



AMENDED CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines

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Cathedral, Tagum City, Davao del Norte

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THE STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

WE BELIEVE, in One God; Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer who provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation. That in Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, God became human and is Sovereign Lord of life and history. That in the Holy Spirit, God is present in the world, empowering and guiding believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE, persons are created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation. That by disobedience, they have become sinful, but, by grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ. That being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order.

WE BELIEVE, that the Church is the one Body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.

WE BELIEVE, that the Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness of God's self revelation in Jesus Christ and in history, to illumine, guide correct and edify believers in their faith and witness.

WE BELIEVE, that God is at work to make each person a new being in Christ and the whole world God's Kingdom in which love, justice and peace prevail. That the Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

WE BELIEVE, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death gives assurance of life after death, and we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory to make all creation new and to gather all the faithful in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

*(Revised in 1992 by the UCCP Faith and Order Commission
and approved by the 2006 Quadrennial General Assembly
Digos, Davao del Sur)*

PRAYER

O gracious God, behold your people. You have called us to remain in covenant with you and with one another.

From the beginning you have always been the solid foundation of the Church. Your providence has been our shelter in the storms of life; your strength our stay as we pursue the vision of our founding parents for a united and uniting, reformed and transforming Church.

You have given us diversity of heritage in our union - which has enriched our capacity for witness and reconciliation as a community of faith.

As we renew this covenant,

May your Spirit guide us into greater sensitivity, openness of hearts and minds, and a truly creative response to the challenges of our time;

May the guidance, blessing and the empowering presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, be upon us, even as we strive to be faithful to the true spirit of the covenant we today have forged anew.

Grant, we beseech you, O God, that this symbol of our resolve for greater service may be accompanied by your most assuring love and mercy.

To you alone we give glory and honor, knowing you are the Author of all perfect wisdom and truth.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

**AMENDED CONSTITUTION
OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Article I **NAME**

Section 1. The name of the Church is **UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES**, referred to as “UCCP” or “Church” whenever appropriate.

Section 2. All local Churches and church-owned entities shall bear prominently the name: United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Article II **DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES**

Section 1. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is an integral part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

Section 2. *The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its Protestant heritage as a reformed and reforming church. (As Amended by GA 2002-41, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 3. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is a united and uniting Church, in response to the prayer of Jesus Christ “that they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (John 17:21, RSV).

Section 4. The doctrines and beliefs of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines are based on the Word of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and articulated in the historic Christian creeds, expressed in the diverse heritage of faith and practice brought into the union by its uniting Churches, and embodied in its Statement of Faith.

Section 5. The fundamental values of love, justice, truth and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church.

Section 6. At all levels of its life and government, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall ensure, as far as practicable, the equitable representation of its general membership in terms of gender, age, sector, and geography.

Section 7. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms the catholicity and ecumenicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the UCCP’s relations with other church bodies and in its support of efforts in interchurch cooperation and union in the Philippines and in the world.

Section 8. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its historic faith and its pastoral and prophetic witness in the life and culture of the Filipino people. The Church supports the people’s aspirations for abundant life and holistic redemption from all forms of bondage, in accordance with the vision of the reign of God.

Section 9. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines advocates vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall observe responsible Christian stewardship by utilizing the properties under its care towards self-reliance and support of its various ministries. (As Amended by GA 2002-42, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 10. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall encourage and provide the means for amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members, as well as those involving the Church and its constituencies.

Section 11. In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.

Section 12. As steward of God's creation, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and the integrity of creation.

Section 13. *The United Church of Christ in the Philippines recognizes that nurturing the faith is part of its primary responsibility. (As Amended by GA 2002-43, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 14. Consistent with the heritage and commitment of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the autonomy of the Local Church shall be respected. The scope of such autonomy shall be defined in the By-Laws.

Article III

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall be through one of its local churches or congregations.

Section 2. Membership is acquired through baptism in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; or by dedication, confirmation, transfer and reception, public confession of *faith*, or affiliation. *(As Amended by GA 2002-44, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 3. The categories of membership, including honorary membership, the acquisition, loss or recovery of membership, and the rights and privileges as well as the obligations and commitments of the church members, including the institution and maintenance of discipline, shall be provided for in the By-Laws.

Article IV

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. In faithfulness to Jesus' proclamation of his own mission (Luke 4:18-19), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), the Church, as the People of God, is called to a ministry of love and service and the search for peace based on justice and reconciliation, in obedience to, and as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Having been given a diversity of gifts, all church members are called upon to participate in this ministry, looking forward to the attainment of unity in faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and mature personhood according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

Section 2. Within the Church, some are called as ordained ministers, lay church workers and others charged to perform specific ministries to enable the Church to fulfill its mission and service, and to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Section 3. The UCCP upholds a three-fold mission of preaching, teaching and healing. As such, it sets up schools, health care institutions, service agencies, foundations and recognized as

such to contribute to the fulfillment of its life and Ministry. The list of recognized church institutions shall be appended to the by-laws. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-30, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Section 4. The Church shall also recognize organizations that play an important role in the life and ministry of the Church. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-30, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Article V

LOCAL CHURCH

Section 1. Nature. A Local Church *consists of* baptized or dedicated persons who adhere to the Statement of Faith of the UCCP, who worship in a particular place and carry out the Church's mission and ministry. It is the basic unit of the Church. *(As Amended by GA 2002-45, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 2. Recognition. To be recognized as a Local Church, a *worshipping* congregation shall have at least seventy-five (75) members, shall subscribe to the Constitution and the statutes of the Church, and shall have demonstrated its capability to conduct its life, ministry and administrative affairs for at least two (2) years. *(As Amended by GA 2002-46, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 3. Rights and Privileges. The Local Church shall enjoy the rights and privileges of membership accorded the basic units of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Section 4. Duties and Functions of the Local Church. The Local Church shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) Proclaim the Gospel in witness and service;
- b) Provide for the growth and nurture of its members;
- c) Promote stewardship and other program thrusts of the Church;
- d) Ensure that its worship is orderly and solemn yet joyful and meaningful;
- e) Recruit, recommend and support candidates for its varied forms of ministry;
- f) Support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church;
- g) Hold an annual congregational meeting;
- h) Submit to the Conference an annual report of its life and work;
- i) Strive to fulfill faithfully and promptly all obligations to the other church bodies;
- j) Relate and respond to the life and concerns of society;
- k) Relate with other local churches and worshipping congregations within the Conference towards a more holistic ministry; and
- l) Perform other duties and functions that may be assigned to it.

Section 5. Structure. *The Structure of the Local Church may consist of the following:* *(As Amended by GA 2002-47, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

- a) the Congregation;
- b) the Church Council;
- c) the Board of Elders;
- d) the Board of Deacons;
- e) the Board of Christian Educators;
- f) the Board of Trustees. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-31, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Section 6. The Congregation. Authority in the Local Church emanates from the congregation, consistent and adherent to with the UCCP Constitution and By Laws and in the light of God's Word. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-32, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Section 7. Composition. The congregation shall consist of the following:

- a) Officers and members of the Church Council; and
- b) Regular members of the Local Church. *(As Amended by GA 2002-49, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 8. Duties and Functions of the Congregation. The duties and functions of the congregation *as the highest policy making body* in the local church shall be the following: *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-33, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

- a) Receive members into the Church according to the provisions for membership and ensure their nurture and continuing holistic educational and spiritual development;
- b) *Advocate vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions among its members;*
- c) Acquire, dispose of or encumber the properties of the church in accordance with the statutes of the UCCP and the applicable laws;
- d) Call and support church workers in line with provisions stipulated in the Magna for Church Workers; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-33, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- e) Elect officers and members of the Church Council *and the different boards;* *(As Amended by GA 2002-50, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- f) Approve, support and monitor the implementation of the programs of the Local Church;
- g) Adopt an annual program and budget and approve plans for the ensuing year;
- h) Affirm, modify or reverse the actions of the Church Council in appropriate cases;
- i) Assess the life and work of the Local Church;
- j) Elect delegates to the Conference and other church bodies; and
- k) Perform such other duties and functions as are vested in the congregation.

Section 9. The Local Church Council

A. Composition. The Local Church Council shall be composed of the following: *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-34, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

- 1) Chairperson;
- 2) Vice Chairperson;
- 3) Secretary;
- 4) Treasurer;
- 5) Financial Secretary, *who is at the same time, Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;* *(As Amended by GA 2002-52, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- 6) Auditor;
- 7) Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- 8) Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators; *(As Amended by GA 2002-53, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- 9) Chairperson of the Board of Trustees;
- 10) Heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- 11) Pastor and other church workers, without vote;

- 12) Where applicable, the representatives of Church Institutions operating in the area, without vote; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-34, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- 13) Such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and
- 14) The Conference Minister, without vote.

B. Duties and Functions of the Church Council. Except those duties and functions that are vested in the congregation under this Constitution, the Church Council shall have the following duties and functions:

- 1) Exercise functions and implement programs consistent with the thrusts set forth by the General Assembly;
- 2) Submit reports on the church's life and work, including those on the spiritual growth of the congregation, its outreach programs as well as the financial reports and the proposed budget for the ensuing year to the congregation and the Conference; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-34, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- 3) *Affirm, modify or set aside actions, decisions or orders of any of the boards which may be in conflict with its action, decision or order, or that of another board, or where there is clear error, injustice or deviation from existing Church policy statute;* *(As Amended by GA 2002-54, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- 4) Transmit request and questions to the appropriate committees of the Conference;
- 5) Attend to matters beyond the competence of standing committees;
- 6) Act on requests or petitions submitted by church members;
- 7) Recommend to the Conference candidates for the ministry and for appointment as lay preachers or licentiates, subject to the confirmation of the congregation;
- 8) Call a special meeting of the congregation upon the request of one-third (1/3) of the members; and
- 9) Exercise other duties and functions as may be assigned to it by the congregation;

Section 10. Local Church Workers. Local Church workers are those called by the Local Church and assigned officially by the Conference.

The Pastor is the spiritual leader, shepherd, and executive officer of the Local Church. He/She is the representative of the Church to the congregation, as well as the representative of the congregation to the other bodies of the Church and the larger society.

Section 11. The Board of Elders. The Board of Elders, which shall also act as the Board of Christian Mission, shall attend to the spiritual welfare and discipline of the church members, the mission concerns of the Local Church, and matters affecting church membership, including the maintenance of discipline *and amicable resolution of disputes or conflicts.* *(As Amended by GA 2002-55, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 12. The Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons, which shall also act as the Social Concerns Committee, shall oversee the effective and efficient implementation of the stewardship program of the Church.

Section 13. The Board of Christian Educators. The Board of Christian Educators shall oversee the education program of the Local Church.

Section 14. The Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church properties.

Section 15. Term, Election, Other Matters. The qualifications, term of office, duties and responsibilities of the Pastor and Officers of the Local Church, the procedures for election and

other matters pertaining to its structure and government shall be provided for in the By-Laws and the statutes of the Church.

Article VI **THE CONFERENCE**

Section 1. Nature and Composition. The Conference is an organized body of no less than thirty (30) local churches, in a defined area and with no less than ten (10) ordained ministers *and ten (10) unordained church workers* with pastoral or ecclesial assignments. *(As Amended by GA 2002-56, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 2. The Conference in Session. The Conference in session shall be composed of the following:

- a) Church workers of the Conference;
- b) one (1) lay representative, *not otherwise a church worker*, from each Local Church for every two hundred (200) members, or major fraction thereof; provided that where there are more than one delegate the duly recognized youth organization shall be represented; provided finally that a Local Church shall have at least one (1) but not more than five (5) delegates; and provided finally that in cases where there are more than one (1) delegate, one (1) delegate shall be from the local church council; *(As Amended by GA 2002-57, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002); (As Amended by GA Action 2014-36, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- c) To include further that in all instances the chairperson of the Church Council is an automatic delegate.
- d) Officers and members of the Conference Council;
- e) Ministerial students under the care of the Conference;
- f) Retired church workers;
- g) Heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Conference;
- h) Where applicable, the representative of Church Institutions operating within Conference area, without vote; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-37, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- i) Whenever applicable, designated representatives of partner churches, without vote;
- j) Representatives from accredited ecumenical and service agencies within the Conference, without vote; and
- k) one (1) representative from each worshipping congregation, without vote.

Section 3. Officers. The Conference shall have the following officers:

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) Secretary;
- d) Financial Secretary;
- e) Treasurer;
- f) Auditor;
- g) Conference Minister, without vote;
- h) Deputy Conference Minister, without vote and
- i) Other officers which the Conference or its Council shall deem necessary, without vote.

Except for the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister, all the officers of the Conference shall be lay persons, not otherwise church workers. (As Amended by GA 2002-58, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 4. Duties and Functions. The Conference shall have the following duties and functions;

- a) Proclaim the faith and promote the expansion of the Church;
- b) Affirm and apply in all its activities and programs the Declaration of Principles;
- c) Ordain candidates for ministry according to the procedures of the Church;
- d) Appoint and consecrate licentiates and other lay Church workers;
- e) Install ministers in their respective assignments, with the Conference Minister or the duly appointed representative officiating;
- f) Receive ministers from other communions according to the regulations of the Church;
- g) Ensure that every Local Church within the Conference shall have a church worker and that every active church worker shall have an assignment;
- h) *Create, organize and establish such committees, boards or bodies as may be necessary and essential in the performance of its duties and functions; (As Amended by GA 2002-59, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- i) Exercise supervision over local churches and pastoral assignments within its area; review existing local churches and decide on their status and organize or recognize new ones; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-38, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- j) Support, spiritually and financially, the lay and clergy formation program of the Church;
- k) Elect delegates to the General Assembly;
- l) Elect its representative to the National Council;
- m) Elect members of the Conference Council and Conference representatives to other church bodies.
- n) Receive and act on petitions and appeals from the local churches or on matters referred to it by the wider bodies of the Church; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-39, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- o) Develop, implement and evaluate programs consistent with the program thrusts of the General Assembly in the Local Churches;
- p) Review all acts of the Conference Council;
- q) Adopt a Conference budget;
- r) Coordinate the programs of the church-recognized organizations;
- s) Endeavor to fulfill faithfully and promptly all financial and other obligations to other church bodies; and
- t) Provide adequate salaries of church workers within the area.

Section 5. Sessions.

- a) The Conference shall meet annually.
- b) Special sessions may be called by the Conference Ministers upon request of the Conference Council.

