

No. 8921

RESOLUTION CONCERNING ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL CONDUCT

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee, Board, and Regional Assembly of the Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ) perceive tension and distrust between all levels of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—congregations, pastors, districts/areas, regions, general units, and recognized organizations—and we seek to help establish and strengthen mutual relationships of trust and covenant between all facets of the church; and

WHEREAS, this discord is most evident in the growing number of churches throughout our regions experiencing conflict, conflict which too often raises ethical questions concerning the relationship of pastor and parish; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1950's the Local Church Life Committee of the Home and State Missions Planning Council of the United Christian Missionary Society published "A Code of Ethics for Local Congregations;" and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church in Kansas (Disciples of Christ) recently completed the first major revision of this code since its original publication, working through several drafts before these "Ethical Guidelines For Congregational Conduct" were received and recommended for use in Kansas' congregations by our 1988 Regional Assembly; and

WHEREAS, this document offers practical helps in dealing with congregational life that is both scriptural and Disciple in its orientation, and addresses the priority of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) "to develop vital congregations as dynamic faith communities in prophetic, redemptive, and reconciling ministries to the whole world" (General Assembly Resolution 8730);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 28-August 2, 1989, receive these "Ethical Guidelines For Congregational Conduct" for use as regions and congregations deem proper.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL CONDUCT

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

1. The minister should suggest to the Church Board and/or any other appropriate body that they spend parts of each meeting discussing these Guidelines until they have worked through the entire document.
2. A sufficient number of copies should be available to provide:
 - a supply of extra copies for future use
 - a copy for each discussion group participant
 - copies for each "New Member Packet"
 - copies for each new board member
 - copies for the church library (available to any church member)
3. Schedule a series of congregational discussions - publicize the dates and places.
4. After thorough discussion in various classes, committees, groups, and/or the cabinet, the Board is encouraged to submit its recommendation to the Congregation for adoption of the guidelines.

5. In studying each section of the Guidelines it will make the process more personal and helpful if the following questions are discussed:
- a. How do the suggested scriptures and Disciple traditions inform our consideration of this part of the Guidelines? Are there other scriptures and parts of the Disciple tradition that would enhance the study of this section?
 - b. What are the implications of this (these) statement(s)? What does it mean? Why was it included? What are the problems or concerns it addresses?
 - c. What is our congregation's policy at this point? How have we handled such situations in the past? How do we want to handle them in the future?
 - d. What specific steps should be taken to fulfill our responsibilities on this point? To what person or group should the responsibility be assigned?
 - e. Would we be willing to approve this part of the Guidelines? If not, what changes are suggested?
 - f. How can our congregation put the principles of these Guidelines into practice?

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCE MATERIALS

Following each of the seven sections of the document there is a box (lines) that begins with the statement "For Study Refer To:". Inside the box are two sets of information: 1) *Scripture*, and 2) *Disciples*. If there are letter designations beside them [a., b., c., d., etc.], the remarks correspond to the letter designations in the preceding section of the document. If there are no letter designations, the remarks apply to the preceding section in general. The following materials quoted in the study section of the Guidelines were authored by Alexander Campbell:

The Christian System
The Campbell-Owen Debate
The Millennial Harbinger
The Christian Baptist

Non-inclusive terminology by Alexander Campbell has not been altered in respect for historical accuracy. However, it is the intention of these Guidelines that they be understood in this age to be inclusive in their intent. These supplementary materials are designed to enhance your study of the Historical Guidelines For Congregational Conduct."

FOR STUDY REFER TO:**Scripture:**

(General) Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16; 5:1

I Peter 2: 9-10

II Cor. 5: 17-19

a. Phil 1:9; 2: 1-4; Jn. 13: 34-35; Rom. 3:10

b. I Cor. 12: 12-26; Matt. 5: 23-25; Rom. 12: 3-8

c. Gal. 5: 13-15; James 4: 11-12; Matt. 7: 1-5; 18: 15-17; Eph. 4: 31-32

d. I Cor. 10: 31-11:1; Gal. 5: 22-25; Phil. 1:27

Disciples Tradition

a. The law of love is the supreme law of religion, morality, and expediency. No code of laws, without it, could make or keep any people ... peaceable, and happy... We cannot love by law, but we can walk in love with no other law but that of love. *Christian System*, 1839, p. 100

...Love has a transfiguring or transforming efficacy upon the human mind. To impress the image of God upon the human heart, it is necessary that the love of God should be exhibited to the human mind. *Campbell-Owen Debate*, 1829, p. 373

b. "In essentials, Unity; In non-essentials, Liberty, In all things, Charity (love)."

d. The character of the new man is an elevated character. Feeling himself a son and heir of God, he cultivates the temper, spirit, and behavior, which correspond with so exalted a relation ... The character which Jesus sustained amongst men, is the model of his daily imitation. His ... aspiration is —

"Thy Fair example I would trace,
To teach me what I ought to be;
Make me by thy transforming grace,
Lord Jesus, daily more like thee!"

