

# CHURCH OF GOD SOUTHWEST REGION



## MINISTERIAL MANUAL

South California & Arizona  
"Synergy - CAAZ"

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# SECTION I

[INTRODUCTION](#)

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## INTRODUCTION

In the construction of buildings, mainly in the Middle East and Europe, one can see pillars or columns. In architecture and building engineering, a column or pillar is a structural element that transmits, through compression, the weight of the structure above to other structural elements below. The model we propose here consists of five pillars that support the building, growth and development of disciples, pastors, and congregations in our region. These pillars are formation, evangelism, revitalization, community outreach, and Self-Care.

This ministerial manual serves as the foundation for 24/34 Vision. It is based on the words of the Lord Jesus when He said in Matthew 24:34 *“Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”*. The document is like the architectural blueprint upon which the work of the Church of God, Hispanic Southwest Region (Southern California and Arizona) will be built. We believe that God will fulfill His purpose for our region in the next ten years. An important part of this blueprint is the flexible adaptability for each pastor to contextualize it and apply it to his congregation.

The local church is the main element in the structure of the Southwest Region and the Church of God internationally. It is where heaven confronts hell, the lost find salvation, the sick find healing and families are restored. The local church is an assembly of followers or disciples of Jesus. The pattern we see in the New Testament is that each person needs a healthy local expression of the church where he or she can grow in relationship with God and with others. The New Testament writers painstakingly remind us that a church is not simply something we go to, but a family to which we belong.

Our mission has to do with more than just preaching the gospel with words. We must also fulfill it through social acts of love that feed the needy, that help the homeless, that minister to the incarcerated, the addicted and all those who have been deemed hopeless by society.

It is vital that pastors and ministers can recognize the value of living in community and to avoid living as independent islands to themselves. It was God who created all the emotional responses in human beings for their protection and preservation. However, it is one thing to have a small level of anxiety about something and another to become anxious and lonely people. God said it was not good for man (humans) to be alone. Therefore, any anxiety that comes because of our relationships cannot be compared to what happens if we choose to live in a bubble, separate and isolated. As Pastor Rick Warren, who lost a son after a long process of depression that led him to take his own life, says "we are better together". So, we want to work under one mission, one vision and one goal.

## CHURCH OF GOD

### ARTICLE I

Name: The official name shall be Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

### ARTICLE II

Legal Recognition: The Church of God is incorporated in the State of Tennessee (United States) as a not-for-profit organization and is recognized as an entity under 501(c)(3), or corresponding sections of existing or future codes of the United States Internal Revenue Code.



### ARTICLE III

Government: The recent edition of the Minutes of the International General Assembly of the Church of God contains the decisions of the last session of the International General Assembly, the updated Articles of Government, the Rules of Order, Church Discipline, and these Bylaws.

### ARTICLE IV

Mission Statement: The mission of the Church of God is to communicate the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20), in the Spirit and power of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 13-18) (A71, 2006, p. 44).

### ARTICLE V

Membership: The membership of the Church of God shall be composed of Christians who have accepted the teachings, doctrines, and polity of the Church of God, and who have been formally received into the fellowship in accordance with the rules established by the International General Assembly. Procedures for the exclusion of members shall be established by the International General Assembly upon the recommendation of the International General Council.

## DECLARATION OF FAITH

The Church of God believes and upholds the whole Bible, to be completely and equally inspired and that it is the written Word of God. The New Testament is its only rule of government and discipline. The Church of God has adopted the following Declaration of Faith as the official standard of its doctrine.

We believe:

- In the verbal inspiration of the Bible.
- In one God eternally existing in three persons, namely: the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.
- That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried and raised



from the dead. That he ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as our Intercessor.

- That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for the forgiveness of sins.
- That justification, regeneration and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
- In sanctification, subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word and by the Holy Ghost.
- Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people.
- In the baptism with the Holy Ghost, subsequent to a clean heart.
- In speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost.
- In water baptism by immersion, and that all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
- Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.
- In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet.
- In the premillennial second coming Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on earth a thousand years.
- In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked.

## DOCTRINAL COMMITMENTS

The denomination has summarized its most important beliefs in the following Doctrinal Commitments, as set forth in Scripture.

- Repentance: Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19.
- Justification: Romans 5:1; Titus 3:7.
- Regeneration: Titus 3:5.
- New birth: John 3:3; I Peter 1:23; I John 3:9.
- Sanctification, subsequent to justification: Romans 5:2; I Corinthians 1:30; I Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:12.
- Holiness: Luke 1:75; I Thessalonians 4:7; Hebrews 12:14.
- Water baptism: Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9-10; John 3:22-23; Acts 8:36-38.
- Baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart; the impartation of power for service: Matthew 3:11; Luke 24:49, 53; Acts 1:4-8.

- Speaking with other tongues, as the Spirit gives utterance as the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost: John 15:26; Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-7.
- The Church: Exodus 19:5-6; Psalms 22:22; Matthew 16:13-19; 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; 7:38; 20:28; Romans 8:14-17; I Corinthians 3:16, 17; 12:12-31; II Corinthians 6:16-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:9, 21; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 2:12; I Peter 2:9; I John 1:6-7; Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17.
- Spiritual gifts: I Corinthians 12:1, 7, 10, 10, 28, 31; 14:1.
- Signs will follow believers: Mark 16:17-20; Romans 15:18,19; Hebrews 2:4.
- The fruit of the Holy Ghost: Romans 6:22; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11.
- Divine healing provided for all in the atonement: Psalm 103:3; Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17; James 5:14-16; I Peter 2:24.
- The Lord's Supper: Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-26.
- The Washing of the Feet of the Saints: John 13:4-17; I Timothy 5:9-10.
- Tithes and offerings: Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22; Malachi 3:10; Luke 11:42; I Corinthians 9:6-9; 16:2; Hebrews 7:1-21.
- Restitution where possible: Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8-9.
- The premillennial second coming Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on earth a thousand years: I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4: 15-17; II Thessalonians 2:1. Second, to reign over the earth for a thousand years: Zechariah 14:4; I Thessalonians 4:14; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude verses 14-15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21; 20:4-6.
- Resurrection: John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:5-6.
- Eternal life for the righteous: Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; I John 5:11-13.
- Eternal punishment for the wicked, without deliverance or annihilation: Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 3:29; II Thessalonians 1:8,-9; Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOUTHWESTERN HISPANIC REGION

### Southern California and Arizona

It all began in the 1940's with a broad and passionate vision for the Hispanic field. God motivated several leaders of the Church of God. J.H. Walker was one of the first in the work among the Spanish speaking people inside and outside the United States.

However, it was not until after the 1945 General Assembly that important appointments were made within the denomination. One such appointment in the Latin world was that of missionary Vessie D. Hargrave. He was appointed director of the Latin American office based in San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Hargrave was known for his enthusiastic and sacrificial heart for the work among Spanish speakers. Although he spoke Spanish, he needed someone with Latin roots and background to assist him in the great task God had placed on his shoulders. In a providential way, after finishing his theological studies, Josué Beltrán Rubio arrived in San Antonio, Texas, and was convinced that his arrival and closeness with Dr. Vessie Hargrave was God's will. It was during prayer, conversations, and adversities that the first Hispanic Church of God was born in San Antonio, Texas, under the leadership of Brother Beltrán Rubio. Although Spanish-speaking congregations already existed in Raton, New Mexico and Coachella, California, at that time they were attached to the Church of God in Mexico. It was in Texas that the work was made official among the Spanish-speaking people in the United States under the supervision of Dr. Vessie D. Hargrave.

### **Decade of the 60s**

The Hispanic/Latino work continued to move forward at a slow but steady pace under Dr. Hargrave's supervision until 1962, when the Latin American office was dissolved to become field superintendencies. In the summer of that same year, Brother Josué Beltrán Rubio and his wife Venette were appointed overseers of the vast West Mississippi territory. After some time, the Rubios made a proposal to the executive committee for two territories to be created in the West, which would include the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Utah.

Under the direction of Overseer Josué Beltrán Rubio, the office was established in San Jose, California. Years later it was moved to the Fresno, California area.

Beltran and Venette Rubio's first overseership was from 1962 to 1974. During that period more than 34 new congregations were planted. Subsequently, they were reappointed in the years 1980 to 1986.

After the Rubios, the West received the appointments of recognized and passionate servants of God, among them Hector H. and Loida Camacho, who served as overseers from 1974 to 1978. They promoted and planted new districts and congregations. The executive committee appointed Clyde and Erma Hargrave from 1978 to 1980. In their short time, they kept the work going. In 1986 Overseers Beltrán and Venette were replaced by Cornelio and Annette Castelo. Among Dr. Castelo's notable efforts was the acquisition of property in Upland, California, from which the territorial office operated for several years.

Victor and Ada Pagan received the appointment to be the new overseers from 1990 to 1994. They had to travel hundreds of miles visiting churches in the seven states that made up the West territory. In the 1994 Assembly, the decision was made to create two territories: the North Central Territory and the Southwest Territory.

Hiram and Maria Luisa Almirudis, were appointed overseers at that 1994 Assembly. Due to health reasons, Dr. Almirudis was only able to serve as overseer until the end of the summer of 1995. The executive committee then, in place of the Almirudis, appointed Fidencio and Dora Burgueño, who served as bishops of the Southwest Hispanic Region from 1995 to 2006. Aside from the continued expansion of the work in the Region and the establishment of ministerial formation programs, the move of the office from a home garage in Upland to the retreat center in Sky Valley, California was among the more notable accomplishments of their administration.

From 2006-2008 the region had David and Fernanda Ramírez as regional bishops, who, in their short time in office, inspired and motivated the pastoral ministry to seek excellence in their ministerial and personal work.

In the late summer of 2008, the office welcomed Samuel and Ivette Santana, pastors of this same region, as the new Bishop administrators until the last assembly in 2022. Under their management (among others) the region acquired the property in Upland, California from where the regional office now operates.

Since the last International General Assembly 2022, the region rejoices in the administration of Dr. Victor and his wife Giovanna Cruz. The pastoral and regional Church is confident that there will be a season of SYNERGY, which will result in integral growth. Among his ministerial efforts, Bishop Cruz established the 24/34 Vision, based on Matthew 24:34 which will govern the work for pastors, churches, and ministries for the next years 2024 to 2034.

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE BISHOP</b>	<b>WIFE</b>	<b>YEARS OF SERVICE</b>
Vessie Hargrave	Bessie May Hargrave	1954-1962
Josué B. Rubio	Venette Rubio	1962-1974 / 1980-1986
Hector H. Camacho	Loida Camacho	1974-1978
CC Hargrave	Erma Joy Hargrave	1978-1980
Cornelio Castelo	Julia Annette Castelo	1986-1990
Victor Pagan	Ada Pagan	1990-1994
Hiram S. Almirudis	Maria Luisi Almirudis	1994-1995
Fidencio L. Burgueño	Dora Burgueño	1995-2006
David E. Ramirez	Fernanda Ramirez	2006-2008
Samuel Santana	Yvette Santana	2008-2022
Victor J. Cruz	Giovanna Cruz	2022-present

# SECTION II

<u>MISSION</u>
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2. <u>A church in faithfulness</u>
3. <u>A church in unity</u>
4. <u>A church on mission</u>
5. <u>A church in harvest</u>
6. <u>A healing church</u>
7. <u>A church in the Spirit</u>
8. <u>A growing church</u>
9. <u>A church in formation</u>
10. <u>A church on the move</u>





## MISSION

The mission of the Southwest Hispanic Region is to reach every city and every community within Southern California and Arizona through relevant, challenging, loving, Holy Ghost-led gospel preaching.

## VISION

Formation • Evangelism • Revitalization • Community Outreach • Self-Care

We will promote the **formation** of ministers and leaders, while motivating the membership towards **evangelism** and **revitalization** in the local churches. We will create spaces of awareness around **community outreach** and **Self-Care**.

## OBJECTIVES

### Training

- Train ministers: in our region we believe that all ministers and laity should actively and continuously participate in some form of educational improvement and growth related to their current ministerial status.

### Evangelism

- Reaching the lost: in our region we believe that the command of the Lord Jesus to preach to the whole world has not yet been fulfilled, so we must work to evangelize one more for the divine kingdom.

### Revitalization

- Revitalize the church: In our region we believe that the local church must keep alive its passion for worship, service, ministry, communication of the gospel and participation in the life of the church.

### Community Outreach

- Integral mission: in our region we believe that one of the primary endeavors of Pentecost is that we are motivated by love to reach out to the poor, needy, and destitute in our region and in the world.

### Self-Care

- Caring for ministers: In our region we believe that healthy ministers lead healthy churches. We promote the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of every man and woman who participates in the work of the ministry.

## OUR VALUES

### 1. A church in prayer



Prayer is the key to the revelation, establishment, and sustenance of the church. Through prayer we connect to the divine designs for ourselves, our families, and our congregations. An emphasis on prayer should be paramount in every congregation. God wants to reveal His will to us, and it is through individual and congregational prayer life that we can receive that revelation, (Amos 3:7-8; Matthew 18:19-20).

### 2. A church in faithfulness



Our faithfulness has several dimensions: faithfulness to the call, faithfulness to the Lord, faithfulness to the Church of God and faithfulness in our family. If we remain faithful to these four dimensions it will result in a synergy that will help us to establish a firm and powerful foundation on which we can build the vision of the Southwest Region, (2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23).

### 3. A church in unity



One of the wishes of our Lord Jesus Christ regarding the disciples after His departure, was the unity of the people. Unity makes us understand that we are much better and stronger when we are together. A united people will accomplish much more than they could if their effort is solitary and isolated. There is great power when we live in the unity of the Spirit, (John 17:21-23; Philippians 1:27).

### 4. A church on mission



The mission of the church is the same since the Lord told us that we should go into all the world preaching and teaching the gospel of His love. A gospel of power based on the love the Father had for us when He gave us His only Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life, (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16; Ephesians 5:1-2).

### 5. A church in harvest



Part of the fulfillment of our mission implies that we sow the seed of the gospel everywhere. This involves identifying areas where there is still a need for a congregation to open its doors so that many people in that community have an entrance into the kingdom of God. Our sowing must be strategic, continuous, cross-cultural and with a global vision of the gospel, (Luke 10:2; Mark 4:30-32).

## 6. A healing church



In some instances, there are ministers who have misinterpreted the biblical mandate and try to create a hall of fame where congregants live in outward perfection. However, the church exists to heal the spiritual, emotional, and physical wounds of a suffering world. That is why Jesus Christ went to the cross for us. Every church should be like a hospital for its community, (Jeremiah 8:22; 33:6; Acts 3:16).

## 7. A church in the Spirit



One of the roles of the Holy Ghost in the church is to reveal, direct and empower us with the necessary tools that will enlist us to worthily represent the kingdom of God here on earth. Every person should allow the Holy Ghost to move genuinely and freely in our midst. A life in the Spirit is a life that learns to look at things as God sees them and makes its decisions according to that revelation brought about by the Holy Ghost, (Matthew 3:11; Mark 13:11).

## 8. A growing church



In the biological sense it is determined that every living being is born, develops, reproduces, and dies. In the spiritual sense, the church is not like that. God wants us to grow continuously without stopping and without excuses. If the church stops growing, then the end awaits us, just like biological beings: death. However, when we make every effort to expand, grow and reach others for the kingdom, we will see that each person brings life and the congregation will be strengthened, (Matthew 24:14; 2 Peter 3:9).

## 9. A church in formation



The times in which we live require people dedicated to study what God has revealed to us in His Holy Word. For some reason, there are people who resist biblical and theological study, when this was part of the Lord's mandate for His church. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ say that to search, study or analyze the Scriptures is a fundamental discipline since it is there where eternal life is found, (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:17).

## 10. A church on the move



Movement is one of the evidences or hallmarks of a life directed by the Holy Ghost. Movement has to do with creativity, and the opportunities that a church should provide for its members to develop their spiritual gifts and leadership abilities. A church in movement is willing to go beyond the walls of the temple. A church on the move is not limited to what happens there, rather, it connects with its community to serve it and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ to the whole world, (1 Timothy 4:14; Matthew 25:16).