- c) The delegates to the special session of the Conference shall be the accredited members in the last regular sessions. Vacancies by reason of death, transfer, incapacity, or resignation, shall be filled as prescribed in the By-Laws.

Section 6. Quorum. A majority of the Local churches through their accredited representatives shall constitute a quorum, provided that not less than (5) ordained ministers and five (5) other church workers of the Conference are present.

Section 7. The Conference Council. Every Conference shall have a Conference Council composed of the following:

- a) Officers of the conference who shall be the officers of the Council; the Conference Minister and the Deputy Conference Minister without vote; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-40, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- b) Three (3) ordained ministers elected by the Conference;
- c) Three (3) unordained church workers elected by the Conference.
- d) Three (3) lay persons elected by the Conference from among the men, women and youth;
- e) Heads or representatives of church-recognized organizations;
- f) The Conference representative to the National Council; *(As Amended by GA 2002-60, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- g) Heads or representatives of Church Institutions within the Conference; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-41, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- h) Other officers and members as may be designated by the Conference *without vote*; *(As Amended by GA 2002-62, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- i) The Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, without vote unless he/she is a member of the Conference; and
- j) Whenever applicable, the Bishops Emeritus residing in the area.

Section 8. Duties and functions. The Conference Council shall serve as the interim body of the Conference. It shall act on all matters referred to it except those that pertain to the Conference in session.

Section 9. Meetings.

- a) The Conference Council shall meet three (3) times a year.
- b) Special meetings may be called by the Conference Minister *or the Chairperson, or at least three (3) voting members.* *(As Amended by GA 2002-63, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 10. Quorum. At least fifty percent (50%) of the voting members of the Conference Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 11. The Conference Minister.

- a) The Conference Minister shall be the spiritual leader, shepherd and chief executive of the Conference.
- b) *Qualifications.* To qualify for election as Conference Minister, a person must be an ordained minister of *the Church* in good standing, have formal theological training, be at least 30 years of age at the time of election, and must have rendered full-time active service as an ordained minister for at least five (5) years, *at least* two years of which as a full-time minister of a Local Church of the UCCP. The candidate must also have been a *member of,*

and have served within, the Conference for at least two (2) years immediately prior to election. *(As Amended by GA 2002-64, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

c) *Election.*

1. The election of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister shall be presided over by the Bishop of the Church assigned to the Jurisdictional Area *or his/her authorized representative, who is also a Bishop.* *(As Amended by GA 2002-65, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

2. The Conference Minister and the Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected by the accredited members of the Conference in session from among the qualified ministers who have recorded their availability with the Secretary of the Conference. Election shall be by ballot, without nomination or discussion, and shall be preceded by a period of quiet meditation and prayer. A majority vote of the members present and voting shall be required for election.

d) *Term.* The Conference Minister shall be elected for a term of two (2) years, with two (2) possible reelections.

e) *Duties.* The duties and functions of the Conference Minister shall be prescribed in the By-Laws.

Section 12. Other Officers. The qualifications, term of office, manner of election, duties and functions of the other officers of the Conference, and the filling of vacancies shall be provided for in the By-Laws and statutes of the Church.

Article VII

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 1. Nature. The General Assembly is the highest policy-making body of the Church.

Section 2. Composition. The General Assembly shall be composed of the following:

a) Four (4) delegates from each Conference for every five thousand (5,000) members or a major fraction thereof; provided, that at least one (1) of them shall represent the youth; provided further, that one of them shall be the Conference representative to the National Council; provided furthermore, that fifty (50%) percent shall *be women and at least (50%) percent of which shall be lay, not otherwise church workers. In all circumstances, the chairperson of the Conference shall be an automatic delegate;* and provided finally, that each Conference must have at least four (4) but not more than twelve (12) delegates; *(As Amended by GA 2002-66, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

b) Conference Ministers;

c) Bishops Emeritus;

d) All officers of the General Assembly;

e) One (1) representative from each duly recognized national organization;

f) One (1) from the aggrupation of the Church Institutions; and, *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-42, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

g) Other members as may be co-opted by action of the General Assembly, without vote.

Section 3. Duties and Functions of the General Assembly. The General Assembly shall have the following duties and functions;

- a) Proclaim the faith, determine the ministry and mission policies of the Church, provide for the conduct of mission, and make, issue or approve statements on important public issues and concerns;
- b) Formulate policies and determine program thrusts and priorities of the Church in consultation with local churches, conferences and other constituencies;
- c) Elect and proclaim the Bishops of the Church and assign them to their respective jurisdictional areas;
- d) Elect the other officers of the Church;
- e) Set-up the organizational structure of the Church;
- f) Review the actions of the National Council;
- g) Dispose of matters referred to it with respect to worship, general welfare and government of the Church;
- h) Recognize new Church bodies, reorganize existing ones, and determine their geographical boundaries based on standards set by the Church;
- i) Foster union and/or partnership with churches and other bodies whose purposes and aims are consistent with that of the UCCP;
- j) Receive through the Conference other local churches which adhere to the UCCP Statement of Faith, its Constitution and statutes; and
- k) Act on proposed amendments to the Constitution or call for a Constitutional Convention as stated in Article X of the Constitution.

Section 4. Meetings. The General Assembly shall meet every four (4) years in the month of May inclusive of the anniversary dates.

Section 5. Quorum. A majority of the Conferences duly represented shall constitute a quorum.

Section 6. Officers. The General Assembly shall have the following officers who shall also serve as such in the National Council;

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) General Secretary;
- d) Bishops;
- e) National Treasurer;
- f) National Auditor; and,
- g) Other officers as may be designated by the General Assembly, *without vote.* (As Amended by GA 2002-67, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, General Secretary, incumbent Bishops, National Treasurer, National Auditor are hereby constituted as the Executive Council that shall act, decide or resolve any matter or issue that may arise in between sessions of the National Council, and its actions, decisions and resolutions shall be subject to review and confirmation of the National Council or the General Assembly. It shall also serve as the preparatory committee for the next session or special meetings of the National Council or the General Assembly.

Section 7. Term, Election, Qualification, Duties of Officers. The Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the National Auditor shall be elected from among the members of the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years without re-election. *Except for the General Secretary and Bishops of the Church, all other officers of the General Assembly shall be lay persons, not otherwise church workers.* The General Secretary and the National Treasurer shall be elected for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) possible re-election. Their qualifications, duties and responsibilities shall be provided for in the By-Laws. *(As Amended by GA 2002-68 and 69, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 8. Bishops and Bishops Emeritus: Qualifications, Term and Election. The Bishops shall act as the collegial shepherds of the Church.

To be qualified for election as Bishop, one should at least be forty-five (45) years old and not more than sixty-one (61) years old at the time of assumption of office; provided, that he/she is theologically trained in a UCCP-approved and accredited theological seminary; must have been an ordained minister in good standing for at least ten (10) years, and with at least ten (10) years of active service in a UCCP Local Church prior to his/her election.

They shall be elected by the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) re-election.

Bishops Emeritus are all elected Bishops of the Church whose terms have ended and who have served at least one (1) term.

Section 9. The Council of Bishops. There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of incumbent Bishops and Bishops Emeritus whose duties and functions are as follows:

- a) Attend to matters of faith, life, mission, and welfare of the Church;
- b) In consultation with the Faith and Order Commission, issue pastoral letters and public statements on various questions and concerns reflecting the life and mission of the Church;
- c) Settle issues and conflicts relating to faith and doctrine; and
- d) Supervise the clergy formation program of the Church.

Section 10. The National Council: Composition. There shall be a National Council which shall serve as the interim body of the General Assembly composed of:

- a) Officers of the General Assembly;
- b) *Bishops Emeritus; (As Amended by GA 2002-70, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- c) One (1) representative each from duly recognized national organizations;
- d) One (1) representative each from the national aggrupation of Church Institutions, and other service agencies;
- e) One (1) official representative from each Conference to be elected from among the members of the Conference in session, with an alternate *representative* in case the official representative cannot attend; and *(As Amended by GA 2002-71, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- f) Others as may be co-opted by the National Council, without vote.

Section 11. Duties and Functions of the National Council. The National Council, which shall also serve as the Board of Trustees, shall have the following duties and functions;

- a) Devise mechanisms for the implementation of the program thrusts, policies and priorities of the Church;

- b) Adopt an annual program and budget;
- c) Appoint members of programs and project committees upon the recommendation of the General Secretary;
- d) Act on matters referred to it affecting the life and witness of the Church, except those reserved exclusively to the General Assembly in session; and
- e) Constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and representatives from the Conferences, which shall receive and screen nominees for all officers of the Church.
- f) *In case of vacancy in any of the positions of the National Officers, to elect persons who shall fill up the said vacancy, provided that the person or persons so elected shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term. (As Amended by GA 2002-72, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 12. Meetings. The National Council shall meet annually. Special meetings may be called in accordance with the provisions of the By-Laws.

Section 13. Quorum. A majority of the members of the National Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 14. General Secretary. The General Secretary, who shall be a Bishop, shall be the spiritual head and executive officer of the Church.

Section 15. The National Secretariat. There shall be a National Secretariat, the members of which shall be appointed by the General Secretary in accordance with the administrative structure of the UCCP. *(As Amended by GA 2002-73, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 16. The Corporate Treasurer. The Corporate Treasurer shall be the custodian of all funds of the Church. The duties and responsibilities of the Corporate Treasurer shall be stipulated in the By-Laws. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-44, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Section 17. The National Auditor. The National Auditor shall act as the corporate auditor.

Section 18. Jurisdictional Area Cabinet. There shall be a Jurisdictional Area Cabinet for each of the jurisdictional areas designated by the General Assembly. It shall be composed of the following:

- a) Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, who shall serve as the presiding officer; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-45, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- b) Conference Ministers; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-45, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- c) Presidents of jurisdictional CROs; *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-45, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- d) Program coordinators of the Jurisdiction; and
- e) Others who may be co-opted by the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet, without vote.

Section 19. Duties and Functions. The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) To coordinate and correlate the work of the Conferences and promote such programs, projects and activities as shall be undertaken jointly in the jurisdictional area, consistent with the program thrusts and priorities of the General Assembly; and
- b) To provide spiritual care and nurture, fellowship and mutual support among leaders and church workers within the jurisdictional area;

Section 20. Meetings. The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall meet twice a year. *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-46, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Section 21. Faith and Order Commission. There shall be a Faith and Order Commission whose members shall be elected by the General Assembly or its National Council from among those members of the Church who have the required expertise and experience for the task of the Commission. *(As Amended by GA 2002-75, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002); (As Amended by GA 2002-75, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 22. Duties and Functions. The Faith and Order Commission shall;

- a) Establish norms and standards of doctrine, order and discipline in the Church; and
- b) Prepare theological statements pertaining to doctrinal and contemporary issues of public interest to be issued by the Council of Bishops. *(As Amended by GA 2002-76, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 23. Commission for Church Unity and Union. There shall be a Commission for Church Unity and Union whose members shall be *elected* by the General Assembly from the membership of the Church *or its National Council*. Its duties and functions shall be: *(As Amended by GA 2002-77, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

- a) To dialogue with other denominations and communions in the interest of Christian Unity;
- b) To negotiate with local, independent churches seeking affiliation with the UCCP; and
- c) To represent the UCCP in negotiations for organic church union.

Section 24. Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development. *There shall be a Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development whose members shall be elected by the General Assembly or its National Council from the membership of the Church. Its duties and functions consist of formulating and proposing for the approval of the General Assembly or National Council policies, programs and projects for:* *(As Amended by GA 2002-78, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

- a. Christian Stewardship *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-47, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- b. Human Resource Development *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-47, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*
- c. Investment and Property Development *(As Amended by GA Action 2014-47, Legazpi City, May 28, 2014)*

Article VIII

INTERPRETATION OF LAWS AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES

Section 1. System of Conflict Resolution. A system of conflict resolution is hereby established for the authoritative interpretation of laws and statutes of the Church and the settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the Church itself, its instrumentalities and agencies, including Church Institutions, which are collectively referred to as constituencies.

Section 2. Exhaustion of Intrachurch Remedies. In all conflicts and disputes which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the rules of exhaustion of remedies [Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6], including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration, as provided for in the By-Laws. These shall be availed of as a condition to the assumption of jurisdiction by the units in various church levels of the *National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution*. No member who is party to any dispute or conflict as these terms are defined in the By-Laws, may institute any suit or proceeding or apply for remedy before any civil courts, administrative tribunal, board or commission without first showing compliance

with this procedure of exhausting all intrachurch remedies. (As Amended by GA 2002-79, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 3. Arbitration; Decision/Award Final and Non-appealable. A procedure of arbitration shall be established at all levels of the Church, and for this purpose a pool of arbitrators at such levels shall be constituted in accordance with the By-Laws. The award or decision of the arbitrators shall, as a general rule, be final and unappealable.

Section 4. National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution. A National Commission on *Discipline* and Conflict Resolution (NCDRC) is hereby established to dispose *with finality* all requests for advisory opinions on the interpretation of the Constitution, By-Laws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church and its constituencies and likewise decide all justiciable cases brought to it in the exercise of its original or appellate jurisdiction. *Advisory opinions and decision of the NCDRC shall become final and executory in accordance with the By-Laws and Rules of Procedure adopted by the NCDRC. As the highest judicial body of the Church, the NCDRC shall be separate from, and independent of, the other church bodies and its final advisory opinions, orders, awards or decisions shall not be subject to any further appeal or proceedings before other Church bodies.* (As Amended by GA 2002-80, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 5. Questions beyond the Jurisdiction of the Commission. All questions of policy shall be referred to the appropriate policy-making bodies of the Church. Cases brought before the *NCDRC* involving matters clearly pertaining to faith and doctrine shall be referred to the Council of Bishops. All questions of state policies and those involving the public justice of the State are beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission. (As Amended by GA 2002-81, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 6. Advisory Opinions and Decisions in Justiciable Cases. Where the advisory opinion of the *National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution* is requested by the General Assembly, the National Council, the Council of Bishops, or the Conferences, it shall be the duty of the Commission to render such opinion, after consultation and thorough deliberation.