Millennial Harbinger, 1833, p. 357

II.

**OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS
TO OUR CHURCH OFFICERS AND LEADERS**

- a. We will select our officers intentionally and impartially on the basis of their commitment, competence, compassion and maturity in the faith. We are committed to having men, women and youth serve in the various responsibilities of the congregation.
- b. We will endeavor to distribute our offices among many persons and be appreciative of the services of every member.
- c. We will provide them opportunities for training, skill development and faith formation. We will provide the resources needed for each to be an effective leader.
- d. We will nurture through encouragement and prayer our officers, committees, classes, auxiliary groups and the board of the congregation.
- e. We will expect our officers to manifest Christian principles in their conduct.
- f. We will offer constructive support and feedback to our officers and leaders.

FOR STUDY REFER TO:**Scripture**

(General) Matt. 23: 1-12;

Mk. 10: 42-45; 9:35

I Peter 5: 1-3; Col. 3: 12-17

I Tim. 3: 1-13; Titus 1: 5-9

Disciples Tradition

(General)

By virtue of membership in the church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people. Within the corporate ministry, each Christian fulfills her or his own calling as a servant of Christ sent into the world to minister. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall seek to provide all its members with opportunities to exercise this ministry.

The Design for the Christian Church, paragraph 90

The offices of the eldership and the diaconate are ordered by the congregations, through election and recognition with appropriate ceremony, for the performance of certain functions of ministry appropriate to the offices. (a) A person elected to the eldership is authorized to exercise within the congregation which elects him or her to ministerial functions which it assigns for periods of time which it specifies, such as: sharing in the ministration of the Lord's Supper and the conduct of worship, and sharing in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The eldership is a voluntary ministry, each congregation having a plurality of elders. (b) A person elected to the diaconate is authorized to serve in the congregation which elects him or her for periods of time which it specifies by assisting in the ministration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the conduct of worship, and in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation. The diaconate is also a voluntary ministry.

The Design for the Christian Church, paragraph 97

III. OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS TO OUR MINISTER(S)

- a. When seeking a minister, we will follow our denominational guidelines, work through the Regional Office, and will conduct all negotiations with integrity, courtesy and orderly procedure, without unfair discrimination with regard to marital status, sex, age or race.
- b. We will keep informed on how ministers are compensated in our denomination through information supplied by the Pension Fund of the Christian Church and by the regional office, and will support our ministers with salary, housing, a pension plan, health insurance, necessary expense funds, vacation, and the time and financial means for continuing education consistent with the demands and resources of our congregation.
- c. We will provide our minister with necessary facilities and equipment for his or her work and will respect study hours. We will be considerate of the need for rest and relaxation and will be sensitive to the need for time with family.
- d. We will respect the time and talents of members of the minister's family and will have no greater expectations of them than of other lay people.
- e. We will grant our minister responsible freedom of the pulpit and the right to present Christian convictions without fear.
- f. We will respect and cooperate with our minister's spiritual and intellectual leadership.
- g. We will call on our present minister for weddings, funerals and other special services. Our former ministers or others unconnected with the congregation may be invited to participate in such services only when appropriate and at the present minister's invitation.
- h. We will cooperate with our minister to best utilize our congregation's talents in fulfilling the mission of the church.
- i. We will keep our minister informed when pastoral services are needed.
- j. We will support our minister's reasonable participation in District, Regional, and/or General activities of the denomination, as well as civic and ecumenical activities.
- k. We will encourage and assist our minister through constructive feedback, appropriate praise, constant prayer and faithful participation with him or her in ministry.
- l. Because the congregation is a priesthood of believers that minister to one another (pastor to the congregation and congregation to the pastor), our relationships in the church will be covenantal as well as contractual, and we will maintain and conclude all pastoral relationships in a spirit of Christian love.

- m. The church will be sensitive and will voluntarily find specific ways to go the second mile in ministry with love, compassion and trust in the event of personal and/or family crisis, illness of the minister or minister's family, a death in the family, psychological or emotional difficulties or other extenuating circumstances.
- n. We will have an active Pastoral Relations Committee or a corresponding body to continually monitor the relationship between our minister and the congregation, and we will call on the assistance of the regional staff before a conflict situation grows into a crisis.
- o. We will observe similar appropriate principles with all other professional staff of our congregation.