# SECTION III

<b><u>IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES</u></b>
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## STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION

The church and the pastor of the local church are responsible for the implementation of this vision and mission. One of the main characteristics of this manual is flexibility and adaptability in relation to the different models and practices of each local church. We do not attempt to change the structure, vision, beliefs, and practices of each local church. We understand that we belong to the Church of God council, whose international offices are in Cleveland, Tennessee. Therefore, our government, discipline, doctrines, and practices are properly determined by the Minutes approved every 2 years at the International General Assembly. The interest of this vision and this regional mission is to empower, support and provide resources so that each pastor can reach the levels that God has determined for his church within the context of his location.

The local churches will be supported through the management of the District Overseers and the regional office. This rationale describes the notion expressed on multiple occasions by the bishop: the regional office and the bishop are not an oversight entity, but a resourcing unit for the districts and pastors of the local churches. The vision, mission, strategies, and other components of the 24/34 vision is to expand the vision that the Holy Ghost has already revealed to the men and women God has called and chosen for the holy ministry of leading a congregation.

In the parable of the talents, according to Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who went away and called his servants and gave them his goods. To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability; and then he went away. We know that at the end of this story two servants produced more, while another negligently buried what was entrusted to them and produced nothing. Pastors are the servants to whom the Lord has entrusted His church for us to manage, care for and grow. As we noticed in the passage of Matthew 25, the Lord does not look favorably upon mediocre attitudes. Elsewhere He expressed that not even the gates of hell will be able to stop the overwhelming and powerful advance of His church.

## STRATEGIC AREAS

### Introduction of Strategies

Matthew 24:34 *Verily I say unto you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*

The Church of God defines Synergy as the Action of two or more causes whose effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects. In the next 10 years our region will be governed under the theme of 24/34 Vision, based on Matthew 24:34. There the Lord gives us a promise of assurance that the next generation (10 years) will not pass until His divine designs are carried out.

In the context of Matthew 24:34 the Lord was making an eschatological statement related to the second coming of the Son of Man. So, these words have a sense of urgency for us in this generation as the end times are approaching. These next 10 years are pivotal in the divine clock for the Lord's church.

The idea being that He would return in glory during the lifetime of the people then living, and indeed some people defended this view, claiming that Jesus would reappear on earth not long after His death, perhaps at the fall of Jerusalem, to mark the end of the world.

A better view is that all these things refer to the distress indicated in verses 4-28 of Matthew 24, which must occur in the last days before Jesus comes again, but which does not mean that his coming would be immediate for the disciples at that time.

The men of the world plan and project generation after generation, but they do not plan with reference to the overwhelming, near and most certain event of the second coming of Christ, which will put an end to all human planning and put aside forever all that God forbids. That will be a day as startling as the flood was to the ancient world. For this reason, the church must be prepared for the fulfillment of His will for us at such a time as this. In the days of Esther, when the destruction of the Jewish people was being planned, the wise Mordecai had to make the young queen aware that she had come to reign for such a time as this. We too are part of a generation that seeks and longs for the final fulfillment of His will in such a time as this.

This 24/34 Vision challenges every church, pastor, and leader to accept their role in the fulfillment of God's will. The fields are ready, the harvest is plentiful; a generation of workers passionate about reaching the world without hidden agendas and legalistic attitudes is needed.

The next 5 areas define the strategic emphases that we will be developing in the region for the next 10 years. Once again, we know *that this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*

### Definition of Strategies

1. **Formation:** This strategy is geared toward the training and preparation of ministers in areas necessary for the proper fulfillment of their ministerial duties. In 1 Timothy 3:6,

Paul advises us that ministers should not be "neophytes" or a "new convert". The idea behind Paul's advice is that the new convert lacks the biblical, theological, and administrative formation which are necessary tools for all ministers. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul also advises us that the minister should be someone *"who correctly handles the word of truth"*. From the time a person arrives at the church, until they decide to accept their calling, it is imperative that they actively and continually participate in the formation process.

2. **Evangelism:** One of the timeliest ordinances for the church is when the Lord says in Mark 16:15, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"*. Here, He speaks to us of the extension of that ordinance "all the world"; and the multicultural character of the same "to all creation". On the other hand, this ordinance is not limited to ministers, but that all the sons and daughters of God must go out to share the gospel, until all know that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).
3. **Revitalization:** When the Holy Ghost came upon the believers in Acts 2, He breathed a life into the early Christians that would give them the boldness necessary to stand before magistrates, governors, and emperors to declare their faith. The church is meant to exhibit life and power before a dead and confused world. Sadly, some churches resemble the church at Sardis, to which the Lord said, *"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead"* (Revelation 3:1). The revitalization process, in the context of the church, awakens the sleeping, encourages the discouraged, lifts the fallen, uplifts the downtrodden, strengthens the weak, and motivates the apathetic.
4. **Community Outreach:** Community Outreach simply involves feeding the hungry, covering the homeless, and helping the needy. The Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 25:35-36 *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me"*. The church cannot ignore the fact that in our communities there are less fortunate people; people who would benefit from preaching through acts of love and charity.
5. **Self-Care:** One of the expressions that is normally applied to a life of holiness (which is necessary for all believers), is that of Paul saying that *"your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). Apart from holiness, the body must be treated with the respect and care that a temple deserves, especially if it is a temple of the Spirit. Ministerial self-care does just that, making ministers aware of the need to take care of themselves emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Such care extends to the immediate family. Our spouses and children should be treated with the sufficient care, dedication, and attention they need.

## Strategies Implementation

### PILLAR 1: FORMATION



### Strategy Implementation

#### Goals:

- Provide Biblical formation opportunities for pastors, ministers, and lay people in the Region.
- Develop formation programs including Bible Institutes, certification of ministries, chaplains, and higher education.
- Facilitate access to high-level practical and theological formation for the local Church.
- To train ministers and leaders prepared in the word, who respond to the call of the ministry in their local churches, and in the planting of new churches, under the power of the Holy Ghost, according to 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.

#### Objective:

Integral mission: In our region we believe that every pastor, minister and layperson needs to actively and continuously participate in some educational improvement and formation program applicable to their current ministerial status.

One of the most well-known biblical passages for the Church is Matthew 28:18-20, which is known as "The Great Commission". In it, Jesus Christ Himself urges His Church to emphasize the formation of disciples, and the call is imperative to go and make new disciples.

According to John Nolland, in that passage in which Jesus said, 'go and make disciples', Matthew had already introduced the idea of discipleship in chapter 13:52, where the images of people being discipled to be ambassadors of the kingdom were used and where the ambassadors were seen as the eleven, now in chapter 28:19, as a disciple being discipled. This idea shows us a model of "mentorship". In the formation pillar, we emphasize the need for disciples to form disciples.

Christian formation is an essential part of God's plan to save mankind, God has appointed teachers and ministries (Ephesians 4:11) to counsel and teach with all wisdom, that He may present them all perfect before Him (Colossians 1:28). The mission of Christian biblical teaching is that: that human beings may be converted to the Lord, in short, that they may experience a change of life.

The Church of this time needs to have a clear philosophy of Christian formation, since formation is of utmost importance for the healthy and integral life of the church. The Bible clearly teaches us the importance of formation for the church. In the lists of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8), teaching is mentioned as necessary for the edification of the body of Christ, that is, for the growth of believers, for their spiritual development and their continued sanctification.

When the preacher preaches, he teaches; when the counselor counsels, he teaches; when the teacher disciples, he teaches; and when the prophet prophesies, he teaches. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was widely known during His earthly ministry as "*rabbi*," teacher (Matthew 23:8; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26). During the extension of the early church and throughout its history, we can observe the presence of formation in the life of the church. The apostles and founders of the church used formation as an evangelistic, missionary, apologetic and theological means. Christian formation should be given the place and importance it deserves in the church. This means using it responsibly and allocating the necessary resources for its practice and development.

## Strategies

### A. Local Church

- Promote Christian education in the local church, directing the church to utilize the resources provided by the regional office.
- Have a Christian formation leader in the church who will serve as a liaison for the formation directors at the district and regional levels.
- Promote the Biblical Institutes of the region, and the higher education programs that the region provides (USAHEM, CLS, UTC, PTS, etc.).
- Promote formation events provided by the regional office.
- Encourage pastors, ministers, and laity to examine themselves for their credentials (Exhorter, Ordained, and Bishop).
- The local church as a recruiting center; identifying and sending ministers to be prepared in one of the formation centers of our educational system.

### B. District strategies

- The district overseer shall appoint a district formation coordinator (preferably the director of the district Bible institute) to serve as liaison for the regional formation director and the regional office.
- The district overseer shall promote the education program at all district activities.
- Serve as a liaison between the region's comprehensive vision and the local churches in their district.

### C. Strategies of the region

- To provide a Centralized Christian Ministry Certification program, through Bible Institutes, following the curriculum of the national office of Hispanic Educational Ministries (USAHEM).
- Offer Bible Institute Teacher Certification, formation, and capacity building for the faculty with ministerial enrichment workshops (2 times a year).
- Serve pastoral ministry through the Ministry Update Center, which consists of a quarterly course for pastors and credentialed leaders to provide tools relevant to the current need in ministry (One in California and One in Arizona 1 Quarterly Course).
- Overseeing the Credentialing process (Exhorter, Ordained, Bishop), and the examining board. Provide a curriculum for each credential (CAMS & MIP).
- Advising and being the link referring those interested in studying theology to the most appropriate programs in each case (UTC, PTS, SEMISUD, etc.).
- Coordinate the Women's Ministry Certification program.
- Coordinate the Chaplaincy program.
- Coordinate an annual Education Summit, with the purpose of revitalizing the Ministry of Education, in the face of the challenges of the present time.
- The regional education director, together with the administrative bishop, will form a board of education for the region, which will promote accountability within the comprehensive strategic plan.
- The regional education director will provide formation program information at all regional activities, providing information tables, display announcements, etc.

<b>Tools</b>	
»	<b>Marketing</b>
»	In the local church.
»	Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Website).
»	Newsletters, flyers, and other printed and electronic materials.
»	Local, district and regional events.
»	<b>Training</b>
»	Ministerial update.
»	Teacher certification and updating.
»	Workshops.
»	Education Summit.
»	<b>Awareness-raising</b>
»	Submit reports on the status and development of formation in our region. These reports shall be made periodically, and especially during district and regional activities.
»	<b>Implementation</b>

» The regional office will officially implement the 24/34 vision in January 2024.
» The pastors of the local church will inform their congregation about the 24/34 vision and motivate the membership to be part of it.
» District overseers will motivate pastors to actively participate in the vision 24/34.

### **Implementation dates**

- » The 24/34 vision will be implemented as of January 2024.
- » Local church formation leaders should meet with their teams at least once a month to plan and follow up on education activities in the region for implementation in their local church.
- » Hold planning meetings with district formation coordinators and local church leaders.
- » Monthly meetings of the regional education director with the district coordinators, wherein they will be informed of progress, projects, and events, and an evaluation of the development of the program in the districts will be made.
- Evaluation of effectiveness
  - » Constantly review the growth of the Biblical Institutes.
  - » Present new ideas for student recruitment.
  - » Review of the teachers in the Bible Institutes and include new teachers.
  - » Achievement report and follow-up plan.
  - » Board of Education meetings every four months.
  - » Complete an evaluation of each event (workshops, education summit, etc.), one week after the event.
- Implementation team
  - » Administrative Bishop
  - » Regional Education Director
  - » Regional Board of Education
  - » District Coordinators
  - » District Overseers
  - » Local leaders
  - » Pastor of the local church



## PILLAR 2: EVANGELISM



## Implementation of Strategies

### GOALS

- May we mobilize every believer to become a soul winner by formation and empowering them to know and use their gifts and abilities. "Every house a church, every believer a disciple" (Matthew 28:19-20).
- That the church may have an active, palpable, and notable presence in its community through evangelism. May our cities know that there is a Church of God in their community (Acts 17:6).
- May we transform lives in our communities, transform neighborhoods and neighborhoods through evangelism (Mark 5:19-20).
- That we plant new churches in places where the Church of God has no presence and where the Holy Ghost leads us (Acts 16:9-10).
- That each church can grow a minimum of 10% each year.
- Let each district dare to plant one church per year.

### OBJECTIVES

Romans 10:14 *"How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"*

- Reach the lost.
- Obey The Great Commission
- Promote growth

### STRATEGIES

#### D. Local Church

- 1) Form a prayer team and engage in prayer and intercession walks for the community.
- 2) Identify the person who can oversee this ministry concurrently, so that they can form a team and be a liaison for the district and the region.
- 3) Recruit people who can plant a church and win the city.
- 4) We encourage every church to take an evangelism course.
- 5) Have an awareness campaign about The Great Commission as it pertains to the needs of your community.
- 6) Plan an evangelistic campaign or activity in which believers are engaged in the winning of new souls through in-home bible studies, small groups, or other small groups strategies.

- 7) Plan a friends' day (*A specific day to invite new people*) intentionally focused on soul winning- an evangelistic campaign or service.
- 8) Create a data sheet with the information of the people to be evangelized, where their needs are noted and can be followed up.
- 9) Identify methods and activities such as support or help groups to reach out to all age groups (*Children, Youth, Men, Women, Married Couples, Seniors, etc.*).
- 10) Study the demographics of the city where the church is established, to better understand the ages, needs of the community, and applicable strategies.
- 11) Contact government agencies to glean the need(s) in our city (divorce, drugs, youth, senior support, etc.). Introduce ourselves: We are here to serve you. What do you need? How can we help?

### **E. District Strategies**

- 1) That each district sponsors an evangelistic event at least once a year. That it can be rotated in each church so that all churches have the same opportunity.
- 2) Establish a team with a district coordinator and church members to plan, motivate and support the local church in evangelism.
- 3) Promote the reciprocal support of the churches within the district, when they have evangelistic activities, special events, etc.

### **F. Regional Strategies**

- 1) Propose an annual day or week of regional evangelism, and/or the church in the community. Example: One day one million.
- 2) Examine and promote evangelism resources for the local church.
- 3) Analyze the cities where a new church plant is desired, present this need to the churches in the district, and from there determine the appropriate strategy for planting that church.
- 4) Have a comprehensive plan for planting new churches.

### **Tools**

- Marketing: Marketing consists of explaining to people how a project, program or service can solve their problems, improve their lives, and/or instruct them on the right path to eternal life. We can do this through person to person, social media, radio, television, newsletters, posters, events, etc.
- Training: Each member of the team should receive the necessary formation to carry out the evangelistic work of the congregation: Training through seminars, conferences, workshops, websites, and more.

- Awareness-raising:
  - » Present statistics of the social reality
  - » Go to the areas of need and know the urgent needs of the community. Walk the streets of our city and see with the eyes of Jesus.

- Implementation:
  - » The regional office will officially implement the 24/34 vision in January 2024.
  - » The pastors of the local church will inform their congregation about the 24/34 vision and motivate the membership to be part of it.
  - » District overseers shall motivate pastors to actively participate in the vision 24/34.

- **Implementation dates**

- » The 24/34 vision will be implemented as of January 1, 2024.
- » The local church group should meet at least once a month to plan and follow up on evangelism within the different congregations.
- » The District Overseer will send the date for the first planning meeting.
- » District motivational event and official launching, (Saturday, January 6, 2024).
- » Evaluation meetings will be held one week after the event.
- » The evaluation will reflect what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved.

### • Evaluation of effectiveness

- » After each activity, a realistic evaluation of the results should be produced. This includes performance of the believers, adherence to instructions, community reaction, evaluation of the terrain, risks and possible difficulties.
- » If the objectives are clear, the results can be easily measured.
- » Achievement report and follow-up plan. Perseverance enriches knowledge and sharpens our work tools.
- » Perseverance leads to improvement. There is always room for improvement.