In cases involving conflicts or disputes between and among church members and those involving the members and the Church itself or its constituencies, and there is a probability that the same may ripen into litigation, the local units of the *NCDRC* or the *NCDRC* itself may assume jurisdiction to decide such cases where the parties are unable to settle their disputes through the use of good offices, mediation and conciliation and decide not to submit their case to arbitration. The procedural rules for this purpose shall be issued by the *NCDRC* as provided in Section 11 thereof. (As Amended by GA 2002-82, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 7. Composition and Election. The National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution* shall be composed of seven (7) members, with all the jurisdictional areas represented. At least one (1) shall be a member of the Philippine Bar and another who shall be *not more than thirty (30) years old* at the time of election. All members shall be nominated by the Conferences, screened by the National Council, and elected by the General Assembly. (As Amended by GA 2002-83, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 8. Qualifications. With the exception of the youth representative in the National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution*, the rest shall not be less than *thirty-one (31) years of age*. They shall all be members of the Church in good standing, of unquestionable integrity, probity, competence, and independence of mind. (As Amended by GA 2002-84-85, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

Section 9. Term of Office; Vacancy. With the exception of the youth representative who shall serve for only four (4) years, all members of the National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution* shall serve for a term of eight (8) years with no re-election. To provide for

continuity, the three (3) nominees who shall obtain the highest number of votes in the first election after this Constitution takes effect, shall serve for a term of eight (8) years and the rest for four (4) years. Any vacancy shall be filled by the National Council, and the person so elected or appointed shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term. *(As Amended by GA 2002-86, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 10. *Limitation.* No member of the National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution* shall be elected or appointed to any other office in the Church during his or her term. All members shall avoid any conflict of interest. *(As Amended by GA 2002-87, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 11. *Creation of Other Units; Rules of Procedure.* *The Board of Elders, sitting as committee on discipline and conflict resolution, and the conference committee on discipline and conflict resolution shall be the units of the NCDRC at the Local Church and Conference levels, respectively. The NCDRC shall formulate and adopt Rules of Procedure to govern the interpretation of laws, the amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes, and adjudication of justiciable cases in the Church.* *(As Amended by GA 2002-88 and 89, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 12. Together with the specific rules of law, the rules of evidence and procedures shall be taken into account by the arbitration bodies of the *NCDRC*. *(As Amended by GA 2002-90, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 13. *Enforcement of Decisions.* It shall be the duty of the appropriate officers to enforce and the members at all levels of the Church to respect all final and executory decisions and orders of the arbitrators and of the *NCDRC*.

Article IX **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

Section 1. All real properties may be held by the *Local Churches, church bodies, or Church Institutions*, in trust for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. *(As Amended by GA 2002-91, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

Section 2. The ecclesial year of the Church shall be from June 1 to May 31 of the following year.

Section 3. The church shall have a logo, the design and color of which shall be decided upon by the General Assembly or its National Council.

Section 4. The official text of this Constitution and By-Laws shall be in English and Pilipino; however, in case of conflict in interpretation, every effort shall be exerted to harmonize and reconcile the English and Filipino versions. Translation into the various Philippine languages is encouraged, but the text must first be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

Section 5. No Local Church, Conference and other Church bodies may incorporate without the prior approval of the General Assembly or its National Council.

Section 6. Rules and regulations to implement, supplement or carry out the provisions of this Constitution shall be set forth in the By-Laws and statutes of the Church.

Article X **AMENDMENTS AND RATIFICATION**

Section 1. Amendments to this Constitution may be made through any of the following procedures:

- a) A Conference may propose an amendment to the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.
- b) An amendment may be proposed on the floor of the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.
- c) Where a Constitutional Convention is called by the General Assembly, the proposed Constitutional amendments shall be transmitted to the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective immediately upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.

Section 2. This Constitution shall not be amended in any manner within seven (7) years from the date of its effectivity.

Article XI **TRANSITORY PROVISIONS**

Section 1. The provisions of this Constitution, upon its effectivity as provided in Article XII, shall immediately bind all local churches, Conferences and other higher bodies of the Church. All other policies, actions, and procedures of the Church inconsistent with this Constitution shall be deemed rescinded, repealed and superseded.

Section 2. All elected officials of the Church prior to the effectivity of this Constitution shall remain in office until their successors shall have been elected under this Constitution. The General Assembly or the Executive Committee shall determine the date and shall conduct the election for this purpose.

Section 3. In the first election under this Constitution, incumbent Bishops adversely affected by the provision of age requirements, as set forth in Article VII, Section 8, may be allowed to run for reelection, if otherwise qualified.

Section 4. Cases pending in civil courts or administrative boards or commissions, as well as cases pending in the National Judicial Commission (NJC) at the time of the effectivity of this Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable means set forth

Article XII **EFFECTIVITY**

Section 1. This Constitution shall take effect upon the ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences, upon proclamation by the General Assembly and upon its registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

**AMENDED BY-LAWS
OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Article I

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership. Members of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines are those who have been received as members of the local churches.

Section 2. Types of Membership. Membership may be regular *or* associate, affiliate, preparatory or honorary. *(As Amended by NC 2002-11, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 3. Regular Members. Regular membership shall be held in only one Local Church. The regular members are the following:

- a. *Those baptized as infants and confirmed in the Local Church, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;*
- b. *Those who are baptized as adults in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;*
(As Amended by NC 2002-12, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)
- c. Those who are not yet baptized or who wish to be baptized, and who by public confession of faith and baptism, are accepted as such members; and,
- d. Those who are members of other denominations or communions whose baptism uses the Trinitarian formula, and
 - 1) who, upon having obtained a letter of transfer from their Local Church, are duly received by the Local Church;
 - 2) who, having officially resigned or withdrawn their membership from their former church, profess and are accepted as such members by the Local Church; or
 - 3) who, by marriage to members, profess to become such members of the Local Church.

Section 4. Associate Members. Associate members are those members of another Local Church whose circumstances make it necessary to participate in the ministry of another Local Church and obtain associate membership in such Local Church. Except for the right to vote and be voted upon, associate members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of regular members.

Section 5. Affiliate Members. Affiliate members are those members of other Christian communions who are temporarily absent from their home church and who, upon application, are received as affiliate members. Except the right to vote and be voted upon, affiliate members shall enjoy the rights and privileges of regular members in the Local Church they are affiliated.

Section 6. Preparatory Members. Preparatory members are the following:

- a. Those baptized or dedicated as infants; and,
- b. Adults who are seeking to be baptized.

Section 7. Honorary Members. Honorary membership may be granted to members of other Christian churches who have performed extraordinary service.

Section 8. Rights and Privileges of Members. Membership in the Local Church bestows the following rights and privileges:

- a. Continuing nurture in the faith and pastoral care;
- b. To be informed of, and participate in, all programs and other activities of the Church;
- c. To avail of the services of the Local Church; and,

- d. In the case of regular members, *who are at least twelve (12) years of age*, to vote and be voted upon in, or appointed to, any position in the Local Church. *(As Amended by NC 2002-13, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 9. Commitments of Members. Membership in the Local Church entails the following obligations and commitments:

- a. To proclaim the Gospel and bear personal witness in both word and service in the context of one's immediate community, the nation and the rest of humanity;
- b. To lead a peaceable and godly life worthy of one's Christian calling; and to endeavor to be a follower of Jesus Christ;
- c. To be diligent in prayer, the faithful practice of family worship and Bible study, and attendance at services of public worship of the Church;
- d. To exhort one another in the faith, and to strive in every way to strengthen the unity and fellowship of the Church;
- e. To study and practice the principles of Christian stewardship, cheerfully giving of one's tithes, pledges, time, talents and possessions;
- f. To protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of God's creation; and,
- g. To affirm and adhere to the historic Christian creeds, the UCCP Statement of Faith, and the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 10. Transfer, Loss and Restoration of Membership.

- a. **Certificate of Transfer of Members.** Whenever a regular member moves from one Local Church to another, he/she shall obtain a certificate of transfer, signed by the Pastor and Secretary of the Church Council. In the absence of the Pastor, the Chairperson of the Church Council becomes a signatory.
- b. **Notice of Forwarding Certificate.** The Pastor who issues a certificate of transfer as provided for in the immediately preceding sub-section shall forward such certificate, with appropriate explanation to the Pastor of the Local Church to which the member bearing the certificate shall be received.
- c. **Notice of Reception of Members on Certificate.** Upon reception of a member bearing a certificate of transfer, the Local Church of origin shall be properly notified.
- d. **Limitations of Certificate.** A transfer certificate issued to a member as provided for in the preceding sections must be presented to a Local Church or returned to the church of origin within eighteen (18) months, beyond which time, it becomes null and void.
- e. **Loss of Membership.** Members shall be delisted from membership roll on account of:
 - 1) *Resignation; (As Amended by NC 2002-14, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
 - 2) Absence from his/her home church for a period of three (3) consecutive years, and despite diligent efforts by the Local Church, his/her whereabouts remain unknown;
 - 3) Expulsion, and
 - 4) Death
- f. **Expulsion of Member.** A member may be expelled for committing any of the following offenses:
 - 1) Offense against the unity or integrity of the Church;

- 2) Offense against accepted norms of morality;
 - 3) Offense against religious worship and other sacred ceremonies and rituals of the Church;
 - 4) Disrespect for the Church, its councils and officials, and fellow members; and,
 - 5) Willful and flagrant violation of the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church, including decisions of the National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDRC)*. (As Amended by NC 2002-15, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)
- g. **Admonition and Suspension.** In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order of the Church, admonition shall be given by the Pastor or a duly designated member of the Board of Elders upon such erring member; and, if there be acknowledgment of fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the member may retain his/her good standing.

On a second offense, the Pastor or duly designated member of the Board of Elders shall take with him/her one of the faithful members and strive to bring the offender to repentance.

On a third offense, and, if there be no satisfactory repentance of offender, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension for such period as the Board of Elders *may fix and confirmed by the Church Council*. (As Amended by NC 2002-16, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

- h. **Restoration of Membership.** A regular member whose name has been delisted from the Local Church shall be restored as a regular member after giving satisfactory evidence of his/her conduct to the Board of Elders and reaffirming his/her faith before the congregation. He/She shall be restored to his/her original standing as member upon confirmation by the Church Council and acceptance by the congregation.

A member may not, earlier than one (1) year from date of his/her expulsion, apply to the Local Church from which he/she was expelled from restoration of his/her membership, and no other Local Church has authority to restore him/her to full membership after the period of his/her suspension.

As the penalty for expulsion is applied only in extreme cases, great care should be taken by the Board of Elders in recommending (a) the expulsion of a member; or (b) the restoration to full membership of one who has been expelled from the Local Church.

Article II

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. Ordained Minister. An ordained minister is one who has been called and set apart for the ministry in accordance with the requirements of the Church.

Section 2. Qualifications for Ordination. To qualify for ordination, one must:

- a. *Be a graduate of a formal ministerial formation program in any of the approved ministerial theological seminaries and/or ministerial formation centers of the Church, and have previously obtained at least two consecutive years of full-time satisfactory pastoral work as a licentiate in a Local Church and/or in a Church Institution; (As amended by NC Action 2015-30, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- b. *If a graduate of a four year theological program of other theological institution, not otherwise accredited by UCCP, (i) undergo probationary pastoral work for two (2) years*

under supervision of a UCCP pastor in a Local Church, (ii) submit himself/herself to a required orientation course under the direction of the Conference Examination Committee in coordination with the Office of the Clergy, (iii) affirm his/her acceptance of, and adherence to, the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the Church, and (iv) have previously obtained at least two (2) consecutive years of full-time satisfactory pastoral work as a licentiate in a Local Church and/or Church Institutions; (As amended by NC Action 2015-31, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

- c. Be certified through the examination process established by the Church as to his/her maturity, satisfactory preparation, growth in knowledge, experience and commitment to the ministry and mission of the Church.

Section 3. The Ordination Process. The ordination to the ministry of men and women called for this purpose shall be standardized for the entire UCCP, as follows:

- a. The Local Church, Church Institution or Conference recommends that the ordinand goes through the ordination process; *(As amended by NC Action 2015-33, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- b. The Conference Examination Committee receives the recommendation of the sponsoring Local Church, Church Institution and requires the candidate to undergo the following: *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-34, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
 - 1) Psychological test prepared by the Office of the Clergy;
 - 2) Practical examination which shall include inquiry into the lifestyle, his/her standing among peers and in the community, as well as his/her performance as a Local Church worker; and,
 - 3) The candidate will then undergo the national canonical exam conducted by the Office of the Ministry, supervised by the Council of Bishops. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-34, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- c. Based on the results of examination, the Conference in Session upon the recommendation of the Examination Committee, together with the Jurisdictional Bishop shall then decide whether the ordination of the candidate shall be approved, deferred, or denied. *(As Amended by NC 2002-19, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

In case of deferment or denial, the candidate for Ordination can appeal to the Incumbent Bishops, who act as the final appeal body on matters pertaining to Ordination.

In the case of deferment or denial, candidate shall be apprised of his/her weaknesses and deficiencies with the view of helping him/her overcome these within two (2) years. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-35, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

- d. *The Bishop assigned to the jurisdictional area or his/her duly authorized representative, also a Bishop, shall preside over the ordination. (As Amended by NC 2002-20, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 4. Reception of Ministers from other Denominations.

- a. Whenever an ordained minister from another church presents himself/herself to the Conference, the Conference through the Examination Committee may receive him/her provided he/she first fulfills all the requirements for ordination of the UCCP.
- b. An ordained minister from a member church of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) must present a certificate of transfer and clearance from the proper authority of his/her church, undergo the required orientation course under the Office of the Ministry, and affirm and adhere to the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-36, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 5. The classification of Church Workers shall be provided for in the Magna Carta for Church Workers. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-37, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 6. Admonition and Suspension of Church Workers. In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order or statute of the Church, the admonition upon the erring Church workers shall be given by the Conference Minister and if there be acknowledgment of the fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the Church worker may retain his/her good standing.

On second offense, the Conference Minister shall take with him/her the Jurisdictional Bishop and strive to bring the Church worker to repentance.

On a third offense and if there be no satisfactory repentance by the Church worker, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension from his/her office by the Conference Minister and/or Jurisdictional Bishop. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-38, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 7. Termination of Status of Church Workers. The status of being a Church worker can be terminated only by death, separation and expulsion from the ministry.