FOR STUDY REFER TO:

Scripture

(General) Eph. 4: 11-14; Phil. 2: 19-22
II Cor. 6: 3-10; 8: 16-19; 8: 22-24

b. I Cor. 9: 1-10; Gal. 6:6

m. Gal. 6: 2; Rom. 12: 15; Matt. 18: 21-25

Disciples Tradition

a. & n. Within policies developed by the General Assembly, regions certify the standing of ministers and provide help, counsel and pastoral care to ministers and congregations in such matters as: ordination, licensing, ministerial relocation, establishment and dissolution of pastoral relationships, and installations of ministers. Regions seek to supply a minister for congregations without full-time pastoral services and offer counsel and assistance in cases of difficulties between ministers and congregations.

The Design for the Christian Church, paragraph 95

**IV.
OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS
TO OUR COMMUNITY AND/OR COUNTRY**

- a. We accept our missional responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of our community. We agree to live in a manner consistent with our Christian convictions.
- b. Because our Christian convictions set the standard for our citizenship, our faith will lead us to be informed, to respect law, to vote our conscience and to influence government officials in working toward a just and morally responsible community.
- c. We will be attentive to the moral and ethical implications of every project we are asked to support.
- d. We will maintain a good credit standing in the community. We will expect our staff to do the same.
- e. We will respect the rights and privileges of persons living near the church and will endeavor not to inconvenience our neighbors nor to harm their property.
- f. We will establish no barriers that might prevent anyone from worshiping with us.
- g. We will work in a complementary way with community service agencies and organizations to most effectively serve and improve our community.

FOR STUDY REFER TO:

Scripture

(General) Matt. 10: 35-37; 25: 31-46; 28: 18-20
Phil. 1: 29-30; I Jn. 5: 17-18
James 1: 26-27; 2: 14-17

Disciples Tradition

- a. ...It is ... as essential to our usefulness in this world as it is to our Christian integrity and purity, that truth and justice be supreme in all our transactions with men.
Millennial Harbinger, 1838, pp. 386-389
- b. In our country and government, every man is responsible for his vote. When therefore ... there is a question or a crisis involving, as he judges, any good, or the prevention of any evil, it is his duty to God, who gives him a vote, and it is his duty to man, to use, or to give that vote, to that person, or to that measure, which will, in his judgement, insure the most good, or of two evils to prevent the greater, by voting for the less.
Millennial Harbinger, 1857, p. 174

**V.
OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS
TO THE CHURCHES IN OUR COMMUNITY**

- a. We will seek to understand the beliefs and practices of others. While we may be constructively critical of their doctrine, we will refrain from unkind remarks about people who differ from us.
 - b. We will encourage unity and harmony among the various communions of Christian peoples and will give evidence of our sincerity through participation at appropriate local, state, national and/or world levels.
 - c. We will not be part of proselytizing members from other congregations in our community, nor will we exploit the problems or crises of other congregations. We will present the witness of our congregation in a manner not injurious to others.
 - d. We will respect the privilege of borrowing from other congregations.
 - e. We will consider sharing our facilities according to the necessities of the community and the purpose for which they are needed.
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FOR STUDY REFER TO:

Disciples Tradition

With all this evidence before us, we must plead for cooperation among all the citizens of Messiah's kingdom ...

Millennial Harbinger, 1838, pp. 268-269

... a combination ... of churches is essential to accomplish some of the great objects of Christian ... humanity.

Millennial Harbinger, 1850, pp. 500-501

Churches are all equal and independent in some respects, but not in all. They are also all equally subordinate to one another in the Lord.

Millennial Harbinger, 1841, pp. 46-47

**VI.
OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS
TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

- a. We will seek to know and to understand the various points of view within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and will respect the opinions of those whose interpretations differ from our own.
 - b. We will recognize our covenantal relationship with the Disciples and will give generous and prayerful support to our programs at home and overseas.
 - c. We will endeavor to know, claim and live our identity as set forth in the *Preamble for the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and be knowledgeable about the actions of the District, Regional, and General Assemblies.
 - d. Mission gifts received by our congregation will be used for their intended purpose(s). Budget commitments for world outreach causes are as binding as those secured for our local obligations.
 - e. We will encourage our minister(s) and our members to serve beyond the local congregation in the Cluster, District, Regional and/or General manifestations of Disciple work.
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FOR STUDY REFER TO:

Disciples Tradition

As members of the Christian Church,
We confess that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of the living God,
and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.

In Christ's name and by his grace
we accept our mission of witness
and service to all people.

We rejoice in God,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and in the covenant of love
which binds us to God and one another.
Through baptism into Christ
we enter into newness of life
and are made one with the whole people of God.

In the communion of the Holy Spirit
we are joined together in discipleship
and in obedience to Christ.

At the table of the Lord
we celebrate with thanksgiving
the saving acts and presence of Christ.