### Notes, ideas, help:

- Field research: *Go and walk through the land (Numbers 13)*.
- *Put those most passionate about souls in charge.*
- Prayer and Intercession (*Fasting, walks, etc.*)
  - ✓ Observe what other churches and networks are doing. Share resources.
  - ✓ Measuring the vision (*What to do each year*).
  - ✓ Search, call, train new leaders.
  - ✓ Explore how to solve internal problems (*Church Health*)
  - ✓ Analyze what we are doing well, and what we are not doing well, what areas no longer work.
  - ✓ Use regional and national resources.

There are several digital platforms where you can acquire information, knowledge, material:

- ❖ [www.barna.com](http://www.barna.com)
- ❖ [www.pastors.com](http://www.pastors.com)
- ❖ [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- ❖ [www.multiplicationnetwork.org](http://www.multiplicationnetwork.org)

### Books:

- ❖ *Relevant Church Robert Barriger*
- ❖ *Mission: An Essential Guide Carlos F. Cardoza Orlandi*
- ❖ *Church Unique Will Mancini*
- ❖ *Called to Create Jordan Raynor*

## PILLAR 3: REVITALIZATION



Why talk about revitalization? Because the loss of vitality is a slow and "merciless" process that occurs in congregations. Is there a way to show this decline? It will not be easy to see it from the inside; rather, it will be from the outside that it can be better appreciated. Ronald A. Heifetz illustrates it with the image of the balcony and the dance floor. Those dancing on the dance floor cannot appreciate the different movements, but going up to a balcony and looking out onto the dance floor will give a better appreciation of what is going on in the dance area.

How can we revitalize ourselves as soon as possible?<sup>1</sup>

It is understandable that stuck, or static, churches would want to move quickly. Frankly, I would be concerned if there was little urgency and enthusiasm to fix what is broken. However, results are compromised when the emphasis is on speed rather than quality of approach or process.

Revitalizing your church requires a significant investment: time, energy, resources, and laser focus.

I encourage you to start by answering these 3 key questions:

- 1. Why do we exist as a church?**
- 2. Where are we headed?**
- 3. How did we get there?**

When you sit down with your team to answer these questions, it is vital to not only answer them prayerfully, but to do so in order.

Apathetic, stopped-up churches want to jump into how to do ministry, discipleship, weekend services, etc., instead of focusing on why we do those things.

If you've done the hard work of answering the first two questions, you need to answer the how.

It may seem obvious, but if you want to see a change, the way you do church in the future has to be different from what you are doing today. One of the most common things we see is stagnant churches that continue to do the same thing expecting different results.

If you want to see change, the way you do church in the future has to be different from what you are doing today. That's one of the most common things we see—stagnant churches continuing to do the same thing expecting different results.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Morgan, Church Revitalization: How & Where to Start. <https://theunstuckgroup.com/church-revitalization-how-where-to-start/>

Does your church need revitalization? That's no easy task; but, if I had to suggest a way to start, I would recommend addressing these four things:

**1. Shift the focus from indoors to outdoors.**

One of the key factors we find in stuck churches is that they are inward focused. It is the natural attraction.

This is an extremely important shift-from being inward-focused to outward-focused. As leaders, we must always be reminding our congregation and refreshing our strategy for reaching those outside the church and outside the faith.

The churches we have seen that are outwardly focused are those answering the first two questions addressed above, "Why do we exist?" and "Where are we going?" You, the pastor, or senior leader of the congregation, must be intentional in consistently bringing that vision forward.

**2. Deprogramming and clarifying a discipleship pathway.**

Churches experiencing the healthiest growth approach discipleship as a pathway rather than offering an overwhelming number of programs.

Instead of ministries competing for time, attention, and resources, one pathway simplifies the process of bringing people to Jesus.

**3. Reduce Ministry Complexity and Refocus Your Team's Time and Energy... and profits.**

With events, programs, and many meetings, we lose sight of our mission, vision and focus because we are doing too much.

Complex ministry rarely helps people take the next steps in discipleship. Complexity also makes your team feel like the "win" is just getting people to show up for meetings or events, rather than seeing real life change.

**4. Change from more meetings to more ministry.**

"To equip His people for works of services, so that the body of Christ may be built up until all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" Ephesians 4:12.

A key indicator that churches are stagnant is that people spend more time talking about how to do ministry rather than doing ministry. Sitting in meetings will not lead people to Christ. Equip and empower your lay leadership to be more involved in the ministry of your church.

Sitting in meetings will not lead people to Christ. Equip and train your lay leaders to become more involved in the ministry of your church.

Rafael Candelaria in his book, *Revitalization-A Practical Guide to Reversing the Loss of Vitality in the Local Church*, proposes 5 areas that evidence the decline of a congregation:

1. **Lack of vision**
2. **Lack of unity**
3. **Lack of biblical knowledge**
4. **Lack of mobilization of spiritual gifts**
5. **Lack of commitment to The Great Commission**

Although Candelaria's list is limited and generalized, it helps us to formulate questions that we must answer promptly to have clarity on the issue and where we can point to in practice. Among other questions to ponder are: What is and what is not revitalization? What do we revitalize? Who is responsible for revitalization? In what context do we revitalize? Does revitalization require a financial budget? How do we measure the outcome of revitalization?

The most important question for our issue is the following: Who does the revitalizing and how is the revitalization of congregations in the Southwest region initiated? The answer requires team consensus.

The proposal to be considered starts from two lines that can be viewed as the general and the particular.

**In general**, it has to do with preparing the ground for raising awareness of the urgency of revitalization in our region. This can take the form of regional and district conferences and seminars. We also suggest a round table discussion with experts and practitioners on the subject (1Chr. 12:32).

**In particular**, the implied focus is more direct, specific, and measurable results. This begins with pastors and congregations who wish to participate in the revitalization process in an intentional and accountable manner (it is important to recognize that not all pastors and churches have the same need).

TOWARDS REVITALIZATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a particular contextual diagnosis to discover the areas to revitalize (Take the pulse of your church).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select pastors, via application, for a 6-day revitalization retreat.</li> <li>• 8 hours</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an action plan (route to follow) together with the pastor and his core leadership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take tours of/excursions to other model churches in the process of revitalization.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a team of dedicated to evaluation, accounting, and results interpretation (preferably external and knowledgeable)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have models of revitalization in the region that serve as an example</li> </ul>

The possibility exists, that as we continue to have conversations, elements applicable to the congregations in their contexts and needs will emerge. For now, I look forward to the regional feedback and measures to be considered.

## Goals

- Synergistically reinvigorate the pastoral passion and congregations to fulfill the mission of the kingdom.
- Accompany pastors and congregations in the process of revitalizing urgent areas of ministry and mission.
- Work to achieve the practice of revitalization as a way of life in the pastoral ministry and congregation.
- Make short- and long-term preventive diagnostics to avoid stagnation.

### **Objectives:**

Revitalize the church: In our region we believe that the local church must keep alive its passion for worship, service, ministry, communication of the gospel and participation in the life of the church.

### **Strategies:**

- Revitalization retreats 3-5 hours.
- Local diagnostic seminar
- Enter a circular revitalization process.
- Intentional follow-up and process accountability
- Discussions

### **Tools:**

- Local pastors and guests
- Tours/excursions to successful churches in revitalization processes
- Virtualization

Implementation dates:

- Ministerial Assembly
- Agenda 2024/2034.

Evaluation of effectiveness:

- By an external team (once the local evaluation has been completed)
- A "BEFORE and AFTER" data bank.



## PILLAR 4: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### Strategy Implementation



Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoner and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free".

#### **What is the reason for these strategies?**

The main objective of community outreach is to raise awareness of one of the primary purposes of our mission: to reach the poor, needy and destitute in our communities. We will use available resources to influence people, systems, structures, and ideas at different levels to alter the way power, resources and ideas are created, distributed, and consumed.

#### **Objectives**

Every idea, project, or innovation that we wish to undertake comes, to a greater or lesser extent, from our social environment. If we remember the great inventions of history such as the wheel, paper, and the lightbulb, all responded, at the time, to a need; to an opportunity to promote human development and modify living conditions.

We must do works of charity and not be ashamed to proclaim the gospel, not only through preaching and teaching, but through actions of love that touch all the communities where our congregations are located.

#### **What are the expected results?**

All congregations that participate in programs, projects, initiatives, and plans that promote and aim at community outreach will acquire a wealth of skills and knowledge that they can use to act for the benefit of others. Community Outreach is closely related to the idea of change brought about by the proclamation of the gospel. The main objective of community outreach is to "change society".

#### **What are the anticipated consequences?**

First: we believe that the Holy Ghost will make the church aware of its mission and reason for being. So, the mission to help the needy will be embodied in every believer and together we will celebrate the long-awaited revival of the church.

The prophet says in Isaiah 61:1-3 "*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners;<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning<sup>3</sup>, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor.*"

These were the very words quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ when He entered the synagogue, and ended by saying, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21).

Second: the communities around each congregation will see and hear a new way of preaching the gospel and consequently many will become new disciples of Jesus.

**What are the expected benefits?**

God will renew the understanding of the church and the community, and through this will come social transformation. Some benefits will be a decrease in crime and violence in schools and communities. There is the possibility of a better world.

**Strategies**

<b>A. For the Local Church</b>	
1.	Constantly promote the 24/34 vision to keep it alive. The first week of each year each congregation may schedule a community outreach awareness service.
2.	Establish or promote the ministry of community outreach within the church and for the entire community.
3.	At least once a year invite the community to a party, festival, or get-together where free or low-cost health services, information about job opportunities, etc. are offered.
4.	Provide information on and promote voting in local, state, and national elections.
5.	Form a team to help the local church gain a better understanding of community outreach and motivate them to actively participate in it.
6.	Identify specific areas and needs of the community and seek resources that can help them.
<b>B. District strategies</b>	
1.	Form a team with members of the different congregations to plan, organize, and schedule an annual activity in which all the churches in the territory participate and help those in need.
2.	Schedule follow-up steps to provide continuity of vision 24/34
<b>C. Strategies of the region</b>	
1.	The region will adopt Latin America's program: 1 day one million
2.	Schedule a special service remembering "the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on believers" (June)

TOOLS

**Marketing**

1. The regional office will send a promotional PowerPoint to be used for church announcements.
2. Person to person, social networks, radio, television, newsletters, flyers, events, etc.

### **Training**

1. Seminars, videos, printed articles, copies of statistics, etc.
2. Contemporary and contextual Bible study.
3. Visits to areas of need.

### **Implementation**

1. Create an atmosphere of empathy and motivation to help those in need.
2. The pastors of the local church oversee motivating the members of their congregation.

### **Implementation dates**

The territorial office will officially implement the vision 24/34 in January of 2024.

District planning meeting (Suggestion: immediately after the ministerial assembly)

District-wide promotion and motivation for official launch. (Suggested: Saturday, January 6, 2024)

#### **1. Planning meetings**

- a. District planning meeting (Suggestion: immediately after the ministerial assembly)
- b. **Official District Launch** (Join on a date to be set by the territorial office. Suggested date: Saturday, January 6, 2024)

#### **2. Evaluation meetings**

- a. Which of the objectives were achieved? Explain. Why?
  - » The evaluation will reflect what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved.
  - » The evaluation will occur after the event.
  - » A realistic assessment/evaluation includes performance of the believers, adherence to instructions, community reaction, assessment of the terrain, risks and possible difficulties.
- b. Which of the objectives were not achieved and why?
- c. What modifications were necessary/suggested?
 

Achievements and objectives

  - a. Objectives must be clear and specific to be measurable.
  - b. Achievements and a follow-up plan must be reported.
  - c. Listen and accept suggestions.

Implementation team

Administrative Bishop: Dr. Victor Cruz, District Overseer, Pastor of the local church , District leadership team, Clarification

1. Some dates are pending.
2. Some meetings will be scheduled at a later date.

## PILLAR 5: SELF-CARE<sup>2</sup>



The self-care pillar has some support resources in [Appendix 3: Ministry Support Group](#). There, you will find some materials for conducting pastoral support groups, guidelines for running an effective meeting and some demographic questions for support groups.

1. Promote self-care and ministerial care.
2. Establish mentorship groups.
3. Use the Ministerial Assembly to minister to the pastorate.

### Ministerial Family Care

- The strategic area of Ministerial Care will provide accompaniment, guidance, mentoring, spiritual, emotional, and psychological support to the ministerial family that needs it and requests it. Accordingly, it will act in accordance with the following guidelines:
- Will work in harmony with and support the work of the District Overseers.
- Its focus will be the care of ministers, their spouses, and children.
- It will offer seminars on: • Values of the Region • Pastor's commitment to the region's departments and strategic areas.

### What is Self-Care?

Ministerial care seeks to accompany the minister as a person, to help him face the challenges of his life and ministry in its different facets (personal, family, as a spiritual leader, citizen, companion, friend, etc.) providing guidance, counseling, and development opportunities in the different areas of his life.

### Areas of Care

#### **PERSONAL CARE**

We seek to provide the minister with orientations, seminars, counseling, and other activities that help him grow as a person who loves and serves God and the people around him. Each minister is called to be an example of what a servant of God of the highest human, moral and spiritual quality is.

#### **MINISTERIAL FAMILY CARE**

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<sup>2</sup> This section was edited and contextualized using the Ministerial Manual of the Southeast Hispanic Region of the Church of God under the direction of Bishop Othoniel Collins. We thank Bishop Collins for providing us with the following information for incorporation into our Ministerial Manual.

Every servant of God is called to take the utmost care of his family (spouse and children). To be an example, a provider for his family, to facilitate spiritual growth, social and intellectual development, etc., while achieving a pleasant family environment of peace, harmony, and love.

### **CARE OF YOUR MINISTRY**

To exercise his or her function adequately, it is important for every minister to seek continuous spiritual, intellectual, professional, and ministerial growth.

### **BIBLICAL BASIS**

- Timothy 2:15, 22-25; 4:2-5
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:6-16; 6:11-16
- Titus 1:6-9
- Hebrews 8:11
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-27
- 2 Samuel 21:15-17
- Psalm 42:5-6
- Proverbs 18:24
- Jeremiah 25:36
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

### **Self-Care Process**

1. The minister in need of assistance should contact the District Overseer, or the Regional Overseer's Office directly.
2. The District Overseer or Regional Bishop contacts the pastor for a conversation that leads to an understanding of the minister's need and willingness to receive help.
3. The District Overseer or Regional Bishop will let the minister know of the plan that will be implemented to offer moral and spiritual assistance to the minister in need.
4. This is a strictly confidential process, between the minister in need, his or her spouse or child.
5. If the need for ministerial support results from death or illness of a member of the minister's family, the administrative bishop will be informed, and the ministerial care board will provide support to the minister and family.
6. The ministerial care board will stand by the minister who asked for support for as long as it is understood that it is necessary to do so, both by the minister and the board.

## **SECTION IV**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Pillar 1-FORMATION

Discussion Questions

### Pillar 2-EVANGELISM

Discussion Questions

### Pillar 3-REVITALIZATION

Discussion Questions

### Pillar 4-COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Discussion Questions

### Pillar 5-SELF-CARE

Discussion Questions

## THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL BASIS

- PILLAR OF FORMATION
- PILLAR OF EVANGELISM
- REVITALIZATION PILLAR
- PILLAR OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH
- PILLAR OF SELF-CARE



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

There are short (5 minute) videos that accompany the theological foundation of each of the vision pillars for discussion within each congregation. These videos were created using the narrative of the THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION. At the end of the presentation of each video, we provide the discussion questions below. Each pastor should use these questions in a congregational meeting as a congregational self-examination and reflection. If you do not have the ability to present the videos, then the text of the THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL FOUNDATION serves to motivate the participants to dialogue about each of the pillars of the 24/34 vision.

### Pillar 1-FORMATION

#### Discussion Questions

1. After watching the video about the formation pillar, what is your understanding of what formation is for church members, and what formation is for ministers?
  2. When do you think the formation process should be completed?
  3. What can you say about Jesus' formation process according to Luke 2:52? And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.
  4. How is it beneficial to have a formation process in the church?
  5. Describe all the formation programs and processes that our church has (local, district, regional).
  6. Describe what the church can do to improve our church's formation programs and processes.
  7. If the church does not have a formation program for its members, what steps should they take to establish a formation program?
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### Pillar 2-EVANGELISM

#### Discussion Questions

1. After watching the video about the pillar of evangelism, what is your understanding of evangelism?
2. Do you think it is necessary to have a strategy for evangelism? Explain.
3. What can you say about The Great Commission, according to Matthew 28:19-20? Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Amen.
4. Who in the church should be the ones to evangelize and why?
5. What is the local church doing to win and evangelize its community?