- a. **Separation from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be considered separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference, where he/she:
 - 1) Gives official notice to the Conference of his/her desire and decision to be separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference; or,
 - 2) Takes on secular employment for at least three (3) consecutive years and does not obtain a leave of absence or recognition for special ministry.
- b. **Delistment from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be delisted from the ministerial roll of the Conference when he/she fails, without valid excuse, to attend at least three consecutive annual sessions of the Conference.
- c. **Expulsion from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be expelled from the ministerial roll upon any of the following grounds:
 - 1) Having actively worked against the interest, unity and integrity of the Church;
 - 2) Having intentionally violated the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the Church;
 - 3) Having habitually committed acts which do not befit a minister as enunciated by the spiritual, moral and ethical standards of the Church;
 - 4) Having been convicted by final judgment of a crime involving moral turpitude; and,
 - 5) A church worker who is expelled from the ministry is automatically delisted from the membership of the Church. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-39, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 8. Reinstatement of Church Workers. A Church worker, who has voluntarily withdrawn or was delisted from the ministerial roll and who wishes to be reinstated as Church worker in full standing, shall apply to his/her Conference for reinstatement. The Conference shall require of him/her a copy of the record of his/her original connection and status and if satisfied that he/she remains qualified in terms of integrity, competence and dedication, the Conference may reinstate him/her to full standing. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-40, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 9. Conference Committees on the Ministry. The Conference committees on the ministry are the following:

- a. **Ministerial Formation Committee.** The Conference shall appoint upon nomination by the Conference Minister, a Ministerial Formation Committee composed of three (3) active ministers and two (2) lay persons who shall have oversight of the recruitment, apprenticeship and formation of ministerial students of the Conference. The Committee shall assist the students in their work and needs, and certify to their progress and standing to the Conference.
- b. **Examination Committee.** The Conference *in Session or its Conference Council*, shall appoint, upon nomination by the Conference Minister, an Examination Committee composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom *must be active ordained ministers, and two (2) lay persons, not otherwise church workers*, whose duty is to examine all candidates for certification, licensure or ordination, to evaluate the application of those coming from other communions; and to process the granting and renewing of the status of lay preachers. *(As Amended by NC 2002-25, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002); (As Amended by NC Action 2015-41, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 10. Settlement Committee.

- a. The assignment of Church workers shall rest with a Settlement Committee, composed of two (2) active ministers and three (3) lay persons, to be appointed by the Conference. The Conference Minister and the president of the Church workers' organization shall be ex officio members of the Settlement Committee, without vote. The Settlement Committee shall meet at least annually before the meeting of the Conference.
- b. The Settlement Committee shall, as far as practicable, ensure that:
 - 1) All Church workers shall have assignment in the local churches of the Conference and its recognized ministries;
 - 2) Every Local Church and worshipping congregation shall have at least one Church worker to take care of the life and work of the Church;
 - 3) Initiate arrangements for assignment in the absence of a call from the Local Church or congregation;
 - 4) Examine and confirm the arrangements on the call made by the Local Church or congregation; and,
 - 5) Monitor the compliance of the remunerations, benefits and other privileges committed to the church worker by the local church. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-42, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- c. Any minister shall have the right to appear before the Settlement Committee to present his/her case in regard to his/her appointment. Any pastoral charge may also appear through not more than two (2) representatives, properly authorized in writing and appointed from the members at a regular or special meeting of the Church Council.
- d. **Procedure for the Call of Church Workers.** The call of *Church workers* shall, as a general rule, be as follows: *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-48, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
 - 1) The Church Council shall constitute a Church Workers Call Committee;
 - 2) The Committee shall send a request to the Conference Settlement Committee, for a Church worker stating the needs of the Local Church and the desired qualities of the said Church worker;

- 3) The Conference Settlement Committee shall recommend a Church worker it deems appropriate for the Local Church making the request;
- 4) Upon acceptance by the Committee of the recommendation, it shall submit the same to the Church Council for approval;
- 5) Once approved, the Church Council shall endorse the recommendation to the congregation for confirmation;
- 6) The confirmation shall be conducted in an appropriate time during the regular Sunday worship service; and,
- 7) Upon confirmation by the congregation and acceptance of the call by the Church worker, the installation ceremony shall be held in consultation with the Conference.

Section 11. *Transfer to Another Conference or Church.* A Church worker desiring to transfer to another conference or church shall secure a written release from the Conference or its Conference Council to be signed by the Conference Minister and Conference Secretary.

A transfer certificate issued to a church worker must be presented to another Conference where the church worker intends to transfer or return to the Conference of origin within 12 months, beyond which time, it becomes null and void. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-43, UCCP Maguipo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 12. *Rights and Privileges of Church Workers.* Church Workers in good standing shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To participate in all Conference sessions;
- b. To avail of the pastoral care, continuing education and other developmental programs of the Conference for Church workers;
- c. To avail of the benefits granted by the Church to Church workers;
- d. To be given a Church assignment; and,
- e. To vote and be voted upon in the Conference.

Section 13. *Duties and Responsibilities of Church Workers.* Church workers shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. To strive for maturity in spirituality, rectitude, faithfulness and stewardship;
- b. As a learner, to learn humbly together with the congregation from the wisdom of the Scriptures, and the way the Spirit works through the individual lives of Church members and world events;
- c. As a teacher, to lead and enable others to grow into mature personhood after the manner of Jesus Christ and so together attain unity and oneness in Christ;
- d. As a counselor, to help Church members discern through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the deeper meaning and significance of crucial events in their lives and so allow healing and renewal to take place;
- e. As a leader, to guide the congregation to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to discover where the Church is, where it ought to be going and what it ought to be, and together move and act in faithfulness to God's will at each historical moment of their life;
- f. As a steward of God's creation, to care for and manage wisely together with the congregation, all that God sends into their lives as individuals and as a church in terms of

material gifts and giftedness so that all may enjoy fullness of life to share with all who are in need;

- g. As a priest, to intercede for the people and to lead them in interceding before God for others and for all creation;
- h. As a prophet, to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever this is demanded in critical issues and human events and so help empower the people in their response; and,
- i. To be constantly aware that he/she is a part of the community of believers who seek earnestly to be with one another in faithfulness to God's purpose for all creation. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-44, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Article III

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Section 1. Rights and Privileges of the Local Church. The Local Church shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To conduct its worship life in light of the Gospel and in accordance with its witness and service to all of God's creation;
- b. To make a call for pastors and other Church workers in accordance with the procedure laid down by the UCCP; and,
- c. To elect delegates to, and be represented at, the Conference and other higher Church bodies.

Section 2. Annual Congregational Meeting. Unless otherwise set by the Church Council, the annual congregational meeting of the Local Church shall be held not later than the last Sunday of December of each year and shall be for the following purposes:

- a. To receive the written report of the Pastor, a copy of which shall be furnished the Conference;
- b. To review the actions of the Church Council;
- c. To approve plans and programs for the ensuing year in line with the Program Thrusts of the General Assembly; *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-45, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 20-22, 2015)*
- d. To adopt an annual budget to support its approved plans and programs for the ensuing year and which shall include the assessment and contribution to the Conference and the General Assembly;
- e. To elect the officers and delegates to the Conference and other Church bodies; and,
- f. To act on such other matters as may validly come before the body.

Section 3. Meetings of the Church Council.

- a. The Church Council shall determine its regular meetings at least once every three months or as often as may be feasible; and,
- b. Whenever necessary, special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or in his/her absence, by the Vice-Chairperson, or at the request of the Pastor, or by at least two members of the Church Council. Notice of special meetings shall be given to all the members of the Church Council before the meeting stating the purpose or purposes thereof.

Section 4. Quorum. A majority of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5. Church Council Officers and Members: Election, Term and Composition. In addition to the head Pastor, the officers of the Church Council are:

- a. Chairperson;
- b. Vice-Chairperson;
- c. Secretary;
- d. Treasurer;
- e. Financial Secretary who is at the same time the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons; and,
(As Amended by NC Action 2015-46, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)
- f. Auditor.

The members are:

- a. Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- b. Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- c. Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators;
- d. Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, where applicable;
- e. heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- f. other Church workers, without vote;
- g. representatives of Church Institutions operating in the area, where applicable, without vote; *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-46, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- h. such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and,
- i. Conference Minister, without vote.

Except for the Pastor, the officers shall serve for a term of one year and may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

Where a Local Church is composed of more than *fifty (50) families*, in the interest of equitable representation in the Church Council, no family shall be represented by more than one member during any term of the Church Council. The term “family” shall include all persons related within the *third* civil degree of consanguinity or affinity (these include parents and children, *brothers and sisters, aunts and nieces, uncles and nephews*). *(As Amended by NC 2002-26, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Election shall be by secret ballot and there shall be no campaigning.

Section 6. Duties of the Chairperson. The Chairperson of the Church Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To preside over the meetings of the Church Council;
- b. Unless otherwise decided by the congregation, to preside over the meetings of the congregation;
- c. To prepare, in consultation with the Pastor, the agenda for the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
- d. To vote in case of a tie;

- e. To represent the Local Church in contracts, instruments, or letter-agreements approved by the Church Council except those involving real properties which should be approved by the congregation, with the written consent of the General Assembly or National Council through the General Secretary; and, *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-47, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- f. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.

Section 7. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the position of the Chairperson when he/she is absent or when a vacancy occurs due to resignation or other causes; and,
- b. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.

Section 8. The Pastor. The Pastor, who should be an ordained minister or licentiate of the Church, must:

- a. Uphold and abide by the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws; and,
- b. Exercise pastoral leadership.

Section 9. Term of the Pastor. The term of the Pastor shall be for two (2) years but not to exceed four (4) years. He/She may be called for more than one term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

Section 10. Duties of the Church Secretary. The Church Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep a full and complete record of all proceedings of the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
- b. To have custody of all records and documents of the Church, including the regular updating of the official record of members, indicating their names, dates of their admission, their category of membership and such other personal data as may be necessary, and the registration of marriages, baptisms and deaths;
- c. To issue notices of meetings of the congregation and the Church Council; and,
- d. To perform such other duties and functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 11. Duties of the Financial Secretary. The Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To act and serve as the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- b. To implement such stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designed and adopted by the Board of Deacons;
- c. To keep and regularly update the record of the Local Church budget;
- d. Together with the Pastor, the Treasurer and the Board of Deacons, to prepare the annual budget of the Local Church based on the plans and programs for the ensuing year for submission to the Church Council;
- e. To ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget;

- f. To lead in the stewardship campaign for tithes, pledges and donations in support of the annual budget of the Local Church; and,
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 12. Duties of the Church Treasurer. The Church Treasurer shall have the following duties:

- a. To receive all funds of the Local Church and deposit the same in such bank or banks as may be designated by the Church Council;
- b. To disburse the funds of the Local Church in accordance with the budget, including the prompt remittance of the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies, under the direction of the Church Council, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the Church Council, and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the Chairperson and/or other duly authorized officer of the Local Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specially intended for any program, project, or activity of the Local Church. In respect to funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Local Church, such funds shall be disbursed strictly according to the specific instructions of such individuals or organizations;
- c. To keep a complete record of all financial transactions, including, but not limited to, vouchers and official receipts;
- d. To present financial reports to the Church Council quarterly or as often as it may require; and,
- e. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 13. Duties of the Church Auditor. The Church Auditor shall have the following duties:

- a. To audit the books of the Local Church regularly and submit a report thereon to the Church Council and the congregation;
- b. To formulate, devise and submit to the Church Council an integrated audit system and procedures;
- c. To present an audited financial statement to the Church Council and the congregation at least once a year; and,
- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 14. Election, Composition and Term of Board of Elders. The members of the Board of Elders shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall at least be three Elders for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Elders to compose the Board of Elders.

Section 15. Qualifications of an Elder. To qualify for election of Elder, one must be a regular member of good standing for five years in any UCCP Local Church and in the Local Church for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election, a respected member of the community where he/she resides, of good moral character and with demonstrated maturity in faith and witness, commitment and support to the mission and ministry of the Church.

Section 16. Duties of the Board of Elders. The duties of the Board of Elders are the following:

- a. To serve as example of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness by the grace of God;
- b. To be responsible for the admission of persons into full membership, the grant of honorary memberships and approval of issuance of certificates of transfer and clearances;
- c. To assist the Pastor in the administration of the sacraments, including the preparation of the Lord's Supper;
- d. To supervise all services of public worship;
- e. To act as a Board of Christian Mission and, as such, formulate, design and carry out holistic evangelism and mission programs of the Local Church that shall include, among others, the establishment of outreach centers;
- f. To formulate, design and implement an integrated plan for membership growth and development, including the annual review of the Local Church membership and visitation;
- g. To oversee the conduct of, and, subject to the approval of the Church Council, exercise disciplinary powers over the members, *including the amicable resolution of disputes and conflicts, with respect to which, its decision or order, as confirmed by the Church Council, may be appealed to the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution. The decision of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution shall be final and executory, except in cases of fraud, grave injustice or gross errors in the appreciation of the facts and application of the Church statutes, rules and regulations; and* (As Amended by NC 2002-28, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)
- h. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 17. Board of Deacons. The members of the Board of Deacons shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall be at least three Deacons for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Deacons to compose the Board of Deacons.

Section 18. Qualifications of a Deacon. To qualify for election as Deacon, a regular member must have been such member of good standing for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election; a respected member of the community where he/she resides; of good moral character; has working knowledge of finance, accounting and budget planning, and an exemplar of cheerful giving.

Section 19. Duties of the Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as responsible stewards in their personal, family and church life;
- b. To formulate, develop and adopt a vigorous stewardship practice that shall include the giving by members of their tithes, time, talents and possessions to ensure the financial and material support of the programs and activities of the Church;
- c. To act and serve as the financial planning arm of the Local Church, with the Financial Secretary as the Chairperson;
- d. To formulate, develop and design a stewardship education program for the Local Church;
- e. To act as a social concerns committee; (As Amended by NC 2002-29, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

- f. To assist the Financial Secretary in the preparation of the annual budget and plan for its attainment for submission to the Church Council;
- g. To ensure that the assessment and other contribution due to wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget; and,
- h. To *perform* such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council. *(As Amended by NC 2002-29, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 20. Board of Christian Educators. The members of the Board of Christian Educators shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregation meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall be three Christian Educators for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Christian Educators to compose the Board of Christian Educators.

Section 21. Qualifications of a Christian Educator. To qualify for election as Christian Educator, he/she must have the same qualifications as an Elder.

