintendent, and should include any new or exculpatory information not

previously considered, with copies sent to the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation and any other districts involved.

b. Consideration of appeal by the General Council Credentials Committee. The General Council Credentials Committee may respond to the appeal in one of the following ways:

(1) *Remanding of case to the district.* If in the judgment of the General Council Credentials Committee, justice has not been served, the case shall be remanded to the district presbytery for review and reconsideration. The district shall report the results of its review to the General Council Credentials Committee for final disposition.

(2) *Denial of appeal.*

(a) *Forfeiture of right of appeal.* No appeal shall be granted by remanding the case to the district presbytery if proof is found of willful neglect on the part of the accused to take advantage of available rights and privileges during the district hearing (see Section 5, 6, & 7 of this Article).

(b) *Insufficient grounds.* The General Council Credentials Committee shall have the prerogative to determine whether there is sufficient cause to grant an appeal, and remand the case to the district.

c. Right of appeal to the General Presbytery. A disciplined minister whose appeal has been denied by the General Council Credentials Committee may appeal to the General Presbytery. An accused minister shall have 30 days from the date notification of the General Council Credentials Committee decision was mailed to appeal to the General Presbytery. The appeal is to be sent to the office of the general superintendent, and should include any new or exculpatory information not previously considered, with copies sent to the superintendent of the minister's district of affiliation and any other districts involved. The decision of the General Presbytery shall be final.

Section 11. Publication of Dismissal

No publication of a dismissed minister's name shall be made until the district has been advised by the office of the general secretary that such has been authorized by the General Council Credentials Committee. An additional 30 days from the date of the notification shall be given the dismissed minister to exercise the right of appeal.

Section 12. Reinstatement of Credentials

a. Authorization. Application for reinstatement may be made through the district council within which territory the applicant resides. The application shall be considered subject to the approval of the district in which the termination was made.

b. Minimal time-lapse for dismissed ministers. The minimal time-lapse required before a minister who has been dismissed is eligible for reinstatement shall be 1 year, except it shall be 2 years for a minister who has been dismissed because of charges as stated in Bylaws, Article X, Section 3, paragraph a. The time-lapse shall be computed from the date of the district presbytery action as it appears on the ministerial status report filed with the General Council Credentials Committee. (See Bylaws, Article VII, Section 10, for other renewals and reinstatements.)

c. Rehabilitation obligatory. When a minister has been dismissed from our Fellowship and applies for reinstatement, he or she shall comply with the procedures for rehabilitation outlined in Section 8, paragraph c, of this Article.

d. Option to refer to General Presbytery. The General Council Credentials Committee may also hold the reinstatement of a minister's credentials in abeyance until the next session of the General Presbytery in order that the General Presbytery may have the opportunity to review the case, in which event the matter of reinstatement of such minister may be left entirely with that body.

e. Reinstatement fee. When applying for reinstatement the minister must include a \$100 reinstatement fee with the application to be divided equally between the district council and the General Council.

Section 13. Notice

Notice shall be deemed to have been given to a minister by certified mail from the district or General Council Credentials Committee on the basis of the last address furnished to the district or General Council by the minister. In the event the certified letter is returned as undeliverable for any reason, notice will have been deemed to have been given in view of the fact it is the minister's responsibility to furnish the district or General Council his or her address, and to accept lawful mail.²³⁷

²³⁷ General Presbytery of the General Council of the Assemblies of God. (2009). <http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/2009%20Constitution%20&%20Bylaws%20with%20Minutes.pdf>.