6. Describe how you view the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the local church's evangelistic program.
7. What evangelistic steps, models and programs do you think would be effective for our congregation?

### Pillar 3-REVITALIZATION

#### Discussion Questions

1. After watching the video about the revitalization pillar, what do you understand revitalization to be?
  2. How effective is your church's worship for the vitality of the church? Explain.
  3. How effective is the church in addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual illnesses of its members?
  4. When you read the phrase "in spirit and in truth" from the conversation between the Lord and the Samaritan woman (John 4:23), what does this phrase mean to you?
  5. What areas of your church do you think need to be vitalized, restored, transformed?
  6. What things do you think are robbing the church of its energy and vitality? Explain.
  7. The following paragraph is the conclusion of the video, explain which of the statements does or does not describe your church: Every church needs some kind of renewal or revitalization to avoid the death of the natural life cycle. Let us strive for renewal in a way that puts the focus on God's Word, God's timing, and the power of the Holy Ghost, rather than on our own creativity, knowledge, and style.
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### Pillar 4-COMMUNITY OUTREACH

#### Discussion Questions

1. After watching the video about the community outreach pillar, what is your understanding of community outreach?
2. What can you say about the quote from Luke 4:18-19 discussed in the video, and which of the aspects mentioned in that quote apply to our congregation?
3. Do you think it is important to have a community outreach program or ministry within the congregation? Explain.
4. What are the social issues, problems, or challenges that most permeate our church community?
5. What is the attitude or feeling of the congregation towards helping the indigent, needy, poor and immigrants in the community?
6. Describe the programs of our church that are geared toward helping the less fortunate in our community.



7. What program or ministry of a social nature can you suggest that our church needs?
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Pillar 5-SELF-CARE  
Discussion Questions

1. After watching the video about the self-care pillar, what is your understanding of self-care?
2. What do you think about what the apostle John told your friend in the passage in 1 John 1:2?
3. What do you think about what Jesus told his disciples in the passage in Mark 6:31? "Then Jesus said to them, Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."
4. Do you think pastors, ministers and leaders should take time to rest? Explain.
5. What do you think are the challenges that most exhaust pastors, ministers, and church leaders?
6. Do you believe that resting and having fun is sin? Explain your answer within the framework of Matthew 11:28; Psalm 23:2.
7. What do you do to rest, why do you do it, and how often do you do it?

## THEOLOGICAL-PASTORAL BASIS

In the introduction to this manual, we mentioned that we will build our pastoral theology using an analogy from architecture: a pillar. A pillar is a large solid structure, usually cylindrical or square, that stands as a support in a house or building, either structurally or aesthetically. Pillars may be designed to support the weight of roofs, second floors, or to help make the building or house structurally safe and sound. So, in the theological foundation of this ministry manual we wish to rely on 5 pillars upon which we can build the mission, vision, and strategies applicable to the Hispanic Southwest Region.

### PILLAR OF FORMATION



Romans 12:2 *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

**Formation** involves "making disciples who make disciples," which is the action that the disciple must experience in the maturation process. A particular definition of the concept of discipleship is the active and evident implementation of the character of Christ in the life of the believer. The New Living Translation translates Ephesians 4:13 as follows: *"This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be matured in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."* In this passage Paul is speaking of goal, objective, and purpose. One of the duties of every believer is to allow the work of Christ to be completed in his life. In the passage of 1 Corinthians 2:16 the apostle says: *"Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him. But we have the mind of Christ."* The notion of what Paul is saying in these passages is that this formation process is an ongoing and intentional one. Acquiring the mind of Christ does not happen accidentally. According to Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers: "In these words is described one of the most important objectives of the Church's ministries, not only the production of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, but the formation of Christ in the soul and heart through faith" <sup>3</sup>.

So, when we talk about formation or discipleship it is similar to the process of an artist painting a portrait of a person on a white canvas. Portraits are effective and convincing when they tell us something about the person depicted in the portrait. A good portrait is not only a visual representation of a person but will also reveal something about the essence of the person. Similarly, in the formation process the disciple must reveal the essence of the Master Jesus Christ.

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”* - Matthew 28:18-20

According to John Nolland, in The Great Commission passage (Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus said go and make disciples. Matthew had already introduced the idea of discipleship in

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<sup>3</sup> Charles J. Ellicott, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* (Delmarva Publications, 2015).

chapter 13:52, where the images of people who were disciples were used to be ambassadors of the kingdom and where the ambassador was seen, as the Eleven are now in chapter 28:19, as a disciple who was discipled: the treasure he has gained is a treasure he distributes to others<sup>4</sup>. When the image of the Master is formed or painted in the disciple, he likewise has the solemn responsibility to multiply in others or to form the new image acquired in other disciples. This is why Paul had the gall to invite his disciples to imitate him, since he had diligently made sure to imitate or form the image of the Master in his own life (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17).

In one of the books of rabbinical Judaism, one finds there is a story a story that effectively illustrates what God's desire is for us in terms of formation. There, it says that a man was traveling in the desert, hungry, thirsty, and tired. Then, he came upon a tree planted beside a spring of water, with delicious fruit and shade. The man ate of the fruit, drank of the water, and rested under the shade.

As he was about to leave, he turned to the tree and said, "Tree, O tree, with what shall I bless you?"

"Should I bless you so that your fruit is sweet? Your fruit is already sweet."

"Shall I bless you so that your shadow is abundant? Thy shadow is abundant."

"For a spring of water to run beside you? A spring of water already runs beside you."

"There is one thing I can bless you with: may it be God's will that all the trees planted from your seeds be as fruitful and kind as you are."<sup>5</sup>

May all the trees planted from your seeds be as fruitful and kind as you!

This wise man's desire contains the essence of a mentor's work: to multiply in people's lives the fruitful and caring attitudes, feelings and actions that lead us to demonstrate the character of Christ. Paul said, "You should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

In the formation pillar we help leaders develop their spiritual gifts and natural abilities. One of the objectives of a formation program is to establish a relationship of trust with accountability and responsibility on the part of both mentor and disciple. However, formation in the ecclesiastical context is much more than developing gifts and skills. Formation motivates us to know and imitate Christ in a more intimate way through the benefit and blessing of intentionally walking alongside a more mature believer. In this sense, a mentor is necessary to instill the image of Christ in another believer. Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron is sharpened by iron, so one person sharpens another."

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<sup>4</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 1265.

<sup>5</sup> The Tree, Talmud, Taanit 5b

All of what has been shared has to do with the rediscovery of God's image in us. Genesis 1:27 says, "*So God created mankind in His own image.*" This statement does not infer that God has a human form, but that human beings are the image of God in their moral, spiritual, and intellectual nature. This is what gives us value and esteem. Irrespective of race, culture, religion, finances and social status, every human being is important in the eyes of God because every human being is a bearer of his image.

As Jesus taught, He was interested in what was inside His listeners. On at least one occasion we have evidence of the Master's frustration, to the point that He could not conduct many miracles because the people in that place had a collective mental and spiritual blockage, "*And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith*" (Matthew 13:58).

In the letter of 2 Timothy 4:3, Paul warns the readers to beware; because, in the future, there would come people who would create models according to personal desires or hidden agendas. Therefore, although formation must guard against conformity to humanistic models, the truth is that the church is not located or established in a vacuum. To maintain its relevance in this generation, our teaching must be willing to examine, dialogue and interact with the political, religious, social, and technological parameters and structures of our present system.

The Revista Iberoamericana de Educación uses the term "formation" and defines it as, "a broad approach because it seeks a comprehensive development of people in different areas, through formation projects, with an ethical vision, constant reflection and relying on information technologies to lay the foundations of a knowledge society"<sup>6</sup> .

In the incarnation we see the action of Jesus Christ becoming man; for a time abandoning the privileges of divinity, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. In this way He was able to meet humanity in a different dimension, and thus become the Savior of the world.

Likewise, churches, pastors, and religious leaders should pay greater attention to the distinctive cultures and subcultures that develop within their own communities. By ignoring these factors, some ministers neglect their relevance and effectiveness because they are not being adequately trained.

A church, seminary or ministry that is unwilling to face the social realities of its community may figuratively die or become irrelevant. Our programs and/or budgets should reflect the realities we are observing outside the doors of our congregations. I understand that this is not an easy task to accomplish. In my experience within multicultural ministry, I have experienced the difficulty of creating a structure that focuses on the race, culture, and social issues of our communities. Today's pastors must deal with the complication that not only are there different cultures, but we also have a youth with an identity crisis due to the world's offerings, the proliferation of social media and generational rifts.

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<sup>6</sup> Revista Iberoamericana de Educación [(2018), vol. 76, no. 1, "La Socioformación: Un Enfoque de Cambio Educativo". <https://rieoei.org/RIE/article/view/2955/3942>

No matter what the ministerial expression is (pastor or ministerial leader), I have been able to identify the need to establish and promote a continuous process of formation, both for lay people and for pastors and ministers. At times, some pastors fall into a comfort zone and become accustomed to a state of apparent well-being. This is something that allows them to function comfortably, even though most of the time it becomes a stumbling block that prevents them from being able to recognize areas for improvement and development. We ministers have a pulpit from which we must preach and teach the Word of God. It can be difficult to get out of our comfort zone and be exposed to the challenges of life. But, if we are to be effective and relevant then we need to be willing to transform our personalities, just as Paul said in Romans 12:2.

Transformational change must be evident and continuous, no matter how long it takes. At this point I can quote the words of the Master when He said, "*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*" (Matthew 7:16-18 God Speaks Today). These words can serve as the foundation for what the apostle James calls for in his letter, that people be willing to show the evidence of their faith by their works. "*Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds*" (James 2:18 God Speaks Today). As a friend said, "good works do not save, but the saved do good works."

At the beginning of the previous paragraph, we used the phrase "no matter how long it takes" in reference to the materialization of the evidence of the fruit in people. Some time ago I read that, in fertile soil, a tall coconut palm tree can yield up to 75 fruits per year. With proper care and optimal growing conditions, coconut palms produce their first fruit in six to ten years, taking 15 to 20 years to reach maximum production. In the Bible we see people who bore fruit from their youth: Joseph, David, Josiah. However, we see others who bore fruit when they were well advanced in age: Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

The transformation of the disciple is evidenced by his fruits. A good mentor should motivate people to bear fruit regardless of the season they are in (Mark 11:12-14, 20-26). Sometimes the best fruit is produced when circumstances are most difficult, because it is during our weakness that through His grace God perfects His power in our lives (2 Corinthians 12:9).

### PILLAR OF EVANGELISM



Romans 10:14, "*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*"

Are we proclaiming the gospel? How is the gospel moving in your region? God has called us to the harvest. How is this reflected where we are? In Romans 10:14 Paul was not just talking about numbers. All ministers know that numbers come and go. There are times when numbers are evident and there are times where they are not.

Are we passionately working for the harvest in areas where the harvest is a challenge? Are we spreading the seed everywhere, even though the harvest has not yet come? Are

we shipping our grain across the sea in faith that something is going to happen fifty years in the future? Are we being motivated by the gospel and hungry for the harvest regardless of our regional context?

If the Word is not being used for harvest, then it is not being used well. When we talk about harvest in the Church of God, we are primarily talking about planting new churches and making disciples who make disciples.

Evangelism is the act of winning someone to Christ: sowing the seed of the gospel in someone's life. This is a good and necessary thing. But we need to do more. Evangelism is the process by which we win people, accept them, deliver them, feed them, train them, mobilize them, and send them out.

When the commission says go and make disciples of all nations, it means that we go and plant bodies of believers, communities of faith where lost and captive people can be healed, set free, restored, and empowered as ambassadors of Christ.

In the same way that Jesus became incarnate to identify with humanity, the church should become incarnate in a specific community to identify with its needs and bring the message of the integral gospel. The church is the living example of a different way of life, embodying the values of Jesus Christ.

Missio Dei is a theological term taken from Latin which can be translated as "the sending of God, or the mission of God". Mission derives from the very nature of God. The missionary initiative comes from God and God alone.

In the context of Scripture, Missio Dei rightly emphasizes that God is the initiator of His mission of redemption through the church from among all the peoples of the world. He sent His Son for this purpose and sent the church into the world with the message of the gospel for this same purpose.

Our God constantly seeks the lost and the needy to bring salvation and transformation to their lives. In the same way, the church must follow God in the commission to make disciples, transform communities and be God's agent of change.

The church proclaims and points to what Jesus proclaimed and pointed to. What did Jesus proclaim and teach? The coming of the kingdom of God! The church aims to, points toward, embodies and teaches the rule of God's sovereignty over creation and its creatures.

The passage of 1 Peter 2:4-10 integrates "being" with "doing". Here we see that the edification of the Christian is linked to his function of announcing, proclaiming, serving, and ministering. It reminds us that the church is the people of God on mission. The church does according to what it is. Just as a tree bears fruit because it is a tree, the church is actively on mission because it is the church.

1 Peter 2:5, *"...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".*

Dr. Bran in his book, *Formidable and Marvelous Works* said that "if every cell accepted the need of the body as the purpose of its life, then the body would live in health". The concept is that each cell lives for the body and not for itself. The culture of the world exalts the self - discovery, autonomy, and fulfillment. Dr. Brand also says that instead, through self-sacrifice, the cell can share in the delight of community, health accompanied by mission. But he compares individualism to cancer. These are cells that decide to live for themselves and not for the good of the body.

We are at a wonderful threshold, an era of opportunity for the Church of God. We can make the choice to move forward. We will move forward most effectively if we unite in vision, accept our common cause, values, and foundations, foregoing our personal agendas and accepting together our unity of purpose.

Many people are victims of hunger, others suffer from illness or mourn the death of loved ones. No wonder so many people seek the "balm" Jeremiah spoke of (Jeremiah 8:22), that is, healing for their emotional and spiritual wounds.

But, unfortunately and shamefully, many times, when they come to our congregations what they find are places where they are accused, oppressed, pressured, harassed, and rejected.

That is why today, more than ever, the church needs to return to the essence of its evangelistic mission. We must critically rethink one of the most well-known verses in all of scripture: John 3:16 "God so loved THE WORLD".

There are social clubs here in America that we cannot be part of simply because we do not have the social status, financial means, or relationships to be allowed to be members. However, the church is a place where the only reason we are here is because we don't deserve to be here. We are not qualified to be here. In fact, we are here because someone paid a price that we could not pay. We are in the church because sin had destroyed our life and Jesus Christ restored it.

We are here, because, as that old chorus says, "if it had not been for the Lord, my soul would have been lost, if it had not been for the Lord".

However, when we enter this "*club*" called church, by the sheer grace and mercy of God, then we decide who we let in and who stays out. Many take an attitude as if they have been given the keys to the kingdom of St. Peter, or the magic wand of Harry Houdini.

Instead of bringing them in, we want to take people out of the churches by how they dress, how they talk, where they come from or what their lifestyle is, while we ignore their wounds, their pain, and their brokenness. We look more at the external, like the Pharisees did.

On the cross, Jesus did not demand that the repentant criminal first change this or that to enter the kingdom of heaven; to the woman found in the act of adultery he simply told her to go and sin no more; Jesus accepted that a former sinful woman touch his feet because it was an act of deep gratitude. He was even willing to associate with people of ill repute,

even though this could "damage" or "affect" his reputation, because as he himself said, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners"* (Mark 2:17).

If the church simply understood that we need to win the whole world to Christ, through a relevant and love-driven gospel that led the Lord Jesus Christ to the Cross, then all our churches would be filled with sinners seeking the forgiveness the Father offers them. Evangelism is winning souls for the kingdom. For this, the church must put aside pharisaical intimidations and move toward healing in our communities. The world needs a church that loves them and invites them to understand that no one loves them as God loves them.