Section 22. Duties of the Board of Christian Educators. The Board of Christian Educators shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as models of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness to growth and development of persons;
- b. To develop and supervise the over-all Christian education and nurture program of the Local Church;
- c. To ensure that the education, nurture, discipleship and leadership development programs for all groups are carried out in the Local Church;
- d. To encourage and challenge the members, especially the youth, to a calling in the varied ministries and mission of the Church; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 23. Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall be established whose members are the officers of the Church Council, including the Administrative Pastor as ex officio member, without vote.

Section 24. Duties of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall have the following duties:

- a. To oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church buildings and other properties.
- b. To formulate, develop and design an integrated property development plan for the Local Church;
- c. To ensure that the acquisition by purchase, donation, bequests or any other means, and the registration of real properties should be in trust for the UCCP for the use of the Local Church;
- d. To recommend to the Church Council, for the approval of the congregation with the written consent of the General Assembly or National Council through the General Secretary, the sale, lease and other disposition of real properties of the Local Church to undergird the integrated property development of the Local Church; and, *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-49, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

- e. To perform such acts or duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 25. Provisions Common to the Boards. The following provisions shall have common application to the Boards:

- a. The Boards shall function within the scope of their authority and, whenever necessary, in coordination with each other. Their action shall not become final and executory until affirmed by the Church Council or confirmed by the congregation;
- b. The Church Council may affirm, modify or alter the action of one Board which may be in conflict with the action of another Board, or when there is clear error, injustice, or deviation from existing policy. It shall also act on appeals brought to it by any of the Boards;
- c. The regular meetings of the Boards shall be held every month on such date as may be determined by the Board in consultation with the other Boards and the Church Council. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or upon written request of the Pastor, or of at least two Board members. The purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the notice;
- d. The Pastor and the Chairperson of the Church Council are ex officio members of the Boards, without vote;
- e. In case of vacancy in the membership of any Board, the same shall be filled by the candidate who garnered the next highest number of votes in the immediately preceding election for the Board or, in default thereof, in any other manner as may be determined by the Church Council; and,
- f. Except when expressly given permission in writing by the Church Council, no Board member shall have financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any contract or transaction of the Local Church. No Board member shall participate in the Church Council or Board deliberation on such contract or transaction where he/she may have financial interest or on matters affecting the employment of his/her spouse, parents, children or other relatives by consanguinity or affinity within the fourth civil degree.

Section 26. Service to the Church. Service to the Church is voluntary and rendered out of love and commitment to Jesus Christ, through the mission and ministry of the Church, without remuneration, unless otherwise indicated by the appropriate Local Church authority in which case a reasonable allowance may be authorized for such engagement or activity.

Section 27. Scope of Local Autonomy. The primary locus of mission is the Local Church. Hence, the UCCP upholds the autonomy of the Local Church particularly as to its right and power to conduct its ministry free from outside control, provided the same is in line with the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church, thereby enabling the Local Church to become an effective instrument in the ministry and mission of the Church and ensuring its positive contribution to the unity and strengthening of the whole Church. Specifically, autonomy of the Local Church includes the authority to do the following:

- a. To call and support its Pastor and other Church workers, keeping in mind the basic policy of the Church to call to its ministry pastors and Church workers belonging to the UCCP, subscribing to the UCCP Statement of Faith and paying allegiance to the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church. Pastors, ministers and workers of other churches affiliated with the *National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)* may be requested to serve in the Local Church with the prior written permission of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary; *(As Amended by NC 2002-30, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- b. To administer, maintain, encumber or dispose of its personal or real properties pursuant to a resolution of its Board of Trustees and approved by its Church Council and, where real properties are involved, with the written consent of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary;
- c. To invite pastors, ministers, workers and lay leaders of other churches to speak, preach or otherwise enter into fellowship with the Local Church, from time to time, in consonance with Article II, Section 7, of the Constitution, and the Policy on Ecumenical Relations issued in 1986, provided that the authority and integrity of the UCCP, as well as the unity of the Local Church, shall never be impaired or compromised; *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-50, UCCP Maguipo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- d. To nominate and elect its officers, in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws, and hold annual and such special meetings as it may deem necessary and proper;
- e. To admit qualified persons into the membership of the Local Church, help ensure their nurture and spiritual development, and promote and develop among them the idea of loving service, stewardship and missionary outreach;
- f. To celebrate its worship services that are orderly and solemn, yet joyful and meaningful, reflective of the faith and life of the Church and responsive to the needs of the community in terms of witness, service and prophetic ministry;
- g. To support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church and recruit, recommend and support candidates for the ministry.
- h. To adopt its own budget and financial program and fulfill its obligations to the wider bodies; and,
- i. To do all things as it may deem wise, necessary and proper, without encroaching on the prerogatives of, and interfering with, the wider Church bodies, ensuring at all times that its action contribute to the unity and strengthening of the whole UCCP.

Article IV **THE CONFERENCE**

Section 1. Conference. The Conference shall encompass a contiguous area, and all local churches and worshipping congregations within the area shall belong to such Conference.

Section 2. Conference Sessions.

- a. The annual sessions of the Conference shall be set in consultation with the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet; and,
- b. In a special session of the Conference, where a vacancy occurs by reason of death, resignation, transfer or incapacity of an accredited delegate in the last regular session, the same shall be filled by the Local Church concerned.

Section 3. Meetings of the Conference Council. -

- a. The Conference Council shall hold three regular meetings every year on such dates and time as the Conference Council may set; and,
- b. Notice of special meetings shall be sent personally or by the most expeditious means available to all the members of the Conference Council at least one week before the special session, and shall state the purpose or purposes thereof.

Section 4. Conference Chairperson. The Conference Chairperson shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session, and shall serve a term of two years, with one possible immediate re-election. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-51, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 5. Duties of the Conference Chairperson. The Conference Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To call and preside over the meetings of the Conference and its Conference Council;
- b. To jointly prepare with the Conference Minister the agenda of the meetings;
- c. To support the leadership of the Conference Minister in the faithful and effective implementation of Conference programs; and,
- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference Council.

Section 6. Conference Vice-Chairperson. The Conference Vice-Chairperson shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session and shall serve a term of two years, with one possible immediate re-election. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-52, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 7. Duties of the Conference Vice-Chairperson. The Conference Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the position of the Conference Chairperson when he/she is absent or when a vacancy occurs due to resignation or other causes; and,
- b. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or Conference Council.

Section 8. Duties of the Conference Minister. The Conference Minister, being the spiritual leader, shepherd of the flock and Chief Executive of the Conference, shall serve the Conference in a full time capacity and shall have the following duties: *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-53, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

- a. To promote the unity and cooperation of all the constituent units of the Conference;
- b. To plan Conference programs of action, together with the members of the Conference Council, consistent with the direction and orientation of the General Assembly program thrusts;
- c. To ensure effective implementation of Conference programs through teamwork and cooperation among Conference leaders and Church workers;
- d. To facilitate and enhance the continuing education and development of Church workers and leaders within the Conference Area;
- e. To promote Conference programs in the local churches through visitation and consultation with the Local Church workers and lay leaders;
- f. To support Local Church workers in assessing the needs of local churches in pursuing their mission and ministry with respect to specific local situations; and,
- g. To have an administrative oversight over the church workers within the conference;
- h. To regularly attend JAC meetings and render report on the life and work of the Conference;
- i. To perform other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-53, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 9. Deputy Conference Minister. The Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected in the same manner and shall have the same qualifications as the Conference Minister.

Section 10. Duties of the Deputy Conference Minister. The Deputy Conference Minister shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the duties of the Conference Minister in the event of the latter's absence, disability, resignation or inhibition; and,
- b. To perform such duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

Section 11. Other Conference Officers.

- a. The Conference Secretary, Conference Financial Secretary, Conference Treasurer and Conference Auditor shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session and shall serve for a term of two years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms.

Members of the Conference Committees shall likewise serve for a term of two (2) years, without prejudice to reappointment.

- b. The Conference, if it so desires, may appoint other officers as may be necessary for its efficient and effective management and administration. These officers, such as administrative officer, office manager and/or liaison officer, shall perform such duties and functions as the Conference may assign.

Section 12. Duties of the Conference Secretary. The Conference Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep and maintain faithful record of all proceedings of the Conference and the Conference Council in a book specially provided for the purpose;
- b. To keep such other records of the Conference as may be entrusted to his/her custody;
- c. To issue certifications or certified copies of documents and records of the Conference; and,
- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

Section 13. Duties of the Conference Financial Secretary. The Conference Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. Together with the Conference Minister and Conference Treasurer, to prepare the Conference annual budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference;
- b. Together with the Conference Minister, Conference Treasurer and Conference Program Coordinators, to prepare and design a stewardship program to generate funds to support the Conference annual budget;
- c. To implement stewardship campaign for tithes, pledges and donations in support of the Conference budget;
- d. To lead in the stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designed and adopted by the Conference or Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the financial secretaries of the local churches to ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the annual budgets of the local churches and that the same are promptly remitted to the Conference;
- f. To keep and update financial records of the Conference; and,
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or Conference Council.

Section 14. Duties of the Conference Treasurer. The Conference Treasurer shall have the following duties:

- a. To have custody, for and on behalf of the Conference, of all funds, securities, titles, assets and other properties in the name of the Conference, which shall come to his/her possession;
- b. To receive and deposit, in the name of the Conference, all funds of the Conference in accredited bank or banks, as may be designated by the Conference Council;
- c. To disburse funds in accordance with the approved accounting procedures and the approved budget of the Conference;
- d. Together with the Conference Minister, to prepare the budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the treasurers and boards of deacons of the local churches to ensure the inclusion in the annual budgets of the local churches the assessment and other contributions due to wider Church bodies, and the prompt remittance of such assessment and other contributions to the Conference;
- f. To submit quarterly financial report to the Conference Council and a yearly audited financial report to the Conference; and,
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

Section 15. Duties of the Conference Auditor. The Conference Auditor shall have the following duties:

- a. To audit the books of the Conference and submit an audit report to the Conference or the Conference Council;
- b. To formulate, design and implement a systematic and simplified audit system and procedure; and,
- c. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

Section 16. Duties of the Conference Council. As the interim body of the Conference, the Conference Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To act upon matters referred to it by the local churches, the Conference and the General Assembly or National Council;
- b. To recommend an integrated short and long range strategic plan and annual budget for approval by the Conference during the annual session;
- c. To meet not later than one month prior to the annual session of the Conference to finalize the agenda for the annual session;
- d. To make a full report of its actions to the Conference during the annual session; and,
- e. To provide for an external audit of the Conference.

Section 17. Conference Program Committees. The Conference may create program committees to implement its program thrusts consonant with the program thrusts of the Church as defined by the General Assembly or National Council.

Article V

NATIONAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section 1. General Assembly. The General Assembly is the highest policy-making body of the Church. As provided in the Constitution, it has the following duties and functions:

- a. Proclaim the faith, determine the ministry and mission policies of the Church, provide for the conduct of mission and *make, issue, or approve* statements on important public issues and concerns; *(As Amended by NC 2002-31, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- b. Formulate policies and determine program thrusts and priorities of the Church in consultation with the local churches, conferences and other constituencies;
- c. Elect and proclaim the Bishops of the Church and assign them to their respective jurisdictional areas, *except in cases of special elections where the National Council is authorized to elect*; *(As Amended by NC 2002-32, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- d. Elect the other officers of the Church, *except in cases of special elections where the National Council is authorized to elect*;
- e. Set up the organizational and operational structure of the Church;
- f. Review the actions of the National Council;
- g. Dispose of matters referred to it with respect to worship, general welfare and government of the Church;
- h. Recognize new Church bodies, reorganize existing ones, and determine their geographical boundaries based on standards set by the Church;
- i. Foster union and/or partnership with churches and other bodies whose purposes and aims are consistent with that of the UCCP;
- j. Receive through the Conference other local churches which adhere to the UCCP Statement of Faith, its Constitution and statutes; and,
- k. Act on proposed amendments to the Constitution or call for a Constitutional Convention as stated in Article X of the Constitution.

Section 2. National Council. When the General Assembly is not in session, the National Council shall serve as its interim body. As provided in the Constitution, it has the following duties and functions:

- a. Devise mechanisms for the implementation of the program thrusts, policies and priorities of the Church;
- b. Adopt the program and budget; *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-54, UCCP Maguipo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*
- c. Appoint members of programs and project committees upon the recommendation of the General Secretary;
- d. Act on matters referred to it affecting the life and witness of the Church, except those reserved exclusively to the General Assembly in session, such as those provided in Article VII, Section 3 (c), (d), (f), (h) and (k) of the Constitution; and,
- e. Constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and representatives from the conferences, which shall receive and screen nominees for all the officers of the Church.

Section 3. Constitutional and National Program Commissions, and Other National Church Bodies. The Church shall plan, determine and implement its ministry and mission through the Constitutional Commissions and such program commissions and other Church bodies as the General Assembly or National Council may create. The General Assembly or National Council shall define the structure and composition of the program commissions and other Church bodies, prescribe the qualifications of their members and term of office, appoint their members in accordance with Article II, Section 6, of the Constitution and approve their budget. These program commissions and other Church bodies shall elect their own officers. National Church organizations and Church Institutions shall be attached to the Office of the General Secretary for coordination, monitoring and evaluation. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-55, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 4. Special Sessions of the General Assembly. In addition to the regular sessions of the General Assembly as provided in Article VII, Section 4, of the Constitution, special sessions may be called in the following manner:

- a. By two-thirds vote of all the members of the National Council; or
- b. By vote of two-thirds of the total number of conferences. Any of the conferences or its Conference Council may, through a resolution, initiate the call for special session of the General Assembly. The resolution shall be circulated to all conferences for the purpose of obtaining the required vote for such call. When the two-thirds vote is obtained, notice of the special session of the General Assembly shall be sent by the Office of the General Secretary to all the members at least one month before the date of the special session. For this purpose, the expenses required shall be covered by a supplementary budget.

Section 5. Quorum. In determining the quorum pursuant to Article VII, Section 5, of the Constitution, a majority of all the conferences should be duly represented and accredited.

Section 6. Election of General Assembly Officers. The Chairperson, and Vice Chairperson shall be elected by and from among the members of the General Assembly. The General Secretary, the Bishops, Corporate Treasurer and National Auditor may come from the general membership of the Church. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-56, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 7. Removal of Elected Officers of the General Assembly. Elected officers of the General Assembly may be removed by two-thirds vote of the General Assembly in a special session called for the purpose, or by three-fourths vote of the National Council for loss of confidence.