Within the universal church
we receive the gift of ministry
and the light of scripture.

In the bonds of Christian faith
we yield ourselves to God
that we may serve the One
whose kingdom has no end.

Blessing, glory and honor
be to God forever. Amen.

The Design for the Christian Church, paragraph 1

In order that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through free and voluntary relationships may faithfully express the ministry of Christ made known through scripture, may provide comprehensiveness in witness, mission and service, may furnish means by which congregations may fulfill their ministries with faithfulness in Christian stewardship, may assure both unity and diversity, and may advance responsible ecumenical relationships, as a response to God's covenant, we commit ourselves to one another in adopting this design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Design for the Christian Church, paragraph 4

**VII.
OUR RELATIONSHIP AS MEMBERS
TO THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL**

- a. With the church universal we proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the world. In his name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.
- b. We are bound to God and one another through covenant, and through baptism we are made one with the whole people of God.
- c. We are called to express the unity God bestows by ecumenical study, dialogue, cooperation and expression.
- d. Because all Christians in the church universal have the obligation to uphold the Christian life in the face of the evil forces of our day, we will cooperate with other church bodies in living the Christian witness.
- e. We will support acceptable agencies of Christian cooperation in local, national and/or global manifestations of the Church's life.
- f. So as to establish no barriers that might prevent any of Jesus' followers from communing with us, we will remember that He invites his believers to the Lord's Table in the spirit of Christian love and unity.

FOR STUDY REFER TO:

Scripture

(General) Phil. 2: 5-11

b. Jer. 31: 31-34; Matt. 26: 26-28;

I Cor. 11: 23-25; Heb. 9: 15a

I Cor. 12: 13, 27

c. Acts 17: 26a; Eph. 4: 3-7; John 17: 20-21

d. Eph. 6: 12-17

Disciples Tradition

Unity is our Polar Star. The Church is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.

b. ... the word church, in the singular number, is, by sacred and apostolic usage, often made to represent all the churches in a nation, an empire, or in the world. It is a term used as commensurate with the whole body of Christ, or the entire community of all the faithful on earth. Hence, there is but one kingdom of Christ, one body of Christ, or one church of Christ on earth. The word church, by reference to its occurrences in the New Testament, indicates the whole Christian community on earth.

Millennial Harbinger, 1853, p. 303

d. Ever since the commencement of this kingdom, the governments of this world have either been directly opposed to it, or, at best, pretended friends; and therefore their influence has always been opposed to the true spirit and genius of the Christian institution. Christians have nothing to expect from them except liberty of conscience and protection from violence, while leading peaceable and quiet lives, in all godliness and honesty, till Jesus take to himself his great power, and hurl all these potentates from their thrones and make his cause triumphant, - a consummation devoutly to be wished, and which cannot now be regarded as far distant.

Christian System, 1839, pp. 170-171

e. ... Committees of ways and means are required. Executive councils, financiers, and general agents, are indispensable to success. These duties ought not to be assumed - no one church, any more than any one individual, could or should assume such responsibilities. Does Christianity leave all these interests to ... mere chance, to individual wisdom, or to individual caprice? ... Why should "children of this world be more prudent in conducting their affairs than the children of light?" If, in the affairs of this world, there are legislative, judiciary, and executive departments necessary; ... why should it be thought ... improper for Christians to have their deliberative bodies, their conventions, for the sake of the concentration of their energies in the accomplishment of their duties to themselves and to the world?

Millennial Harbinger, 1850, pp. 500-501

f. ... I am inconsistent with my own principles when "any evangelical sect or congregation" shall have welcomed me to their communion and I have refused it.

Christian Baptist, 1826, pp. 237-238

Upon the loaf and upon the cup of the Lord, in letters which speak ... to the heart of every disciple, is inscribed, "When this you see, remember me." ... Each disciple, in handing the symbols to his fellow disciple, says, in effect, "You, my brother, once an alien, ... are now brought home to the family of God. You have owned your Lord as your Lord, my people as your people. Under Jesus the Messiah we are one."

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

Christian System, 1839, pp. 329-331

These Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct were adopted by the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kansas, meeting October 13-15, 1988.

We the members of

_____ of _____
(name of church) (name of city)

on the _____ day of _____, 19____

desire to uphold the covenantal relationships we share with

one another,
our church officers and leaders,
our minister(s),
our community and country,
the churches in our community
the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Church universal
regarding these guidelines.

Signed on behalf of the Congregation by:

_____, Chair of the Board

Reaffirmed: _____ (date) _____ (Board Chair)

Reaffirmed: _____ (date) _____ (Board Chair)

Reaffirmed: _____ (date) _____ (Board Chair)