Here we can quote Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, who wrote the following: "Do not crucify what God resurrects and do not resurrect what God crucifies". Our movement, the Lamb's Agenda, must be committed to reconciling the vertical *Imago Dei*, the image of God in every human being, with the horizontal *habitus Christus*, the habits and actions of Christ. This requires a new narrative, an alternative discourse in which we defend truth without sacrificing civility.

The image of God lives in all human beings: black and white, rich, and poor, right and left, conservative and liberal, citizen and undocumented. Our challenge is to see the image of God in all human beings, including those with whom we disagree. Our challenge is to see the image of God even in those who persecute and slander us. Our challenge is to see the image of God in those who oppose us. Our challenge is to see the image of God in those who suffer, in the marginalized, in the oppressed and in those who mourn. Our challenge is to see the image of God in the friend and the enemy, the known and the stranger, the strong and the weak, the oppressor and the liberator."<sup>7</sup> .

#### REVITALIZATION PILLAR



Isaiah 44:3 *"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."*

In biology there is a law known as the circle of life. In short, this law simply states that living things are born, grow, reproduce, and die. The pattern repeats itself repeatedly, thus maintaining the process of life throughout the planet. All plants, animals, and humans go through life cycles. Children grow taller and heavier until they reach adulthood. Children also change as their bodies mature. Eventually, that child, becoming an old man and will have to die, thus completing its life cycle.

Could it be that congregations also have a life cycle? Could it be that congregations are also destined to be born, and eventually die? This is a consideration all of us must grapple with. Certainly, the church operates as a living organism. At some point that congregation is born, it is meant to grow and eventually it begins to reproduce; but does it have to die,

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<sup>7</sup> Rodriguez, Samuel. *The Lamb's Agenda: Why Jesus Is Calling You to a Life of Righteousness and Justice* (pp. 177-178). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.



or will there be some way to prevent the congregation from completing the natural life cycle and dying?

First, did you know that there are living beings that resist, have adapted, and defy the life cycle? For example, there are plants today that have been around for thousands of years. The Great Basin Bristlecone pine (*Pinus longaeva*) has been called the oldest tree in existence, at more than 5,000 years old. Scientists have announced that the oldest living creature on our planet is a jellyfish-like organism called a ctenophore. At 507 years old, the Ming clam broke the Guinness World Record as the world's oldest animal.

On the other hand, what could we say about the church? How old is the church? When was the church founded? Obviously, some people date the birth of the church to the time of Jesus when he said, "*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*" (Matthew 16:18). This is the first time the name "church" is used in the New Testament to refer to the people of God. Nevertheless, most people conclude that the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 should be declared the moment where the church was born. The church has existed for more than more than 2,000 years.

Let us remember that, although there are pastors directing the church, it does not belong to us but is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, the pastors, are simply the administrators. Going back to the question we asked earlier, does it have to die, or is there a way to prevent the congregation from completing the life cycle and dying?

The answer is that the church does not have to die. In fact, the church will not die because it is destined to remain the bride until Christ comes for her. But if my congregation is not revitalized it could die. Why do some congregations grow and others not? Why do some congregations live while others die?

That is why we should consider church revitalization. Church revitalization emphasizes the missionary work of turning around a stagnant or rapidly declining church and helping it grow again. Studies have shown that churches often stagnate in attendance at fifteen years, and at 35 years they begin to have trouble replacing the members they lose. Revitalization of churches is important because these may be dying or be practically dead. It is also important because even healthy churches today are at risk of developing the same disease that other churches are experiencing. God's people desperately need a biblical foundation for church revitalization. Many Christians today attend a local church, in need of learning and practicing the various principles for Revitalizing Churches.

The Lord's warning to the church of Sardis should move us to think about how to revitalize our church. "*I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you*" (Revelation 3:1-3).

How does a church die? Why does Christ use the expression "*you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead?*" Sardis had had an important reputation as a royal city, but now it was nothing. The citizens lived off past fame. Apparently, the same attitude or ideology had affected the church. Their loyalty and service to Christ was in the past.

The command "*Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die*" is a call to radically change their attitudes. The congregation must be alerted to the gravity of the situation. Their complacency led them to renounce their identification with Christ and their mission to Him. The situation was serious, but not totally hopeless. Immediate steps had to be taken to strengthen what was left. The church in Sardis did not cling to the word of Christ. For them, repentance was the only way out of certain and final death. So, they had to repent by restoring the gospel in their lives. This would mean that they would begin again to obey the truth of Christ's Word.

Let us also consider the letter of 1 Corinthians. Paul founded the Corinthian church and wrote this letter a few years after founding it in response to reports he had heard about the church, as well as some questions it had raised with him. What were the issues that prompted Paul to write to the Corinthian church?

- Divisions and factions: some said, "I follow Paul" or "I follow Apollos" (1:10-17);
- Tolerance of sexual immorality (5:1-13);
- Quarrels among church members (6:1-8);
- Confusion about marriage and sexuality (7:1-40);
- Division in the church over the limits of Christian liberty (8:1-13; 10:1-33);
- Wars in worship (ch.11-14);
- And false teachings about the resurrection (chapter 15).

Today's churches are beset by an equally potent mix of false teaching, immorality, division, infighting, and worldliness. Many churches today are in similar need of radical pastoral surgery to save their lives and restore their health. This is what is known as church revitalization.

The revitalization of the Church must be our burden because it is God's burden, as seen in the personal ministries of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul. God's people bear God's name, so we too must strive to strengthen what remains and is about to die.

In an article written by the Malphurs Group about church revitalization, the following 9 principles toward revitalization were discussed.

### **Rejection of the Status Quo**

The status quo initially creates comfort. You don't have to change or exert much effort; however, it kills the spiritual vitality of the church. You may have to change your church culture to thrive. We all grow when we must embrace change and let go of what we once loved.

## **2. Decisive and Future-Fueled Leadership**

Churches need leaders. They need strong, effective leaders. Churches need future-fueled leaders. Who wants a leader that continually looks to the past? Your members or partners may not notice, but your guests always will.

### **3. Extraordinarily Clear and Contagious Church Vision**

Don't assume that you have a clear church vision. Also, don't assume that you have a contagious church vision. You need to be sure your vision is clear and contagious.

Define your vision. People want to know exactly what the future will look like. I don't expect you to predict the future and execute it perfectly — that will never happen. But do clarify what the future looks like to the point that people can't resist telling people about it. People want to collaborate with you on a mission towards a big, audacious, exciting, and inspiring vision.

Your building isn't your vision. Your worship service isn't your vision. Your preaching isn't your vision. All of these may help move your church towards your vision, but they are not your vision. Let people know how their lives will change, how their community will change, how their region and world will change. Give them something to get excited about.

### **4. Honesty About Your Motivations**

Your motivations drive you. You value something. You probably value multiple things. Those things are already driving all that you do. Be honest what those things are. We don't create values. We live them out. You already live them out — good or bad.

### **5. Ministry Endings**

Churches notoriously start too many ministries that never come to an end. At some point, something must go, to make a move towards a strong future. Start helping people get used to things ending (especially "good" things). "Good" things that aren't the best things are not, in fact, good things. Sometimes you need to cut a good ministry to focus on a better one.

### **6. Clarify Priorities**

When you cut ministries and clarify vision, you will need to identify the strategic operations roadmap going forward. If you avoid this one, you run the risk of filling the vacuum of activity with more chaotic activity.

### **7. Commitment to Overhaul Your Guest Experience**

Your church may have an incredible first impressions team and ministry. Perhaps you already have objectives specifically focused on guest experience. Don't stop there. Everyone can improve their first-time guest experience.

Improving your guest experience gives your church some quick wins. It ensures not only more guests, but also more guests that stay around. First impressions breathes new life into your church. New faces inspire people. New faces require change. New faces help every other area by upping the ante for change and missional alignment.

Improving the guest experience provides your church with some quick benefits. Not only does it ensure more guests, but it also ensures they stay. First impressions breathe new life into your church. New faces inspire people. New faces demand change. New faces help in all other areas by raising the ante for change and missional alignment.

## **8. Design a Leadership Pipeline**

Your leadership pipeline isn't only for pastors, staff, and long-time leaders. Figure out the entry points for new leaders. Discern how you will recruit new leaders using vision clarity. Clarify the ministry apprenticeships for potential leaders.

Help those currently leading to move into coaching and formation roles. Mature leaders can present a huge obstacle or a huge opportunity. Mature leaders may perceive they've hit their sweet spot. Help them to get comfortable sacrificing their comfort so that new volunteers, apprentices, and leaders can take on new roles.

## **Ownership**

The time will come when your only decision will be to revitalize the church or simply accept whatever comes. You may have some faithful leaders, and they are likely to be great people. But they will never fully own or accept the necessary changes until YOU do. That's why we include "ownership" here as one of the vital components of revitalization for you and your church.

Make the decision today that church decline is not an option. Turn on the switch in your head and determine that failure is not an option. Accept the fact that change must occur in everyone's life - especially yours - if you ever want to see the ship turn around.

Revitalizing a church is not easy, reformation never is. But there are hundreds of churches that need pastors who will make that daily sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom. The process will be arduous and tedious. But the lasting effects will be evident in the life of the congregation.

Here we can cite the classic fable of the rabbit and the tortoise: The cocky rabbit challenges the other animals to a race. The tortoise accepts, to the bewilderment of the hare. The race begins and the rabbit gets so far ahead that he has time to take a nap. But while the hare sleeps, the tortoise moves ahead faithfully and crosses the finish line first. Moral of the story: Slow and steady wins the race.

Every church needs some kind of renewal or revitalization. The church should always be reforming itself, to avoid the death of the natural life cycle. Let us strive to renew ourselves in a way that puts the focus on God's Word, God's timing, and the power of the Holy Ghost, rather than on our own creativity, knowledge, and style. Then, when people ask us how we can change our church, we won't be flexing our muscular rabbit's feet. Instead, we will be able to say in all sincerity, just as the psalmist said, "*The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes*" (Psalm 118:23).

## PILLAR OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Luke 4:18-19 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

The day of Pentecost is a very important event for us in the Church of God. Pentecost is significant in both the Old and New Testaments. This is the Greek name for a festival known as the Feast of Weeks; and it is so called because of the fifty days or seven weeks that follow the Passover offering.

The only direct reference to the events of Pentecost in the early Christian church is found in Acts 2 where it says *"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."*

The wind of Pentecost was powerful; it was a strong wind, but it did not extinguish the tongues of fire. Apart from power, the wind of Pentecost is also life.

On the other hand, fire is often associated with the presence of God, with His holiness and with the purification that can transform our lives.

Another image of the first Pentecost is the miraculous speaking in foreign languages, which enabled people of various ethnic groups to understand the message of the disciples in the Upper Room. And a final image was the powerful result of Peter's preaching.

Now, it seems to me that some people only emphasize the images or the symbols of Pentecost, which are important, but they are not the objective, they are not the essence for the coming of the Holy Ghost over the life of the church.

Pentecost should lead us to reflect on the importance of that event for the integral mission of the church.

The supernatural event of Acts has a missional meaning for all believers. For example, the signs of tongues distributed as of fire, the noise, the wind, and the different human dialects were initial indications of what the Spirit wanted the church to do.

A few days earlier Jesus challenged the disciples by telling them: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). There began the fulfillment of The Great Commission.

And the church did just that: it went out, preached, evangelized, and helped those in need. The early church went everywhere sharing the love of Jesus Christ through works of charity; through actions of love and a practical way of living the gospel: they held all things in common; they sold their property and goods and distributed to all

according to each one's need; and they broke bread in their homes.

Later, however, the church stopped fulfilling its mission. The church became institutionalized, professionalized, became a sophisticated entity, only available to an elevated social class. For a considerable time, the church emphasized wealth, political power, aristocracy, and the authority of the clergy.

The gospel was held within in lavish temple walls. The priority of the church became the grandeur of the buildings; the sophistication of the liturgy; the elaborateness of the clerical vestments; and the upholding of the religious structure. At that time the original mission for the advent of Pentecost lost its relevance.

Nevertheless, time and again, the Holy Ghost takes advantage of the natural course of history to draw us to Pentecost. Unfortunately, many of those ways come by way of world wars, earthquakes, fires, economic recessions, famines, calamities, and pandemics. But, let it be understood, God does NOT cause these crises, because they are part of the consequences of the natural course of a fallen humanity under the curse. God does, however, use them to remind us of our mission and purpose on Earth.

In this current context, we propose the following questions: How can we understand in an integral way the mission of the church? It is said that its mission is spiritual, but how can we comprehend the correlation between this and physical action?

John Stott, an Anglican theologian, said that "The term Integral Mission is a useful expression to refer to a biblical concept of what Christ sends his people to do in the world. We are sent both to witness and to serve. God is creator, redeemer and Father who is concerned for the spiritual and material well-being of all human beings and all his creation, and so should be our mission as a church."

In Luke's gospel, the Lord entered a synagogue; they gave Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and He chose the following passage. "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" (Luke 4:18-19).

The church and its mission possess a spiritual nature, as well as a physical, material, and contextual manifestation. What Jesus is telling us in the Luke 4 passage is that He had come, and, therefore, the church exists, so that through the manifestation of the Holy Ghost we reach the unreached; that we minister to the undesirable; that we attend to the needs of the indigent and needy of society; that we use the anointing of the Spirit that we received at Pentecost to defend the rights of all those who are affected by the oppressors of this world. That is the way in which we fulfill the integral mission of the church; that is the way Pentecost should be celebrated and experienced.

The church must be a place that fulfills all the objectives described by the Lord Jesus Christ in the quotation from Isaiah 61, as narrated by Luke in chapter four.

Giving good news to the poor implies sharing hope with a hopeless world; that we do not judge people but let them know that there is a God who loves them dearly, regardless of their current state and condition.

Heal the brokenhearted, because the hurts, abuses and pains of the past bring sadness, unrest, and lack of peace; but we have the power to heal them through actions of love.

Proclaim freedom to the captives, for there are millions of people incarcerated in prisons around the world; likewise, there are people bound in vices, destructive relationships, emotional chains, religious spirits, and other types of spiritual and emotional prisons. For all of them there is a word of power and freedom.

Proclaiming sight to the blind: our proclamation gives us the power to open people's eyes to see the truth and the great works of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To set the oppressed free: beyond the proclamation of freedom, the church holds the key to go into the deepest recesses and literally open political, social, unjust, poor, and distressing prisons.

The prophet says that our mission also involves preaching the year of the Lord's favor. It is the time in history when God in His sovereign grace brings exoneration from the guilt and effects of sin.

It is up to us to fulfill the integral mission of the Church at a time like this. If the preaching, the classes, the liturgy, and events lead us only to a theological, biblical, educational, and sociological reflection, then we will have wasted our time.

We are the extension of Pentecost in the fulfillment of the integral mission. As such, we must fulfill the work of the ministry. Letting the world know that Jesus Christ is still the hope for all its ills. We must do works of charity and not be ashamed to proclaim the gospel, not only by preaching and teaching, but by actions of love that touch all the communities where we are sent.

Once again, we must not be content merely to recognize the life-giving and empowering action of God's Spirit. Like the prophet Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, we must give life to people; heal the sick, restore homes, encourage the discouraged, uplift the fallen, break chains of those in bondage. Beyond any biblical, theological, and exegetical knowledge, let us understand that *The Spirit of the Lord is on us, because He has anointed us to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent us to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*".



## PILLAR OF SELF-CARE

3 John 1:2 *"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well."*

Congregational care is essential. However, traditional congregational care is, at best, now very strained. We all know that pastoral ministry is quite different from what it was before the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020. Those who were able to integrate weekly liturgical face-to-face meetings again had to make major changes to church practices. Caring for bereaved families unable to attend funeral services, members unable to digitally connect and those who have lost employment are just a few examples of the new challenges the ministry is now facing.