Section 8. Manner of Nomination and Election of Bishops. The Bishops of the Church shall be elected in the following manner:

- a. Nomination for Bishop shall be made in writing and submitted to the Nominating Committee at anytime before the last session of the National Council;
- b. *Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees; (As Amended by NC 2002-34, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- c. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- d. *Based on its screening, the Nominating Committee shall submit the list of the qualified nominees to the General Assembly;*
- e. The election shall be conducted by an Election Committee, composed of three members, to be created and appointed by the General Assembly; and,

- f. The election shall be by secret ballot and the first nominees *corresponding to the number of jurisdictional areas* obtaining the highest majority vote shall be declared duly elected. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

Section 9. Manner of Nomination and Election of Other General Assembly Officers. The nomination and election of the General Assembly officers shall be in the following manner:

- a. Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;
- b. The nominees shall be notified of his/her nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- c. Based on its screening, the Nominating Committee shall submit the list of the qualified nominees to the General Assembly;
- d. The Election Committee, created by the General Assembly under the immediately preceding section, shall conduct the election; and,
- e. The election shall be by secret ballot and the nominee obtaining the highest number of votes shall be declared elected, except that in the case of the General Secretary, a majority vote is required for his/her election. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

Section 10. Qualifications and Duties of the Chairperson. (a) To qualify for election as chairperson of the General Assembly, one must be [1] a regular member of the church in good standing for *at least five (5) years*; [2] *not otherwise a church worker*, and [3] had some experience in the conduct of meetings. *The person so elected must possess the foregoing qualifications at the time of his/her election.* (b) *The Chairperson shall have the following duties and functions: (As Amended by NC 2002-35, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. To preside over the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- b. To prepare with the General Secretary the agenda for the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- c. When so specifically authorized, to act as the spokesperson of the General Assembly in meetings, conventions, and the like; and,
- d. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

Section 11. Qualifications and Duties of the Vice-Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson of the General Assembly shall have the same qualifications as the Chairperson and shall assume the Chairperson's duties and functions in his/her absence, disability, inhibition or resignation.

Section 12. Qualifications and Duties of the General Secretary. To qualify for General Secretary, one must possess all the qualifications for Bishop as provided in Article VII, Section 8 of the Constitution and shall have demonstrated spiritual and pastoral leadership, and executive and administrative ability; *except that in the case of years of service at least five years of active service in a UCCP local church and at least five years of active service in the conference and other church judicatories/institutions shall be required.* He/She shall have the following duties: *(As Amended by NC 2002-36, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. To serve as the spiritual leader, executive officer, and spokesperson of the Church;
- b. To head the National Secretariat;

- c. To have custody of all land titles, minutes and all other important documents of the Church;
- d. To preside over the meetings of the Council of Bishops; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

Section 13. Vacancy in the Office of the General Secretary. In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of the General Secretary, or inability to discharge *the duties of* his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops shall designate from among its members a temporary General Secretary until the National Council shall have elected an acting General Secretary to serve the unexpired term. *(As Amended by NC 2002-37, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 14. National Secretariat. The National Secretariat shall serve as the administrative, coordinating and monitoring center of the Church in the overall implementation of its programs.

Section 15. Qualifications and Duties of the Corporate Treasurer. To qualify for election as Corporate Treasurer, one must be a regular member of a Local Church, *not otherwise a church worker*, of irreproachable moral character, preferably a certified public accountant, and with demonstrated ability in corporate financial planning. He/She shall have the following duties and functions: *(As Amended by NC 2002-38, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. To serve as the custodian for and on behalf of the Church of all funds, securities, assets and other properties of the Church which shall come into his/her possession, keep regular books of account, and deposit all funds in the name of the Church in such bank or banks as may be designated by the National Council;
- b. To disburse funds of the Church provided in accordance with the duly approved budget, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the General Assembly or the National Council and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the General Secretary and/or other duly authorized officer of the Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specifically intended for any program, project, or activity of the Church. In respect of funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Church, such funds shall be disbursed according to the specific instructions of such individuals or organizations;
- c. To submit his/her books for audit as may be ordered by the Church or when requested by the National Auditor and render audited statements as may, from time to time, be required by the General Assembly or the National Council, and present as may be required and at the end of the ecclesial year, an audited financial report to the General Assembly or the National Council;
- d. In consultation with the General Secretary, to formulate and prepare long-term financial plans, including the annual budget or any supplemental budget as may be required of the Church for submission to, and approval by, the General Assembly or the National Council;
- e. To coordinate with the treasurers of the conferences to ensure the prompt and faithful remittance of assessments, contributions, and other obligations;
- f. To post such bond either in cash or by a reputable surety company acceptable to the National Council in such amount as may be fixed by it;
- g. In coordination with the Finance Officer, he/she shall render reports and financial statements at every General Assembly, National Council and National Executive Council meeting on all financial operations and transactions of the Church;

- h. A Finance Officer shall be appointed by the General Secretary to manage the day to day financial transactions of the Church. He/She shall coordinate with the Corporate Treasurer in the preparation of reports, financial statements and audit but will be directly responsible to the General Secretary; and,
- i. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly, the National Council or the National Executive Council. *(As Amended by NC Action 2015-57, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 16. Qualifications and Duties of the National Auditor. The National Auditor shall have the same qualifications as the National Treasurer, except that he/she must be a certified public accountant. He/She shall have the following duties:

- a. To examine or authorize the examination of the books and records of the Church in order to ascertain and verify that the annual report of the National Treasurer regarding the financial position and operations of the entire Church is in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles and with the policies, statutes and procedures established by the Church;
- b. To formulate, devise and submit to the General Assembly or the National Council accounting and auditing systems and procedures for the entire Church;
- c. To recommend an adequate and effective system of accounts, the proper recording of transactions and the safeguarding of the assets of the entire Church;
- d. To conduct, in coordination with the Conference Auditor, audit of funds allocated by, or coursed through the General Assembly, to the Conference, and submit report thereon to the National Treasurer; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

Section 17. Vacancy in the Offices of National Treasurer and National Auditor. *In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of the National Treasurer or the National Auditor, or inability to discharge the duties of his/her office for any cause, the General Secretary, in consultation with the Executive Council, may appoint from among the members of the Church a temporary National Treasurer or National Auditor until the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term. (As Amended by NC 2002-39, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 18. External Auditor. There shall be an annual financial audit of the Church to be conducted by an external auditor who shall be appointed by the National Council upon the recommendation of the General Secretary.

Section 19. Faith and Order Commission. The Faith and Order Commission shall consist of five members, three of whom must be ordained ministers, and who shall serve for a term of four years. To qualify for *election* to the Commission, one must possess theological understanding, be committed to the doctrines and discipline of the Church, of unquestionable moral character, and awareness of the pressing social issues. *(As Amended by NC 2002-40, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 20. Commission for Church Unity and Union. The Commission for Church Unity and Union shall be composed of five members, who shall serve for a term of four years. To qualify for *election* to the Commission, one must possess familiarity with the UCCP's vision for Christian unity and ecumenicity and must be committed to the establishment of the "One Body of Christ". *(As Amended by NC 2002-41, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 21. Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development. *The Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development shall have five (5) members, consisting of a church worker, a business person, an engineer, a lawyer and a finance person, and shall serve a term of four (4) years. To qualify for election to the Commission one must be a regular member of a Local Church in good standing of a Local Church, of good moral character, has competence in material and human resource development, and an exemplar of generous giving. (As Amended by NC 2002-42, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

The Commission shall establish comprehensive and nationwide property and resource development programs to generate income for the support of the Church.

Such programs shall include the establishment of mechanism for property and human resources utilization that shall make the Church financially self-reliant and enable it to participate in the mission of the Universal Church.

For this purpose, the Commission shall encourage the formation of cooperatives and endeavor to establish Church-related institutions that shall provide insurance, hospitalization, retirement and pension plans for its Church workers, and assist the local churches in the establishment of memorial plans and parks for the members.

Real properties of the Church shall be developed for the benefit of the entire Church. In this regard, all local churches and church institutions not otherwise separately incorporated, shall be allowed to use the incorporation papers of the UCCP for such purposes. Guidelines in the sharing and distribution of the proceeds from the development of Church properties shall be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

In the acquisition, utilization and development of Church properties, the UCCP shall strictly abide and comply with all the laws, statutes and accepted principles for the promotion of ecological balance and integrity of God's creation.

Section 22. The UCCP Resource Development Foundation.

- a. *The Church shall organize and establish a non-stock, non-profit foundation, which shall be wholly-owned and controlled by the UCCP. The foundation shall serve as the holding company of the Church and shall manage its investment ventures.*
- b. *The foundation shall have a board of trustees, composed of the following:*
 - b.1. *General Secretary*
 - b.2. *General Assembly Chairperson*
 - b.3. *General Assembly Vice-Chairperson*
 - b.4. *National Treasurer*
 - b.5. *National Auditor*
 - b.6. *CSRD Chairperson*
 - b.7. *A representative from each of the Jurisdictional Areas designated by the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet on recommendation of the Bishop of the Church for the Jurisdictional Area. Except for the three (3) representatives from each of the Jurisdictional Areas, who shall serve for three (3) years renewable for another term, all the aforementioned members of the board of trustees shall at all times be the incumbent officers of the church. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-58, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)*

Section 23. Procedure for the Election of Commission Members. Members of the various Commissions shall be elected in accordance with the following procedure:

- a. Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;
- b. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing; and,
- c. The General Assembly or National Council, as the case may be, shall appoint the members of the various Commissions from the corresponding list of qualified nominees submitted and certified by the Nominating Committee.

Section 24. Vacancy in the Offices of the Commission Members. *In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of any Commission member, or inability to discharge the duties of his/her office for any cause, the Executive Council shall designate from among the qualified members of the Church temporary Commission Members until the General Assembly or the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term. However, the Executive Council shall not make such appointment if the vacancy occurs within three (3) months from the General Assembly or National Council meeting immediately following such vacancy.* (As Amended by NC 2002-44, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 25. Jurisdictional Area. A Jurisdictional Area shall consist of at least five (5) contiguous conferences, with no less than 150 local churches and at least 50 ordained ministers with pastoral assignments, *and 50 unordained church workers with ecclesial assignments.* (As Amended by NC 2002-45, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 26. Jurisdictional Area Cabinet. A Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall be established by the General Assembly or the National Council for each Jurisdictional Area with the following duties:

- a. Coordinate the promotion and implementation of the programs, projects and other undertakings of the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area consistent with the program thrusts of the General Assembly;
- b. Monitor, assess and evaluate the results of the implementation of Conference programs and submit recommendations thereon to the General Assembly or the National Council; and,
- c. Design a comprehensive human resources development program for the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area;

Section 27. Vacancy in the Office of the Bishop. *In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of a Bishop assigned to the Jurisdictional Area, or inability to discharge his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops may designate from among its members a temporary Bishop assigned to the Jurisdictional Area until the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term.* (As Amended by NC 2002-46, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 28. Bishops of the Church assigned to the Jurisdictional Area. *The Bishops of the Church assigned to the Jurisdictional Area shall have the following duties.*

- a. To serve as the pastor of pastors by exercising pastoral care and responsibility with the Church workers of his/her Jurisdictional area;
- b. To call and preside over the meetings of the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet, *at which, as Chairperson thereof, he/she in the spirit of collegiality leads in the supervision, monitoring and assessment/evaluation of the promotion and implementation of the General Assembly programs, projects and undertakings of the Church within his/her Jurisdictional Area;* provided, that in his/her absence or incapacity, the Jurisdictional

Area Cabinet shall elect from among the Conference Ministers a temporary presiding officer;

- c. To implement a systematic program of visitation, consultation and promotion of programs of the General Assembly in the conferences.
- d. In consultation with the Conference Ministers, coordinate scheduling of, and attend, the annual sessions of the conferences within his/her Jurisdictional Area;
- e. To officiate the ordination of candidates for the ministry *during the conference in session*; (As Amended by NC 2002-47, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)
- f. In the absence of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister, to perform their duties and functions until one has been duly elected; and,
- g. To have administrative oversight over the Conference Ministers within their respective jurisdictional area. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-60, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 29. Board of Trustees of the Church. For the purpose of complying with the requirements of the Corporation Code of the Philippines, the National Executive Council shall serve as the Board of Trustees of the Church, pursuant to Article VII, Section 11, of the Constitution. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-61, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

Section 30. Incorporation of Church Bodies. Henceforth, a Local Church or Conference may be incorporated only upon prior approval of the General Assembly or the National Council, provided that its constitution and by-laws are consistent with the Constitution and By-Laws of the Church. All local churches and conferences, which are separately incorporated, shall be subject to periodic review by the General Assembly or the National Council in regard to their incorporation. In the event of dissolution, all the properties and other assets of the Local Church and Conference shall be ceded back to the UCCP.

All local churches and conferences already incorporated before the effectivity of the Constitution and By-Laws shall be persuaded, when they encumber, convey or dispose of their real properties, to seek the approval of the National Council, through the General Secretary.

Section 31. National Church Organizations. In addition to the existing and duly recognized national organizations representing youth, women and men, the Church shall encourage the formation and establishment of voluntary church organizations based on sectoral, gender or to meet specific or particular needs or other interests of the Church and the community, and promote the ministry and mission of the Church. These voluntary church organizations may seek recognition by, and representation in, the different levels of the Church. To be recognized by, and be represented in, the General Assembly or the National Council as a national organization of the church, a voluntary church organization must be organized in at least two-thirds of all the conferences, have a base membership of at least two thousand members and adhere to the Constitution and By-Laws, including all statutes and ordinances, of the Church.

Section 32. Church Institutions. As part of its ministry of teaching, healing and service, the Church shall continue its participation in the ownership of schools, hospitals and other service institutions. The administration, operation and maintenance of schools, hospitals and other service institutions wholly or partially-owned by the Church shall be subject to annual review by the National Council to ensure the quality of their service and their contribution to the mission of the Church. The Church shall take steps to ensure their continued viability. (As Amended by NC Action 2015-62, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

As regards to Church related institutions, the National Council may consult with the said institutions for the purpose of determining whether they continue to contribute to the mission and ministry of the Church and suggest measures to strengthen the relationship. (As Amended by NC 2002-48, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Article VI

AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LAWS

Section 1. *System of Conflict Resolution.* Realizing that litigations in courts and administrative tribunals between and among members of the Church, or those involving the Church itself and its constituencies, are unseemly in God's sight and do not reflect well on the Church itself and its members, apart from being expensive in many instances and disruptive of cordial relationships within the Church fellowship, a system of conflict resolution is hereby established at all levels of the UCCP.