Because we are ministering in unprecedented times, a unique ministry is required. Pastoral care to families, including the elderly who may be more isolated, parents who work at home, youth, and children, coupled with the increase in intra-family abuse, requires more creativity, strategic vision, energy, and ministry effort. Counseling married couples, planning worship services, checking on the state of the congregation, meeting with ministry leaders and providing spiritual care, as pastors, can challenge our time management and drain all energy.

During this time, many people, including ministers, have experienced what happens to their bodies when they are subjected to a high level of pressure and stress: eating disorders, change in sleep patterns, panic attacks, heart problems, blood pressure, among others.

In the pastoral self-care book called *Healing for Healers* the author describes the following argument, where he cites a simple and interesting medical analogy for us to intentionally pay attention to ourselves.

The moment a part of our body, for example the arm, is attacked by bacteria, it becomes infected and can form a pus-filled abscess. If it is not cured, the poison contained in this pus can infiltrate the cells and organs, damaging the arm and possibly the whole body. When the person is treated by a medical practitioner, the pus can be removed by a procedure that consists of pricking and gently pressing the edges of the boil, which is very unpleasant for both the doctor and the affected person.

Similarly, those of us who provide pastoral care are regularly exposed to direct and indirect trauma, where this experience can create an accumulation of "spiritual pus" within us. If this "pus" remains untreated it can affect us and harm us; however, if we receive treatment then we can be relieved of the potential harm this could cause us.

In an ideal world we would follow the advice we give to people who are exposed to the accumulation of continuous sadness. That is, we should find a self-care system that motivates us to express our suffering, our worries, our fears, our loneliness, our anxiety, and our uncertainties. However, we almost always act as if we are immune to the potential harm this can cause us, absorbing some of the trauma we have been exposed to.

Intentional involvement in therapeutic listening and empathetic listening to brothers and



sisters in the church makes us vulnerable to a syndrome known as "compassion fatigue". This is a set of symptoms caused by indirect exposure to trauma resulting from working with people who have been exposed to a horrific case. It has also been referred to as "secondary post-traumatic stress", and "vicarious traumatization".

Taking care of others constantly requires the need to take care of oneself. If a person is not well, it is quite difficult to take care of others. Frankly, a person cannot give what he does not have. Airlines realized this long ago and set guidelines for parents to take care of themselves first when putting on their oxygen masks before caring for their children in an oxygen-depleted environment.

Self-care is not selfish, it is wise. Even our Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples to go to a quiet place to rest for a while when the ministry was so busy that they did not even take time for themselves. Mark 6:31 *"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."* Self-Care is a practical means to ministry longevity; this leads to a balanced approach to relevant and sustainable ministry.

Self-care can bring clarity to help us nurture a spiritual discipline that establishes a healthy relationship with God. There are people, including some pastors and leaders, who have learned to hide their conflicts, ignore their weariness, and feign their emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Intimacy with Christ can only be feigned for a season. For us to not only survive, but to enjoy, (yes, I said it right, enjoy), our lives we must be willing to look at ourselves and examine ourselves closely in the mirror of sincerity.

Self-care can also be experienced with a change of pace, resting, meditating, praying, taking time for physical exercise, and very important in this time of information oversaturation and social media participation, "DISCONNECTING" from technology, disconnecting from political influences, disconnecting from negative voices, disconnecting from destructive tendencies, disconnecting from depressive emotions, and connecting with other human beings with positive and healthy attitudes; adopting new ideas and projects; adapting to this new way of life; and looking to the future with all the possibilities that our tomorrow can be much better than our yesterday.

On the other hand, Self-Care is the replenishment of mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and socially depleted resources in ministry. Understanding the complex role of contemporary pastors and Christian leaders, gives insight into the need for spiritual connection, emotional care, and physical awareness. All are essential and important for life balance in the men and women of God's personal and ministerial journey.

*"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16).*

The book of Isaiah 53 describes the Messiah as the Suffering Servant. The prophet begins this famous chapter with two questions, *"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed"* (Isaiah 53:1). He goes on to offer details of how this suffering servant would be mistreated, rejected, oppressed, afflicted, and

brought low by pain. Why would anyone willingly submit to such anguish and agony? What would the Messiah gain by doing this? Would there be a day when His sacrifice would be recognized, and people would enjoy the results of such a wonderful act of love? In the letter to the Philippians, chapter 2 we can find answers to these and other questions.

What is interesting in Philippians 2 is that contrary to Isaiah 53, not only are the sacrificial aspects observed, but also the exaltation of Jesus by the Father. He suffered and gave His life, and through these actions and His attitude of submission and obedience, He was exalted in the eyes of all human beings of every nation and tongue. What He did was part of a master plan for the salvation of humans and the redemption of God's creation.

In Isaiah 53, Jesus is identified as the Suffering Servant. I believe that at the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane and had a traumatic experience which included spiritual, emotional, physical, and social suffering.

In Gethsemane, Jesus talks to the Father about drinking a cup as a symbol of his suffering and final death. The first occasion we read about the cup in the context of his death is found in Matthew 20 and Mark 10, after the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus to ask him to give them the opportunity for one of them to sit on the right and the other on the left in his kingdom. His reply was, "They know not what they ask" (Matthew 20:22; Mark 10:38). He went on to tell them about the cup they would have to drink. They nodded that they were willing to drink the cup, even though they did not know what He was talking about. Later, during the Lord's Supper, they literally drank the cup of the New Covenant (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17). This was a symbolic way to teach them about the suffering of the Messiah and their own suffering at the hands of those who in the future would try to wipe Christianity off the face of the earth. The fourth occasion in which the cup is mentioned in connection with His death occurs in the Gospel of John 18:11 when Judas arrives in the Garden of Gethsemane with the soldiers and Peter attacked the servant of the High Priest by cutting off his right ear. Jesus asked him, "*shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?*" (John 18:11).

When we drink from a cup in social settings, we are inviting other people to be part of our happiness and victories. But this was not a time of celebration, rather, of suffering. Therefore, when He asks the Father whether there is the possibility of having to drink from the cup, He said this because there was no one else with whom to share this cup of suffering. The disciples had said that they were willing to drink the cup, but now they were sleeping, and He was alone. In fact, it was very difficult to drink the cup by Himself. At the Lord's Supper Jesus lifted His cup and said to His disciples, "*Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*" (Matthew 26:27-28). That night in the Upper Room it was easy for them to savor the sweet taste of the wine as it passed their lips. There is an adage that says, "it is not the same to call out to the devil as to see him coming." The disciples' eyes felt heavy, their bodies tired, and they lacked the spiritual strength to stand and drink the cup of the Master's suffering.

Self-care leads us to pay attention to all those symptoms we have mentioned in this part of ministerial theology. We must not neglect our mind, body, soul, and spirit. Some act as if they were made of iron. But, even iron, if subjected to a high temperature, can bend and break. Let us understand that our body is a temple that we should take care of. Failure to do so can give the enemy room to take up residence within us and cause us to act in a way that is inadequate to the principles established by God in His Word.

*"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-30).*

SECTION V

**MINISTERS and MINISTRIES**

**MINISTERIAL RANKS**

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**RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH TO THE REGION**



## MINISTERS AND MINISTRIES<sup>8</sup>

The Church of God recognizes men and women who have been called by God to the ministry, providing them coverage through a ministerial rank. Their ministry is key to the integral development of the local church and the advancement of the kingdom of God. Therefore, your faithfulness to the local church and at all levels within the organizational structure of the Church of God where you are serving is expected. It is a privilege as a minister to serve God and the church, but it is a privilege that carries with it specific responsibilities according to ministerial rank: Minister Exhorter, Ordained Minister, Ordained Bishop, Minister of Music, and Minister of Christian Education.

Candidates for ministry are initially identified in the local church. This identification is done holistically based on general objective criteria such as:

1. Have clear evidence of a call to ministry (active in pastoral ministry, evangelism, missionary, teaching, or music).
2. Must be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
3. Must be a faithful member of the Church of God and to be in harmony with its Teaching, Discipline and Government.
4. Must be faithful in the payment of tithes and offerings in their local church.
5. To fulfill the biblical requirements presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-6.
6. Must be honorable.
7. Be willing to obey The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19 and 20).
8. Have biblical studies (depending on the rank to which they apply).
9. That they be willing to continue their education, not only at the biblical-theological level, but also at the academic level.
10. That they be committed to the Church of God in ascending in the different ministerial ranks that are offered.
11. Ability to work as part of a team and follow work guidelines.
12. To recognize and submit to their spiritual authorities (Pastor, District Overseer, etc.).
13. That there be unity in their attitude, deeds, and words.
14. To demonstrate responsibility in church activities.
15. Knowledgeable and supportive of the regional vision.

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<sup>8</sup> The following section is a product of the Ministerial Manual of the Southeast Hispanic Region of the Church of God under the direction of Bishop Otoniel Collins. We thank Bishop Collins for giving us the following information to incorporate into our Ministerial Manual.

## MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALING PROCESS

According to the Minutes of the Church of God, "the local church should refrain from recommending applicants for the ministry until the district overseer has consulted with the Regional Administrative Bishop and the Regional Administrative Bishop authorizes the recommendation" (S21 Chapter 3 Recommendations of Applicants for the Ministry, Minutes).

The diagram to the left describes the basic process through which a candidate aspiring to ministerial rank must undergo, in addition to other requirements of the local church. The process includes five phases that take the candidate from identification to the credentialing ceremony. Each phase is a prerequisite for the next. In addition to what is presented in the diagram, there are additional steps that must be taken cases (divorced candidates with second marriages, ministers coming from other recognized organizations, etc.).

### **Phase 1: Candidate Selection**

The first phase involves the identification or selection of the candidate for ministry. It involves a pastoral diagnostic process based on previously established individual and social moral principles, an interview with the district overseer and approval by the administrative bishop so that the candidate can proceed to the next step in the process.

### **Phase 2: Ministerial Endorsement**

Upon completion of Phase 1, the applicant receives the endorsement of the local church at an assembly or special meeting, the endorsement of his or her pastor and finally the endorsement of the district overseer.

### **Phase 3: Training**

There are three means by which the candidate for ministry is trained for the ministerial rank they aspire to:

1. Call and Ministry Study (CAMS) for applicants to the rank of Exhorter.
2. Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) for applicants to the rank of Ordained Minister.
3. Bible Institutes: Theological studies submitted by candidates are subject to the approval of the Cleveland office.

### **Phase 4: Evaluation and Review**

All applicants to the ministry must provide consent to and pay the amount required for the background check. Additionally, they must submit the proper documentation and pass the exam that corresponds to their desired position with a minimum score of 70%.

## MINISTERIAL RANKS

The following is a description of the ranks that the Church of God recognizes for the ministry. Each rank merits studies, experience and requirements that must be rigorously fulfilled. There are three main ministerial ranks: Minister Exhorter, Ordained Minister, and Ordained Bishop. Additionally, the Church of God recognizes and grants the rank of Minister of Music and Minister of Christian Education.

### Exhorter Minister:

1. Preach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Serve as an evangelist.
3. Fulfill the role of pastoral ministry.
4. In case of emergency, the regional overseer may authorize this person to baptize converts and accept new members into the fellowship of the church membership.
5. When an exhorter serves as a pastor and the laws of the land recognize their credentials as those of an authorized minister of the gospel, then they may officiate the rites of marriage.
6. Exhorters who serve as assistants and assistant pastors may receive tithes when possible.
7. The exhorter is required to be active in the ministry, pay tithes (to the local church of which they are members), and submit monthly reports to the territorial office. After one year of service, they may be promoted to the rank of ordained minister as determined by the administrative bishop.

### Ordained Minister

1. Preach, enact, teach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Serve as an evangelist.
3. To serve as a pastor
4. Baptize converts.
5. Accept new members into the fellowship of the church membership.
6. Administer the holy sacraments (ordinances)
7. Officiate the rites of marriage.
8. Establish churches.

### Ordained Bishop:

1. Preach, enact, teach, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Serve as a pastor, district overseer or in other appointments.
3. Baptize converts.
4. Accept new members into the fellowship of the church membership.
5. Administering the holy sacraments (ordinances)
6. Officiate the rites of marriage.
7. Assist in ordination ceremonies of other ministers.
8. Establish and organize new churches.

### Minister of Music and/or Minister of Christian Education

In addition to the general requirements for all ministers, the Minister of Music and/or Christian Education must:

1. Be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
2. Have full knowledge of the teachings and doctrines of the Church of God as established by the International General Assembly.
3. Have received formal preparation or experience that enables them to serve the church effectively in any of these specialized areas of ministry.
4. Satisfactorily pass the respective examination given by the examining board.

The Minutes describe the rights and powers exercised by the Cristian Ministers of Music and/or Ministers of Education as the following: (Minutes S25, pg.104-105)

1. Serve as music director, Christian education director, teacher, or assistant pastor in local churches.
2. To enact, defend and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. The minister of Christian education or minister of music shall not qualify for ordained bishop if he remains exclusively in the field of music or Christian education. It is understood that women do not qualify for the rank of ordained bishop.
4. If the minister of Christian education or minister of music enters the pulpit ministry, we recommend that the period of credentialing (as minister of Christian education or minister of music) be credited toward the exhorter's license.

### Ministerial Responsibility

It is the responsibility of each minister to be mindful of their moral conduct and fulfill their duties and responsibilities to the organization to avoid suspension or revocation of credentials. The 2018 Minutes pg.111-12 provide the definition of both terms.

1. Suspension: cessation of all ministerial activity, including the right to vote.
2. Revocation: termination of ministerial credentials with the Church of God, including all rights and privileges attached to the position.

These actions are determined, executed, and supervised by the regional bishop.

### Ministers on Pastoral Assignment

It is important to emphasize that the minister on pastoral assignment shall submit monthly ministerial and ecclesiastical reports to the international office and the regional office.



## Ministers without Pastoral Assignment

The first responsibility of a minister who is not pastoring a congregation is to be a faithful member of a local church within our organization. This means supporting and submitting to the leadership of their pastor as their first overseer. Communication and healthy relationships are essential for the mutual support of the minister in the local church and the support of the ministry's assignments as well as the call to serve in those congregations where required.

To ensure compliance with the goals and objectives, it is important that the organizational structure have the following elements:

1. Job Description
2. Clear understanding of the vision
3. Clear and measurable objectives
4. Effective communication between all levels of leadership
5. Leadership development and formation

In this section we describe the different levels of leadership, their appointment, the administrative and pastoral function (if applicable) and how the church should respond at that level. We have used the Inverted Pyramid of the Coordinates 2023 vision as the basis for the order in which the levels of support are described. The greatest example was given by our Lord Jesus, who while being Lord showed servant leadership by washing the feet of His disciples.

*"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him." (John 13:3-5).*

This is the reason we begin with the pastoral figure and culminate with the regional administrative bishop. Each level of leadership is important within the structure and must be carried out with integrity, faithfulness, respect, and love.

## PASTOR

The local church is the first level within the inverted pyramid and the pastor is the minister responsible before God and the regional administrative bishop for the welfare and integral development of the church assigned to him. The word "shepherd" has its etymological origin in the Hebrew word "ra'ah" and Greek "poimen" which imply to care for, feed and guide sheep. Psalm 23 is the clearest illustration of a shepherd who cares for, feeds and guides using our Lord as an example.

The pastoral position is one of the most important within the organizational structure, since it is the pastor who is the first to form a life through teaching, example, exhortation, discipleship, and accompaniment.

The regional vision 24/34 reflects the importance of the pastoral figure within the fulfillment of The Great Commission, positioning the pastor as the base where ministries, leaders and initiatives that have as a priority the winning of souls for the kingdom are developed.

### Appointment

According to the Minutes, the authority to appoint pastors has been vested in the regional administrative bishop.

### Functions of the Pastor

Pastoral work is one of dedication, devotion, sacrifice, and surrender. Their work has a direct impact on the lives and care of the congregation and goes beyond the walls of the church.

#### **A. Pastoral Functions include, but are not limited to:**

1. Any activity that promotes the growth and development of lives from their conversion.
2. Preach and teach the Word as it is written.
3. Maintain communication with the congregation through visits, phone calls, text messages, emails, digital platforms, etc.
4. Plan meetings, formations and/or workshops focused on families, advisory board, ministry leaders when necessary.
5. Support and be present with members in times of need.
6. Perform functions such as: dedication of children, weddings, funeral services.
7. Ensure that the region's vision, mission, and strategic plan are carried out.