Section 2. *Definition of Terms.* The terms "conflicts" and "disputes" are often used interchangeably in this Article. Technically, however, a conflict exists where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between the various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the proper interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, By-Laws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church. A dispute arises where a serious legal disagreement between and among Church officials or members, or between a member of the Church itself, or its constituencies, has reached a point where the parties have formulated claims and counterclaims sufficiently definite as to ripen anytime into a litigation before a court or administrative tribunal, board or commission established by the State.

Justiciable cases are those controversies that may be tried or heard before courts of justice or administrative tribunals. As a general rule, disputes are justiciable.

Section 3. *Amicable Settlement.* As the fundamental values of truth, justice and love are the distinguishing marks of Christian discipleship, the amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the Church itself shall be encouraged (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17) and every effort shall be exerted to discourage litigation before the civil courts, boards, or commissions established by the State (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). This is part of every member's witness to the outside world. Apart from the fact that litigation may involve much expense and delay, its adversarial character also tends to exacerbate the strained relations between and among church members who are parties to a controversy.

Section 4. *Exhaustion of all remedies within the Church in Justiciable Cases.* In all disputes and conflicts which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the rule of exhaustion of remedies including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and the traditional method of adjudication through the National Commission on *Discipline and Conflict Resolution* (formerly National Judicial Commission). *(As Amended by NC 2002-49, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

No member of the Church who is party to any controversy with another member or with the Church may institute any suit or proceeding or apply for remedy before any civil court, administrative tribunal, board or commission without first showing compliance with this requirement of exhausting all intrachurch remedies.

Such intrachurch remedies may include, among other things, acknowledgment of error or mistake, repentance, contrition and restitution, or reparation of damage, on the one hand, and forgiveness and pardon, on the other.

Section 5. *Binding effect of the rule.* To insure the binding effect of the rule of exhaustion of intrachurch remedies, all members of all local churches, conferences and all other bodies of the UCCP, 18 years or over, shall manifest, in a form prescribed for the purpose, their individual conformity to the rule. The Church, at all levels, shall keep a separate register of the said manifestations of conformity. At the local level, members who reach 18 years of age and those

adults who are scheduled to be received into the fellowship of the Church, shall be similarly enjoined to manifest their conformity to the said rule, as part of their Christian witness.

The form, entitled “Manifestation of Conformity,” is found at the end of these By-Laws as APPENDIX I.

Section 6. Questions within and beyond the system of Conflict resolution.

Questions involving misunderstandings or disputes between relatives on matters of personal and property relations, inheritance rights, ownership of properties, disagreements between and among Church members involving alleged violations of contracts, non-payment of loans, the conduct or outcome of elections in Church and Church organizations, the relations between Church authorities and members, and the like, are all included in the system of Conflict resolution and are subject to this Article, provided the parties to the controversy are members of the Church.

But all questions of Church policy, such as whether to send delegates to certain international conferences, or whether the Church should support the Government’s family planning program, its peace initiatives, its socio-economic plan and the like, and those questions that involve the public justice of the State — for instance, such criminal cases as arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like — are beyond the system of conflict resolution.

Special proceedings, as the term is known in the Rules of Court, which do not involve conflicts and disputes, such as adoption, change of name, voluntary dissolution of corporations, declaration of absence and death, and similar proceedings, such as naturalization, all of which require judicial or government action, are not, as a general rule, included in the system of conflict resolution.

However, criminal cases involving light felonies, as this term is defined in the Revised Penal Code, such as slight physical injuries, malicious mischief and the like, for which the penalty imposed is from 1 day to 30 days, public censure or a fine of less than 200 Pesos, and such other criminal cases involving other penalties which, in the best judgment and discretion of the Church Council, may be amicably settled in the interest of the Church fellowship and of the parties themselves, may be included in the system of conflict resolution, provided such amicable settlement will not be in violation of law, morals or public policy.

Section 7. Methods of settling conflicts and disputes. The parties to a controversy are expected to settle their conflict or dispute through direct exchange of views between themselves. But where their relations have become so strained as to rule out direct negotiation, the following methods as herein defined shall be resorted to:

- a. **Good offices.** The pastor, or an Elder, or a respected member of the Church, shall bring the parties together or provide the occasion for negotiations to take place between them so they can work out a settlement between themselves. For example, the Pastor (or Elder or a respected member of the Church) may invite the parties to the controversy to his office or residence for the said purpose. At the Conference level and that of the General Assembly, the tender of good offices may be initiated or done by the Conference Minister, the Officers of the Conference, the General Secretary, and other officers of the General Assembly, or by any respected lay leader of the Church.
- b. **Mediation.** Where the one tendering his/her good office actively participates by proposing a solution and offering his/her advise to the parties to the controversy, he/she plays the role of a mediator. Good offices and mediation may take place on the same occasion. The mediator does not concern himself/herself with the merits of a dispute: his/her task is to encourage compromise rather than advise adherence to legal technicalities.

- c. **Conciliation.** This is the process of settling a controversy about disputed facts by referring the same to a person or persons, designated by agreement of the parties to the conflict of dispute, for the purpose of clarifying and elucidating the facts in issue between the parties in the hope of bringing them to a compromise settlement.
- d. **Arbitration.** This is a quasi-judicial, informal procedure for the settlement of a controversy between the parties by referring the conflict or dispute to one or more impartial persons for final and binding determination. The arbitrator or board of arbitrators, not more than three (3) in number, shall be freely chosen by the parties themselves from a pool of Church arbitrators. In arbitration there is a legal obligation on the part of the parties to the controversy to comply with the award or decision.

Arbitration shall be resorted to by the parties where there is a failure or inability to arrive at a settlement through such means as good offices, mediation, or conciliation and there is a strong probability that litigation may ensue between or among Church members who are parties to a controversy. In such a situation, the Church Council, in case of a controversy at the level of the Local Church, shall adopt a detailed procedure of arbitration, in accordance with the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws and in line with such rules as may be issued from time to time by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDRC). For this purpose, said Council shall immediately constitute a pool of arbitrators, not more than five (5) in number, who are known for their moral integrity, competence, impartiality, and independence of mind. Where the controversy occurs at the level of the National Church, the Conference Council or the National Council, as the case may be, shall do likewise.

An example of an Arbitration Agreement, which may be modified to suit the requirements of a particular case, is found at the end of these By-Laws as APPENDIX II.

The decision or award of the arbitration or arbitrators freely chosen by the parties to a controversy, shall, as a general rule, be final, binding and unappealable, in accordance with law.

For the purpose of insuring that said decision of award shall be recognized and enforced by the courts, boards or commissions established by the State, the NCDRC shall promulgate the procedural rules that shall serve as guide to the Local Churches, the various Conferences and the National Church, on the basis of the Manual of Arbitration appended to these By-Laws as APPENDIX III, particularly with respect to such matters as qualifications of arbitrators, manner of effecting arbitration, procedure of arbitration, the decision or award and the compliance therewith by the parties. The Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III) shall apply in toto as the procedural rules to all cases submitted for arbitration pending promulgation of said procedural rules or in case of inability or failure of the NCDRC to promulgate the same.

In case the present Arbitration Law is amended, the NCDRC shall make the necessary modification or adjustment in its procedural rules.

- e. **Traditional method of adjudication.** Those church members who are involved in a justiciable case and wish to waive or forego arbitration, after having failed to settle their dispute through the use of good offices, mediation or conciliation, may entrust the resolution of their controversy through the traditional method of adjudication. If and when such a situation arises, the Church Council shall establish a local unit of the NCDRC (formerly the Local Judicial Commission), in accordance with the procedural rules that shall be adopted and promulgated by the NCDRC.

In drafting and promulgating said procedural rules, the NCDRC shall take into account applicable provisions of the 1974 By-Laws concerning the Local Judicial Commission, with provision for appeal to the higher bodies in the context of the system of Conflict Resolution under the present Constitution, always keeping in mind that controversies involving church members, officers, and the Church itself shall be resolved in a non-adversarial, non-combative way and in light of the fundamental values of truth, justice and love.

In line with Article XI, Section 4 of the UCCP Constitution, “cases pending in the National Judicial Commission at the time of the effectivity of the present Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable methods set forth in Article VIII”, namely, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. In the absence of such a desire, the cases, if any, will be resolved in accordance with the rules of procedure prevailing before the effectivity of the present Constitution.

Section 8. Advisory Opinions. Where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the correct interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, By-Laws, or statutes of the Church, there being no disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, an appropriate request for advisory opinion by the NCDRC may be made by such officials, members, bodies or agencies in accordance with the Rules of Procedure which shall be promulgated by the NCDRC in accordance with Article VIII, Section 11, of the UCCP Constitution.

Where there is a disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, the NCDRC shall authorize the establishment of units at various levels of the Church to hear and decide the conflict, with provision for appeal to the higher bodies, including the NCDRC itself, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

It shall be the duty of the NCDRC to render its Advisory Opinion, after due consultation and thorough deliberation, within the period of thirty (30) days, counted from the date the case is duly submitted by all the parties for opinion. As the conflict involves only the interpretation of ecclesiastical laws, there shall be no appeal from said Advisory Opinions to the courts, commissions or boards established by the State.

Section 9. Finality of Opinion, Award, Order or Decision. *As a general rule, the opinion, award, order or decision of the NCDRC after the lapse of fifteen (15) days from receipt by the parties of the said opinion, award, order or decision, shall become final and executory. (As Amended by NC 2002-50, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

In cases decided by the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (CCDCR) where the decision is expulsion of a church worker, the case shall be subject to automatic review by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDRC). (As Amended by NC 2002-51, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 10. Election of NCDRC members. NCDRC members shall be elected by the General Assembly from among the nominees of the Conference only. No nomination from the floor during the General Assembly in session shall be allowed, save in exceptional cases.

Section 11. Filling of vacancy. In case of vacancy in the NCDRC, by reason of resignation, death, incapacity and other causes, the same may be filled by appointment of the National Council or the General Assembly if in session. The one appointed by the National Council or General Assembly shall serve only the unexpired term of the member he/she is filling.

Section 12. Disqualification. In case of resignation of any member of the NCDRC, he/she shall be disqualified from holding any elective or appointive office in the National Church for the remaining period of his/her term. The disqualification shall continue in spite of his/her resignation.

Article VII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1. Discipline. Discipline is the prevention and correction of offenses for the purpose of maintaining the unity and integrity of the Church.

Section 2. Board of Elders. Pursuant to Article V, Section 11 of the Constitution, the Board of Elders, *sitting as committee on discipline and conflict resolution*, shall be the disciplinary body in the Local Church, *whose orders, judgments and decisions as confirmed by the Church Council may be appealed, in appropriate cases as defined by the NCDRC, to the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution.* (As Amended by NC 2002-52, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 3. Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution. A Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom shall be active ministers of the Conference and two of whom shall be laypersons, shall be appointed by the Conference *in session or the Conference Council* as its disciplinary body. The Jurisdictional Bishop and the Conference Minister shall sit as ex-officio members of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, without vote. *The Committee shall exercise judicial functions and, as such shall be an independent body, whose orders, judgments and decisions may be appealed only to the NCDRC.* (As Amended by NC 2002-53, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

The Committee shall elect its own chairperson. No member of the Conference Council shall be a member of the Committee.

Section 4. National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution as the Highest Disciplinary Body. In addition to the powers and responsibilities vested upon it under Article VIII of the Constitution, the NCDRC shall be the highest disciplinary body of the Church. It shall have the following functions and duties:

- a. To adopt such rules of procedure as it may deem necessary and proper for the purpose of implementing these By-Laws, ensuring at all times that due process and fair play are observed;
- b. To administer and maintain Church discipline in appropriate cases involving officers and members of the General Assembly or the National Council, Conference Minister and other elected Conference officers; and,
- c. To see to it that there is no overlapping of duties, responsibilities and functions in administering and maintaining discipline at the various units and agencies of the UCCP; and
- d. *To act as the final judicial body of the Church and, as such, its orders, judgments and decisions shall be final and executory, and not subject to any further appeal or review by any other body or bodies of the Church.* (As Amended by NC 2002-54, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 5. Classification of Cases. There are three classes of cases which may involve the imposition of disciplinary measures of the Church:

- a. Direct Misbehavior, obstruction or interruption of religious worship, sacred ceremonies, or official proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, or flagrant disrespect toward the Church or its officers and/or members in the course of or immediately before or after said proceedings, meetings or sessions.

- b. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging immoral, unethical or improper conduct and an admission of culpability on the part of the offender who is an officer or member of the Church.
- c. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging *immoral*, unethical or improper conduct on the part of an officer, or member of the church, but there is no admission by the respondent and the facts are in dispute or in doubt. (As Amended by NC 2002-55, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

In the first class of cases, the Board of Elders may summarily deal with the offense by causing and effecting the physical exclusion or removal of the offender from the Church premises or from the venue of the proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, with the assistance, should this become necessary, of law enforcement authorities and other members of the Church. In addition, the Board of Elders may cause the prosecution of the offender in accordance with the Revised Penal Code (Articles 131-133; 153). Where the offender is a Church member, the Board of Elders may, after due deliberation, impose the penalty of expulsion in very serious cases, or the suspension of the offender from membership for such length of time as may be considered proportionate to the gravity of the offense. At the Conference level, the imposition of the penalty shall be the function and duty of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution; but where the said Committee has not yet been organized or its Chairperson and members are not present for any reason whatsoever, the appropriate disciplinary measure as set forth above shall be imposed by the Conference, or in default thereof, by the Conference Council; at the General Assembly level or that of the National Council, the imposition of the proper penalty shall be the function and duty of the NCDCR; but where the NCDCR has not yet been organized or its Chairperson or members are not present for any reason whatsoever, the appropriate disciplinary measure shall be imposed by the General Assembly or the National Council, as the case may be.

The procedure as set forth in Section 7 and 8 hereof shall be observed with respect to the second and third classes of cases.

Section 6. Anonymous complaints and rumors. Anonymous complaints, gossips, and rumors shall be discouraged by the officers and disciplinary bodies of the Church since these are unseemly in a fellowship based on love, fairness, and truth. Any member found responsible for circulating the same, after his/her attention shall have been called to such practice, shall be subjected to the appropriate disciplinary measures, including admonition, suspension and, in extreme cases, expulsion.