#### **B. Administrative Functions**

The administrative functions of a pastor are described in the Minutes under Ministerial Governance (S21 to S31), Local Governance (S46 to S65) and Employer Governance (S66 to S73).

The following are some of those mentioned.

1. Ensure that the church is properly organized, incorporated, and insured.
2. Keep ministerial and ecclesiastical reports up to date.
3. Ensure that the church keeps legal and administrative documents in order (see Section 6 Appendix 2 for a list of documents that every church should have).
4. Report and/or moderate local church business sessions. It is important that the pastor communicate with the district overseer before setting up a business meeting.
5. Identify candidates for ministry.
6. The church pastor is responsible for participating in district and regional meetings and events.

The apostle Paul answers, in Hebrews 13:17, how a church should respond to the pastoral figure.

*Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you (NIV).*

In addition to respect and obedience to the pastoral figure, the church should also care for its pastor in an intentional way. Pastoral care is of vital importance and should include emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. A church that cares for its pastors is a blessed church.

Pastoral care is a biblical mandate. The first letter to the Thessalonians states the following:

*Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thess. 5:12-13 NIV).*

The pastoral care a church provides for its pastor will depend on the resources at its disposal. A church should:

1. Recognize the pastor as the ecclesiastical and spiritual authority of the church, appointed and commissioned by the regional administrative bishop.
2. Celebrate Pastoral Family Day annually.
3. Provide time off.
4. Provide financial compensation (pastoral salary, health insurance, life insurance, retirement plan, etc.) according to available resources.
5. Provide the opportunity for the pastor to participate in continuing education.
6. Pastoral Sabbatical (Minutes S68 section VII pg.178).

## DISTRICT OVERSEER

The district overseer is the minister responsible before God and the regional administrative bishop for the welfare of the churches, pastors, ministers, and district ministry leaders, seeking the integral development of the district under his charge.

This assignment includes:

1. Support the pastors of the assigned district.
2. Direct pastors to function as an organization within the Church of God.
3. Serve as mediator between the regional bishop and pastors.
4. Serve as a leader and facilitator for pastors by encouraging them to exercise their local ministry in conjunction with the ideals and goals of the Church of God at the international and regional levels.

### Appointment

District overseers are appointed by the administrative bishop of the region and have jurisdiction over several local churches according to geographical location. District overseers shall have the responsibilities and powers set forth in the constitution, bylaws, and policies of the church. Their term of office shall be two years, but may be terminated by removal, resignation, or death. Exceptions may be considered by the administrative bishop of the region.

It is vital that the pastor and the local church establish a healthy relationship of mutual respect and effective communication with their district overseer. This will help the church receive the support, direction, and guidance necessary for the vision and mission of the Church of God to be optimally realized to fulfill The Great Commission.

### Administrative Relations

The district overseers should be servant leaders who understand their strategic position within the organization. His first commitment is to the calling the Lord has placed on his life. This commitment must be reflected at all levels of impact:

1. The Organization: District overseer must show obedience to the Minutes.
2. The Regional Office: The District Overseer is the liaison between the administrative bishop and the District Overseers.
3. Pastoral care: The district supervisor must accompany the district pastors in a close and intentional manner.
4. The Local Church: The district overseer helps to always redirect the hearts of the members of the congregation to their pastor.

District pastors should feel connected to the regional bishop through the district overseer and at the same time they should feel supported in the different experiences within the

ministry. For this to be successful, there must be communication between all the above levels and a clear understanding of the pastoral and administrative functions of the district overseer.

### Pastoral Functions

According to the biblical model, a district overseer should:

1. Shepherd and supervise the district ministers and their respective families.
2. Oversee district ministry leaders.
3. Seek, oversee, and foster the spiritual, ministerial, and academic development of the ministers and ministry leaders of its district.
4. Ensure the unity of each church in the district individually and collectively.
5. Facilitate spiritual or social activities that promote harmony, fellowship, and spiritual growth (retreats, district services, internships, prayer groups, etc.).

To fulfill his or her pastoral role, the district overseer shall seek to have and maintain effective and transparent communication with the pastors of the district using, but not limited to, the following methods:

1. Conduct an annual needs assessment to establish the state of health of the churches and pastors under their leadership, the purpose of which is to develop an individualized accompaniment plan. The district supervisor may make use of district and regional resources to supply, strengthen and support congregations with needs (pastoral care committee, support groups, mentoring, etc.).
2. Maintain continuous communication with pastors through personal visits, phone calls, text messages, emails, digital platforms, etc.
3. Plan meetings, formations and/or workshops focused on pastors, advisory board, local ministry leaders, district leaders and laity when necessary.

### Administrative Functions

Like the pastoral functions, the administrative functions of the district overseer are of paramount importance in formation and maintenance of healthy churches. The administrative role of a district overseer ensures that pastors, ministers, and churches function holistically and efficiently under the Guidelines. Accountability is not only important but helps ensure that every administrative decision is carried out with fairness and balance.

The following is a breakdown of how the district overseer supports the pastor and the local church under his administrative role:

1. Ensure that each church in the district is developed in accordance with the regional strategic plan.
  - a. District overseer will ensure alignment with regional strategic plan.

- b. The district overseer shall organize effective district meetings (document included in Section 6, Appendix 7).
  - c. The district overseer shall encourage the attendance of pastors, spouses, ministers and district leaders at district and regional convocations.
2. Ensure that each church in the district works in harmony with the current denominational plan. The district overseer is responsible for disseminating the denominational plan to the churches in his or her district. Therefore, they should be familiar with the most current minutes, the regional vision and mission, and the regional strategic plan.
3. Promote the biblical theological and ministerial education offered by the region. The district overseer is responsible for knowing the resources, tools, and methods for theological and ministerial development (CAMS, IMP, district institutes, continuing education, etc.).
4. Authorize and/or moderate the business sessions of the district churches.
  - a. The district supervisor shall moderate a business session in each church on his or her district. However, he/she may authorize the local pastor to conduct such a session (A65, 19994, par. 7, p. 88). It is the duty of each pastor to inform his district supervisor of his intention to conduct a business session.
  - b. The district supervisor will communicate the processes of how a pastor should conduct an annual business session in a clear and effective manner.
5. When a local worker does not have the respective ministerial credentials, the District Overseer shall perform the ordinances and ceremonies in the local church (holy supper, water baptism, foot washing, accepting new members into the communion of the church membership, solemnizing marriage ceremonies).
  - a. The local pastor shall inform the district supervisor of his intention to conduct such ceremonies.
  - b. The district supervisor should encourage each pastor to participate in regional education resources (CAMS, MIP, Bible institutes) so that all workers aspire to obtain their ministerial credentials.
  - c. District overseer shall encourage ministerial advancement.
6. The pastor of the local church is the one who endorses candidates to begin the process of ministerial recognition, taking into consideration the candidate's call to ministry, background, testimony, and educational process. The district overseer is responsible for recommending candidates for ministerial promotion to the administrative bishop (see Section 2 of this manual for the credentialing process).
7. Assist the administrative bishop of the region with the appointment of pastors when necessary.

- a. The district overseer will develop a church profile to assist the regional administrative bishop in selecting a candidate for the vacancy.
  - b. The local church should follow the Guidelines when a pastoral change is necessary (Guidelines S51, Title I and II).
- 8. In conjunction with the administrative bishop, the district overseer shall approve applications for the purchase or construction of all church property in his district.
  - a. Before planting a new church or moving an existing church to another location, the district overseer, alongside the pastor and his local council should:
    - i. Check and sign off on the financial and legal status of the decision.
    - ii. Approve the new location where the congregation will be moved or planted.
    - iii. Orient the local pastor to the regulatory process of buying/selling property.
      - b. All property sale/purchase transactions must comply with the requirements of the Church of God Guidelines.
      - c. The district overseer should guide the local church pastor regarding appropriate and professional real estate resources.
- 9. Develop and execute the district work calendar in accordance with the regional calendar. Each district overseer should hold a district meeting at the beginning of each year to share the regional calendar. This will help the local church pastor to develop his or her calendar without conflicting dates. All district and local church activities should be done taking into consideration the separate dates by region.
- 10. Ensure that each of the ministers and churches within the district are up to date in their monthly ministerial reports.
  - a. The district overseer will emphasize the importance of submitting monthly reports on time (within the first 5 days of each month).
  - b. Warn local pastors and ministers of the consequences of not being current in their reporting in compliance with the Minutes.
  - c. The pastor of the local church must report both reports (ecclesiastical and ministerial).
  - d. The district overseer should orient pastors to the methods for submitting reports (by mail, on-line).
- 11. The district overseer shall report quarterly to the regional office in March, June, September and December on the district's activities and achievements.
- 12. The district supervisor shall ensure that the churches in the district have all legal and administrative documentation in order (title, property and pastor's insurance, tax exemption certificate, incorporations, bylaws, background checks, etc.).

## DISTRICT MINISTRY LEADERS

The work of district ministry leaders is representative of the existing groups at the local church level. Their role is to strengthen and support the efforts of local church leaders, foster district unity, and support the vision, mission, and strategic plan of the region. They are accountable to their pastor and to the district overseer.

### Requirements

1. To be a faithful member of the Church of God in full agreement with the Minutes.
2. To be baptized by the Holy Ghost, evidencing the fruit of the Spirit, leadership qualities and good testimony.
3. To be a true disciple who reflects Jesus Christ with the capacity to disciple others.
4. Have the biblical, doctrinal, and cultural preparation for the execution of the duties of their ministry.
5. Possess a spirit of obedience and subjection to their authorities and the ability to work as part of a team.

### Appointment

District ministry leaders shall be selected by the district overseer and may serve for a term of two years according to the following process:

1. Endorsement and recommendation from the local pastor
2. Appointment by the District Overseer

### Functions

The district leader should focus their work plan on the local church. The district leader should submit a draft work plan to their district overseer before presenting it to the local churches.

The district leader will ensure that their work plan is fully developed in accordance with the region's strategic plan.

Under the authority of the district overseer, he/she shall convene and preside over meetings with the local church ministry leaders for their respective assignments. The district overseer shall provide guidance to the district leader in conducting effective district meetings.

4. The district leader shall maintain harmony and unity in the ministry he or she is coordinating.
  - a. The district leader should know each ministry leader in the local church.
  - b. The district leader should support the activities of such a ministry at the local church level as much as possible.
  - c. The district leader should inform the district overseer of any relevant and/or conflicting events.

The district leader must attend regional ministry meetings when called upon to do so.



1. The district leader must submit ministry reports to the district supervisor on a quarterly basis.
2. The district leader should keep a record of district ministry meetings and make them available upon request. Documents should include agenda, minutes, and attendance records.
3. District leader to maintain a current directory of all local ministry leaders.
4. When there are events involving finances, the district leader should keep track of these and prepare reports for the district ministry supervisor immediately following such events.
5. District leader must maintain ethical conduct and respect confidentiality when required.

### Responsibility of the Local Church to the District

To strengthen district efforts and ensure that we are working under the same vision, it is important that the closeness between the pastors and the district supervisor be in an atmosphere of genuine and functional relationships. This relationship is intentionally developed and should be one of mutual respect and consideration. We reaffirm the importance and authority of the district supervisor within the structure of the church at the regional, district and local levels.

The attitude of the pastor toward his district and his overseer will make a difference in the accomplishment of goals. Therefore:

1. The local church shall recognize the district overseer as the ecclesiastical and spiritual authority of the district appointed and commissioned by the regional administrative bishop.
2. Local church should show appreciation to district overseer.
3. The local church should receive the district overseer with due respect and consideration.
4. The local pastor should instruct his leaders and congregation on the role of the district overseer and his functions.
5. The pastor should inform his or her advisory body about the possibility of meeting with the district overseer when appropriate.

Each pastor should make sure that his churches understand the responsibility they have in being part of a centralized polity. It is the Church of God that recognizes you as a minister and pastor and grants you the privilege of working under it. Therefore, accountability, timely delivery of the ministerial and church report, support of activities, constant communication, and faithfulness to the vision and mission of the region is the expected response of every pastor, minister, and church that chooses to be part of the Church of God.

### REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE BISHOP<sup>9</sup>

The charge of the regional administrative bishop is a vital and honorable position in the Church of God. The regional administrative bishop is responsible before God and the International Executive Committee of the Church of God to watch over the pastors and

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<sup>9</sup> (State/Regional Overseer Manual: Charter 3 The Role of the State/Regional Overseer. 2010)

the health and growth of the existing churches and new churches in his region, so that they can fulfill The Great Commission. He is the person in charge of directing, supervising, and watching over all the ministries and programs that are carried out. He is the person of God entrusted with carrying out the vision and mission of the Church of God during his term of appointment.

### Appointment

The regional administrative bishop is appointed by the International Executive Committee of the Church of God to whom he is directly responsible for his administrative management. Every two years, the ministers of the region under his charge have the right to cast a preferential vote for the continuance of his position.

### Functions

Like district overseers, the administrative bishop also exercises pastoral and administrative functions.

### Pastoral Functions

Its pastoral functions are designed to care for and see to the integral welfare of its ministers. These functions include:

1. Support, visit and communicate with pastors and ministers in times of crisis.
2. Provide opportunities for ministerial formation and improvement.
3. Celebrate opportunities for ministerial promotion.
4. Provide opportunities for koinonia among the ministerial body.
5. Celebrate achievements of pastors and ministers (pastoral day, birthdays, anniversaries, academic achievements, etc.).

### Administrative Functions

The administrative functions of the regional bishop help the structure work in a clear, harmonious, and effective manner. Since the purpose of this manual is to describe the different levels of support that help the local church and clarify that the functions of the regional bishop encompass international, national, regional, district and local areas, it is important to clarify that the administrative functions outlined here are those that are both directly and indirectly related to the work of the pastor and the local church.

1. Organize and conduct a Regional Convention and promote conventions and/or camps for (ladies, gentlemen, youth, and children) ministries, giving general instructions in doctrine and general interests of the church.
2. Appoint district overseers, pastors and make changes or fill pastoral vacancies, when necessary
3. Approve the organization and establishment of new churches and/or dissolve inactive churches.
4. Approve the selection, purchase and construction of all church property, parsonage, or Bible school buildings, together with the respective district overseers.
5. To officiate all ministerial credentialing and promotion processes in the region (including approval, revocation, renewal, or suspension of ministerial credentials).

6. Transfer of members from churches that have been dissolved.
7. Determine the boundaries of each district in the region.
8. Appeal to the general overseer in those cases of disciplinary processes and/or trials where there is a conflict or conflict of interest.
9. The administrative bishop in conjunction with the district overseer may authorize exhorters to pastor churches, baptize and receive members into the church, when such authority is necessary or in case of an emergency.
10. Model, encourage and provide in coordination with the district overseer, formal formation, and guidance to pastors in the following areas: planning and administration of an annual local church budget; conflict resolution and impacting the local community.
11. Prepare and/or appoint a committee to conduct a ministry or life planning formation event that covers retirement planning issues and challenges, ministerial retirement transition, taxes, lifetime health, to assist ministers of every age to successfully address life stages, and to successfully embrace the aging ministry.
12. In lockstep with the Regional Director of Youth and Discipleship, senior pastors, student pastors and Regional Ministry Development Board (CAMS and MIP), adopt an annual plan to identify, mentor/train and engage young men and women, designated as the "Jeremiah Generation", both locally and in the regional ministry of the Church of God.

## REGIONAL MINISTRY LEADERS

The role of the regional leaders, under the authority and direction of the regional bishop, is to facilitate strategies and resources to implement the regional vision in the local church through the districts.

### Requirements

1. To be fully aware of and faithful to the Minutes.
2. Be a faithful member of a local church and be in harmony with the pastor of your local church.
3. To be baptized with the Holy Ghost, evidencing the fruit of the Spirit, leadership qualities and good testimony.
4. To be a true disciple who reflects Jesus Christ with the capacity to disciple others.
5. Have the biblical, doctrinal, and academic preparation for the execution of the duties of their ministry.
6. Possess a spirit of obedience and subjection to their authorities, and the ability to work in a team.

### Appointment

Candidates for regional leadership shall have experience in the ministry for which they are being considered. Appointment will be for a term of two years. Exceptions may be considered by the administrative bishop. The following guidelines should be followed for appointment.

## Steps

1. Endorsement from your local pastor
2. Recommendation of the district overseer
3. Appointment by the regional bishop

## Functions

1. Under the authority of the regional administrative bishop, convene and preside over meetings of the regional ministry.
2. Maintain harmony and unity in the coordinating ministry.
3. Attend regional meetings called by the regional administrative bishop.
4. Submit ministry reports to the regional administrative bishop.
5. Keep a record of regional ministry meetings.
6. Maintain an updated directory of all ministry leaders.
7. When there are events where finances are handled, keep track of these and prepare reports for the Regional Bishop.

## S43.DISTRICT OVERSEERS<sup>10</sup>

### I. SELECTION

Each district shall be under the care and direction of a overseer who shall be appointed by the state or regional overseer.

### II. DUTIES AND POWERS

1. To moderate a business session in each church within his or her district. However, they may authorize the local pastor to conduct such a session (A65, 1994, Section 7, p. 88).
2. Ensure that an evangelistic revival is conducted in their district during the year.
3. Ensure that each church in their district implements the state or regional program.
4. Assist the state or regional overseer with the appointment of pastors when necessary.
5. In conjunction with the state or regional overseer, approve the selection, purchase, or construction of all church properties on their district.
6. To the extent possible, each year they will lead the revitalization of one of the district's congregations (A77, 2018).
7. Each district should set a goal to collaborate with the state/regional office in planting a new church (A77, 2018).

### RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH TO THE REGION

The response of the local church and pastor to the region responds to the ministerial coverage and endorsement provided by the international and regional offices. The Church of God is a duly organized institution that recognizes the call of men and women to the ministry. This coverage provides the minister and the church with privileges and rights stipulated in the minutes such as preaching, teaching, serving as pastor or in the different

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<sup>10</sup> TEACHINGS, DISCIPLINE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH OF GOD (2018 Minutes)

levels of leadership. Therefore, the following responsibilities and commitments are expected of the church:

1. Recognize the regional administrative bishop as the highest ecclesiastical and spiritual authority appointed and commissioned by the International Executive Committee in the region.
2. Recognize the leaders of the different ministries at the regional level.
3. Identify and source candidates for regional work when there are vacancies.
4. Report and send monthly ecclesiastical reports at the international and regional levels.
5. Support regional activities (camps, conferences, workshops, convocations, etc.).

## SECTION VI

### APENDICES

Appendix 1: Regional Organization Chart

Appendix 2: The Task Force

Appendix 3: Ministerial Support Group

Appendix 4: Questions for the Pastoral Support Group

Appendix 5: Important Documents to be Handled by the Church



## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1: The Task Force

This Appendix can be used by churches and pastors to establish the parameters contained in this manual. First, it is necessary to form a work team to make church members and leadership aware of how to establish the areas of work in the congregation. Subsequently, this team will evaluate the achievements and challenges, while proposing adjustments and changes for the proper functioning of the ministry in the local church.

A Task Force is an integral element in the work of each pastor in the context of his or her church. The team should be comprised of 4 to 6 persons selected by the pastor who are familiar with and active in the work of the church within their community. Members may be leaders or laypersons, or a mixture of both if the pastor prefers. The selection of Task Force members should be based on the academic disciplines and abilities with which each member can contribute to the fulfillment of the project in this Sourcebook. The team shall provide motivation, support, direction, and organization at each stage of planning and execution of the project.

#### Team Responsibilities

- Help the pastor discern how to set the instructions in the manual within the context or identity of the congregation.
- Provide a detailed assessment of how the congregation is adopting the manual, and how they could be more effective in its operation.
- Assist the pastor in analyzing the mission, vision, and objectives of the region in comparison with the mission and vision of the local church.
- Monitor the progress of the Project, providing constructive criticism evaluation whenever necessary.
- Have one of the members serve as the person who motivates and instructs the congregation about the work of the team.
- Use the different social and communication media to share the mission and vision of the church.
- Create signs and other decorative media that constantly announce the mission and vision of the church.

#### Work of the Task Force

1. The Task Force should help the pastor identify his or her concept of the current mission and vision of the church. Some questions that may help with this topic of discussion are:

- What is the biblical, theological, and historical basis that nurtures the mission, vision and traditions of this church in this particular context?
  - What signs of spiritual life are there in this community and context?
  - In what areas or places have new biblical thoughts been emerging, and what are these?
  - What is the relationship between the spirituality of the church community and the health of the society in which the church domain finds itself?
  - What needs to be done differently for a more transformative vision of faith to develop in this context and community?
2. The Task Force must assist the pastor to be an integral part of the evaluation process. In order to do this, the task force must understand the nature of the ministry and the role of the minister.
  3. The Task Force assists the pastor in defining and identifying areas that present challenges, obstacles, strengths and weaknesses of the church and ministry.
  4. Task force members can provide specific assistance with respect to skills beyond those possessed by the pastor. A Task Force member, for example, who has a degree in psychology can serve as an advisor in the design and interpretation of the assessment instrument to be part of the project.
  5. The Task Force will, continuously, remain in conversation with the pastor to provide constructive criticism during each stage of the project.
  6. The Task Force shall seek to make each congregational leader aware of the fundamental elements of the mission and vision of the church. At the same time, it will provide them with the necessary files to incorporate the logos, emblems, colors, and graphics of the church in their communication and decoration elements.



## Appendix 2: Ministerial Support Group

### "We are Better Together"

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

#### Support Group Goals

- a. Spiritual: Assist the minister in his daily devotion and relationship with God.
- b. Emotional: Provide a safe environment where ministers can bring their emotional burdens and concerns.
- c. Personal: Affirm the minister for the proper functioning of a healthy family life.
- d. Ministerial: Inform ministers of the resources available for a better performance of their ministerial duties.

#### The Role of the Coordinator

- a. The Support Group Coordinator is the person in charge of ensuring that the objectives of the different meetings are met.
- b. The Support Group Coordinator will personally contact the participants of his or her group outside of the meeting to organize social and/or spiritual events.
- c. The coordinator will help organize any necessary aspects of the meeting and will be available in the event that the coordinator is unable to attend the meeting.
- d. The coordinator shall keep a record of meeting attendance and make copies of any necessary materials.

#### Expectations

- a. To provide participants with an opportunity to receive inner healing.
- b. To create a sense of community among participants.
- c. To offer participants the benefits of talk therapy.
- d. To assist participants in carrying out their ministerial duties.

#### Challenges

- a. That participants lose interest.
- b. That the group loses the original healing objectives for healers.
- c. That trust and confidentiality are lost.

**STEP 1:** Each week a person is assigned to start the meeting with a Bible reading. Each week there will be a pre-assigned monthly discussion topic. Cell phones should be turned off completely. The meeting is personal in nature, and no ministerial planning issues will be discussed. The confidentiality and privacy of the group must be protected.

**STEP 2:** Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of their participation in the Support Group. This questionnaire contains demographic questions as well as specific questions about their perspective and understanding of the ministry role. This type of questionnaire will foster a healthy understanding of the specific issues they may face. However, at this time answers will not be discussed.

**STEP 3:** Each person participating in the Support Groups will be asked to share their opinion on three areas: Challenges within the group, Areas for improvement and Positive effects observed in the participants. It will be critical to have a meeting with the volunteers immediately following the meetings. This will provide fresh and current feedback on what happened within the group.

**STEP 4:** Discuss with participants their initial responses to the questionnaire given to them at the beginning of the Support Group.

**STEP 5:** Participants will answer the following questions:

- What is your overall impression of the meetings?
- Share some of the challenges you encountered.
- What benefits have you gleaned from the meetings?
- What things do you wish were different?
- How could this program benefit other pastors?
- Describe how this program helped you emotionally and spiritually.

## **GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

### **Be an active listener**

- Listen without trying to guess what someone is going to say (mind reading).
- Don't talk to others (interrupt) while another person is sharing.
- Proverbs 18:13 "To answer before listening—that is folly and shame."

### **Talk about your own problems**

- Use "I" statements
- Talk about the areas in which you need to change, not what other people are struggling with.
- Colossians 4:6 "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

### **Accepting others' point of view**

- Don't try to "fix" other people's problems and don't give them advice unless they ask for it.
- Meet others where they are and do not diminish their feelings.
- Romans 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

### **Always maintain confidentiality**

- No gossip - what is said in the group stays in the group.
- Beware of gossip and confidentiality in prayer requests and prayer.
- Proverbs 11:13 "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret".

### **Compassion and absence of prejudice**

- Do not criticize, condemn, or belittle others.
- Allow people to cry; avoid saying that crying is not right.
- John 8:11 "...Then neither do I condemn you".

### **Relinquish strict control and hidden agendas**

- Beware of manipulation, controlling or paternalistic attitudes and dominating the discussion.
- Challenge, but do not pressure others to participate.
- 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

### **Practice and encourage honesty and openness**

- Be as honest and vulnerable as the group's level of confidentiality and security allows.
- Avoid presenting an image of being "well" and "together".
- 2 Corinthians 12:9 "...for my power is made perfect in weakness".

**Focusing on the present**

- Share what's going on in your life currently.
- Try to be present with the thoughts you are thinking and the feelings you are feeling.
- Psalm 118:24 "This is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

**Take charge of your own life and growth**

- Your journey is your responsibility.
- Remember that you cannot change others, but you can change yourself.
- Galatians 6:5 "for each one should carry their own load".

**Respect the Group's guidelines**

- It is the responsibility of the entire group to ensure that the group guidelines are followed.
- Consider reminding each other of these guidelines at the beginning of each meeting.
- Hebrews 10:24 "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds".

Appendix 4: Questions for the Pastoral Support Group

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**1. Age**

- a. Under 18 years of age
- b. 18-30
- c. 31-45
- d. 46-60
- e. Over sixty years

**2. Marital status?**

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Separated
- e. Widower

**3. Place of birth and/or upbringing**

- a. South America
- b. Central America
- c. North America
- d. Caribbean
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**4. How long?**

- a. Single \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Married \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Divorced \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Separated \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Widower \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Family makeup**

- a. No children
- b. 1-3 children
- c. 4- or more

**6. Do you speak English?**

- a. 100% \_\_\_\_\_
- b. 50% \_\_\_\_\_
- c. 25% \_\_\_\_\_
- d. 0% \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Secular work**

- a. No
- b. Part-time
- c. Full time

## MINISTERIAL INFORMATION

**8. Academic and/or theological education**

- a. High School
- b. College
- c. Master's Degree
- d. PhD
- e. None
- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Experience in ministerial work?**

- a. 1-5 years
- b. 6-10 years
- c. 11-20 years
- d. more than 20 years

**10. Type of ministerial work**

- a. Pastor
- b. Teacher
- c. Chaplain
- d. Counselor
- e. Layman
- f. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Number of hours per week dedicated to ministerial work**

- a. less than 5 hours
- b. 6-15 hours
- c. 16-35 hours
- d. 36-50 hours
- e. more than 50 hours

**12. Annual salary**

- a. Less than \$25,000
- b. \$25,000 a \$35,000
- c. \$36,000 a \$50,000
- d. \$51,000 a \$75,000
- e. More than \$75,000

**13. In my ministerial work**

- a. I need more help from church leaders
- b. I don't need help from church leaders
- c. I need more support from my organization
- d. I don't need more support from my organization
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**14. I am in the ministry because**

- a. God called me
- b. My organization forces me to
- c. My spouse is forcing me
- d. Because it feels good
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

## EMOTIONS AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS

**15. On a regular basis, I feel**

- a. Alone
- b. Depressed
- c. Content
- d. Happy
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**16. I regularly deal with conflicts**

- a. Talking to another minister
- b. Talking to a professional counselor
- c. Talking to a person of authority in my organization
- d. Talking to \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Talking to no one

**17. Regularly when I have a conflict I like to**

- a. Be alone
- b. Be among friends and family
- c. Listen to music
- d. Play sports
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**18. If I have to talk to someone I prefer**

- a. A stranger
- b. An acquaintance (friend, family)
- c. A professional
- d. A minister
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**19. How often do I discuss my intimacy with a minister/professional?**

- a. Less than one hour per week
- b. Only when I need it
- c. 1-5 hours per week
- d. 6-10 hours per week
- e. Never

**20. (I like) / (dislike) talking to someone from my own organization.**

- a. Because I feel safer
- b. Because I do not trust
- c. Because I am afraid
- d. Because I feel calmer
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Which of the following figures most closely resembles me?**

- a. A broken vessel
- b. A repaired vessel
- c. An imperfect vessel
- d. A perfect vessel
- e. A \_\_\_\_\_ vessel

## EMOTIONS AND MINISTERIAL CONFLICTS

**22. The problems of the people who seek my help make me feel**

- a. Anxious
- b. Frustrated
- c. Confident
- d. Certain
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**23. It seems to me that the work of the church is**

- a. A privilege
- b. A necessity
- c. A nuisance
- d. One more job
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Which biblical character best represents me?**

- a. Moses hitting the rock with a stick
- b. Jonah awaiting the destruction of Nineveh
- c. David fleeing Saul's attack
- d. Jesus in Gethsemane
- e. Another \_\_\_\_\_

**25. The organization to which I belong**

- a. Has provided help when needed
- b. Has never been helpful in my time of need
- c. Has attended to my well-being
- d. Sent me out to minister and forgot about me
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**26. In my ministerial context**

- a. I have never experienced division
- b. I have experienced division
- c. I have been transferred due to problems with the church
- d. I have been transferred due to misconduct
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**27. It seems to me that being a minister has been**

- a. A waste of time
- b. Partly to the destruction of my family
- c. Emotionally and spiritually beneficial
- d. The cause of all my woes
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**28. Regarding other ministers**

- a. I have had problems with another minister
- b. I have had no problems with another minister
- c. False accusations have been made against me
- d. I have a very good relationship with at least 1 minister
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 5: Important Documents to be Handled by the Church

DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION
<b>Local, district and regional calendar</b>	Local calendar including district, area and regional activities and events
<b>Tax Exempt Certificate</b>	Certificate indicating that the church is tax exempt.
<b>Passwords</b>	Passwords for digital programs, bank, computers etc.
Lease or Mortgage Contracts Contract for Rent or Mortgage	Include lease or mortgage agreement and title(s) to property.
<b>Pastoral Compensation</b>	Pastoral salary, life insurance, health insurance, vacations, bonuses, etc., as prescribed in the minutes: S68.COMPENSATION FOR PASTORS
Member Directory Church Directory	List of members including ages or birth dates
Local Church Bylaws Church Bylaws	This is in addition to the Minutes of the Church of God.
Incorporation	Certificate of incorporation and legal documents according to the state where the church is located: Arizona or California.
Bank Information	Bank name, account number. Include a copy of the monthly bank statement.
Furniture Inventory Church Inventory	Inventory should include: description of the item, cost, quantity
Meeting Minutes	Post the minutes of all meetings held during the year. When possible include: attendance sheet, agenda, and minutes.
Local Projects	Include outreach, advocacy, missionary, fundraising, and construction projects.
Financial Reports	One financial report must be provided annually.
Background check	An up-to-date Background Check file should be maintained for all those working with children and youth.
Insurance	Include: property insurance, member's insurance, auto insurance, etc.
Tithe Report	Include a copy of the monthly report. If digital, print the report
Invoice Reporting Report of Bills (Expenditures)	Include company name, account number, and estimate the cost. Also indicate whether the output is monthly or annual

## ANNUAL THEMES

<b>Years 2024</b>	2026: Formation
<b>Years 2026</b>	2028: Evangelism
<b>Years 2028</b>	2030: Revitalization
<b>Years 2030</b>	2032: Community Outreach
<b>Years 2032</b>	2034: Self-care