Section 7. Written complaint. For the purpose of the second and third classes of cases, where a verbal complaint has been presented to the Pastor or other officers of the Church, the Conference, or the National Council, as the case may be, and the same involves immoral, unethical or improper conduct on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, the pastor or other officers of the Church, the Conference or the National Council, as the case may be, shall ask the complainant or offended party, who may or may not be a Church member, to reduce the same to writing, with particulars as to time, place and persons, so that the complaint may be presented to, and discussed by, the Board of Elders, the Conference Committee on *Discipline* and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDCR, as the case may be, for its proper disposition. (As Amended by NC 2002-56, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

Section 8. Action on the written complaint. Where the written complaint is sufficient in content in that it names the parties (the offended and the alleged offender), with enough details as to time, place and circumstances constituting the alleged immoral, unethical or improper conduct, the Pastor or an Elder or a respected member of the Church may seek a private meeting or conference with the alleged offender to inform the latter of the charge or charges in as tactful a manner as possible and ascertain his or her reaction or attitude. In case of an admission of the truth of the charge or charges or of the essential facts constituting the offense, the matter shall be

reported to the whole Board of Elders or Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDCCR, as the case may be, for the imposition of the appropriate penalty, taking into account the mitigating circumstances of the offender's admission of the truth. In every case, the offended party shall be informed of the steps being taken by the Church or by the Board of Elders in acting on his/her complaint.

Where, however, there is no admission of culpability on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, or there is an admission of some facts but with the invocation of certain justifying or extenuating circumstances, the Board of Elders, in the exercise of its discretion, may resort to the processes of mediation or conciliation, as defined in Article VI, Section 7 of these By-Laws, which is in accordance with the teaching of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:15-17). Where these are clearly inappropriate or have failed, it shall ask the parties to enter into an Arbitration Agreement for a prompt, fair, and decisive settlement of the dispute in accordance with these By-Laws, the Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III), and such rules as may be promulgated from time to time by the NCDCCR.

Where the complaint, however, alleges a serious or grave offense and the initial or preliminary proceedings of the Board of Elders and/or the Arbitration Panel indicate a prima facie violation of the laws of the land — such as in cases of arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like, including rape, adultery, and other sexual assaults — the proceedings may be suspended so as to allow the complainant and officials of the State, whenever appropriate, to proceed unhampered with the prosecution of the offense, before the proper authorities of the State, without prejudice to the resumption of the proceedings before said Board as soon as circumstances permit and only for the purpose of administering and maintaining the system of discipline in the Church.

Section 9. Report of the Result of the Arbitration proceedings. The Arbitration body, preferably composed of three (3) arbitrators in serious cases, shall conduct its proceedings at the earliest possible time, resolve the facts in dispute, either acquitting or convicting the Respondent, in whole or in part, but always leaving it to the proper disciplinary body of the Church — the Board of Elders, Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDCCR, as the case may be — to impose the proper penalty in case of conviction. Nothing herein contained shall authorize said disciplinary bodies to alter the findings of fact and applicable law of the Arbitrator or Arbitrators.

Section 10. Interim orders. The following twin principles shall guide the disciplinary bodies of the Church in the performance of their duties and functions:

1. No Church organization can long endure without order and harmony in the Church. The maintenance of a sound system of discipline is a necessary condition to the integrity and growth of the Church.
2. But order and harmony may not last unless based on truth, justice and the willingness to reconcile and forgive. Reconciliation shall be encouraged but without sacrificing truth and justice. In case guilt or culpability exists, contrition and repentance, including restitution where proper, are pre-conditions to genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Always, our example is the great teacher, Jesus Christ.

Article VIII

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Property Ownership. Upon effectivity of the Constitution, in all cases of ownership of real properties, the phrase “held in trust for the UCCP” shall always be annotated in

the document of title with the conformity of the Local Church or the Conference as the case may be.

With respect to real properties already held and owned by incorporated local churches, Conferences, and Church-owned institutions at the time of the effectivity of the Constitution, these entities shall be persuaded to comply with Article IX, Section 1, of the Constitution.

Section 2. *Effectivity.* These By-Laws shall be effective upon ratification and proclamation in the same manner as provided in Article XII, Section 1, of the Constitution.

That the Fiscal Year of this corporation shall be June 1 and May 31 of the following year.

Section 3. *Manual of Operation.* The General Assembly or the National Council shall set forth in a Manual of Operation further details on the operations of various commissions or other Church bodies not otherwise provided for in these By-Laws.

Article IX **TRANSITORY PROVISIONS**

Section 1. Upon the proclamation of the new Constitution, the 1994 General Assembly shall set the date for the convening of the first regular General Assembly under the new Constitution, which shall be held later than *May 1998*, and the present Executive Committee shall act as the Nominating Committee for the purpose of electing the officers of the General Assembly. *(As Amended by NC 2002-57, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 2. All Bishops elected prior to the effectivity of the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall serve until the new Bishops shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these By-Laws.

Section 3. The present national officers of the Church shall serve in “hold-over” capacity until the new national officers shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these By-Laws.

Section 4. The first set of national officers elected under the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall serve starting the month of *June 1, 1998* immediately following their election. *(As Amended by NC 2002-58, Condora, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Section 5. The Conference Areas existing prior to the ratification of the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall continue to exist until such time that the General Assembly shall exercise its prerogative under Article VII, Section 3 (h), of the new Constitution.

Article X **AMENDMENT**

Section 1. These By-Laws may be amended by majority vote of the General Assembly or by three-fourths vote of the National Council, subject to approval by the majority votes of all the Conferences.

MANIFESTATION OF CONFORMITY

As a full member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in _____, I hereby state:

1. That I have read and reviewed Article VI of the UCCP By-Laws, entitled “AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LAWS”, and I agree that as a sign of our love for one another, conflicts and disputes between and among Church members should be amicably settled on the basis of truth, justice and love, and by availing of all remedies within the Church fellowship, in accordance with the Holy Bible.
2. That I manifest my wholehearted conformity to Article VI, particularly Section 4, which embodies the rule of exhaustion of all remedies within the Church.

(Name in Block Letters)

(Signature)

(Address)

Signed on _____
(Date)

(Name of Church)

ARBITRATION AGREEMENT
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

(Name of Church)

(Address of Church)

The undersigned parties, after having made use of the other modes of settling our conflict or dispute (good offices, mediation, and conciliation), hereby agree to submit the following controversy and/or specific issue to arbitration:

Complainant states that she loaned P10,000 (payable in 12 months) in June, 1992 to Respondent, both members of the UCCP at the above address. Respondent states that she has already paid the above amount in five (5) installments but that she lost or mislaid the receipts of payment signed by the complainant. The specific issue is whether the loan has actually been paid. Complainant asks that she be paid P10,000 plus interest at the rate of 20% per annum.

The parties agree:

- (1) That Mr. Juan Martinez, Chairperson of the Board of Elders, shall be the sole arbitrator (In more serious or complicated cases, they may agree on a Board of Three (3) Arbitrators, in accordance with Article 1, par. 4 of the Manual of Arbitration);
- (2) That it is their desire that the hearings be scheduled on the following date or dates and time: _____;
- (3) That the award or decision should be rendered not later than fifteen (15) days after the last hearing;
- (4) That they shall abide by and comply in good faith with the award or decision of the sole arbitrator;
- (5) That any court of competent jurisdiction shall have the power to enforce this Arbitration Agreement, confirm the award or decision and execute the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have hereunto signed this Arbitration Agreement this _____ day of _____. _____ in the Municipality of _____, Province of _____.

In the presence of:

MANUAL OF ARBITRATION

In accordance with the UCCP By-Laws, this Manual of Arbitration shall be the basis of the procedural rules that shall serve as guide to the Local Churches, the various Conferences and the Church in all cases duly submitted for arbitration. Pending the promulgation of said Procedural Rules by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDCR) or in case of inability or failure to promulgate the same, this Manual of Arbitration shall apply to all cases duly submitted for arbitration.

Article 1. Definition and Nature. Arbitration is a quasi-judicial, informal procedure for the settlement of a controversy between the parties by a binding award or decision of an arbitrator or board of arbitrators, not more than three (3) in number, freely chosen by the parties themselves from a pool of Church arbitrators. In arbitration there is a legal obligation on the part of the parties to the controversy to comply with the award or decision.

Arbitration shall be resorted to by the parties where there is a failure or inability to arrive at a settlement through such means as good offices, mediation, or conciliation.

In the event of a conflict or dispute between and among Church members and there is a strong probability that the controversy may ripen into litigation, a detailed procedure of arbitration shall be adopted by the Church Council in the case of a Local Church, the Conference Council at the Conference level, or the National Council at the highest level, in accordance with the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws. For this purpose, a pool of arbitrators, not more than five (5) in number, shall be appointed by said Council. The parties may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators to be chosen from the pool of Church arbitrators as provided in the next article.

The submission to arbitration shall be effected by written agreement of the parties, who may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators, all of whom shall come from the Church's pool of arbitrators, the first to be selected by the complainant or complainants, the second to be appointed by the respondent or respondents; the two arbitrators shall agree upon the third arbitrator. The making of such an agreement to submit the controversy to arbitration shall be deemed a consent of the parties to the authority of the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction, under the Arbitration Law (RA 876), to enforce the agreement and confirm the award. Said agreement shall be filed with the Clerk of the Regional Trial Court having jurisdiction over the case.

An example of an Arbitration Agreement, which may be modified to suit the requirements of a particular case, is marked as Appendix II at the end of the UCCP By-Laws.

Article 2. Qualifications of arbitrators. Any person appointed as arbitrator must be at least 25 years of age, in full enjoyment of his civil rights, a college graduate or its equivalent in terms of training and experience as may be considered adequate by the Church Council, in the case of a Local Church. The arbitrator must be a full member of the Church, known for his/her moral integrity, competence, impartiality and independence of mind.

No person appointed to serve as arbitrator shall be related by blood or marriage within the 6th degree of any party to the controversy. The same disqualification shall apply to the *compadre* or *comadre* of any of the parties. No person shall serve as an arbitrator in any proceedings if he/she has or has had financial, fiduciary or other interest in the controversy or cause to be decided or in the result of the proceeding or has any personal bias, which might prejudice the right of any party to a fair and impartial award or decision.

No party shall select as an arbitrator any person to act as his/her champion or to advocate his/her cause, it being understood that an arbitrator shall be an impartial, neutral judge.

If after appointment but before or during a hearing, an arbitrator shall discover any circumstances likely to create a presumption of bias, or which he/she believes might disqualify him/her as an impartial arbitrator, he/she shall immediately disclose such information to the parties. Thereafter the parties may agree in writing:

- a) to waive the presumptive disqualifying circumstances; or
- b) to declare the office of such arbitrator vacant. Any such vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment was made.

The arbitrator or arbitrators may be challenged by any party for which the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph which may have arisen after the arbitration agreement or were unknown at the time of arbitration. The challenge may be made before the arbitrators. If the arbitrator yields to the challenge, the arbitrator that will replace him/her shall be chosen in the same manner as that of the original arbitrator. If the arbitrator does not yield to the challenge, the Church Council in the case of the Local Church, the Conference Council in the case of the Conference, and the National Council in the case of the Church shall decide, as soon as possible, the merit or lack of merit of the challenge.

In remote areas where all or almost all the Church members are related to one another by blood or marriage, or as *compadre* or *comadre*, so as to render it difficult or impossible to choose impartial arbitrator/s, the pastor and/or the Church Council shall immediately inform the Conference Minister who shall then request the Conference Council to appoint a pool of five (5) arbitrators with the qualifications above-mentioned and without any of the disqualifications that may preclude them to act as arbitrators. The parties may thereafter agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators as provided in the next subsection.

Article 3. How arbitration is effected. The submission to arbitration shall be effected by the written agreement of the parties. The agreement shall set forth the nature of the controversy, the amount involved, and the relief sought. The parties may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators, all of whom shall come from the Church's pool of arbitrators, the first to be selected by the complainant/s or plaintiff/s, the second to be selected by the respondent/s or defendant/s; the two arbitrators shall agree upon the third arbitrator. A form for this purpose entitled Arbitration Agreement is found in Appendix II.

The making of such an agreement to submit the controversy to arbitration shall be deemed a consent of the parties to the authority of the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction, under the Arbitration Law (RA876), to enforce the agreement and confirm the award or decision.

Article 4. Procedure of arbitration.

a. **Date of hearing: adjournment.** If the dates of the hearing are not specified in the arbitration agreement, the arbitrator/s shall set the dates of hearing, indicating the hour and the place, and shall cause notice thereof to be given to the parties.

The hearing may proceed in the absence of any party who, after due notice, fails to be present at such hearing or fails to obtain an adjournment thereof.

An adjournment may be ordered by the arbitrator/s at their own discretion, for good and sufficient cause. But no adjournment shall extend the hearing beyond the date fixed in the arbitration agreement for rendering the award of decision unless the same is extended by written agreement of the parties.

b. **Who may be present.** No one other than a party of said arbitration, or a person duly authorized in writing by said party, shall be permitted by the arbitrator/s to be present during the

hearing. Any party desiring to be represented by a lawyer shall notify the other party or parties of such intention at least 5 days prior to the hearing, so that the latter may, if he desires, be represented also by a lawyer. However, it is not necessary or obligatory for any party to be represented by a lawyer, since the case shall be resolved not on the basis of legal technicalities but on the basis of truth and substantial justice.

Where a party is to be represented by a lawyer, the former shall make sure that said lawyer is a member of the Church (UCCP) or of churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) or the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). Said lawyer shall be advised by the arbitrator/s that the proceedings shall not be considered adversarial, that the dispute or conflict shall be resolved not on the basis of legal technicalities but in light of the fundamental values of truth, justice and love, and that arbitration is intended to resolve the dispute or conflict with finality, for which reason the parties are under the moral and legal obligation to comply with the award or decision.

c. **Amicable settlement during the arbitration.** At any time during the arbitration and before the award or decision is rendered, the parties may decide to settle the case amicably with the assistance of the pastor, Conference minister, bishop, an elder, or a respected leader of the Church. In such a case, the terms and conditions of the settlement shall be embodied in the award or decision which shall be signed by the arbitrator or arbitrators as the case may be.

But no arbitrator shall act as a mediator or as a member of a conciliation committee in any proceedings in which he/she is acting as a mediator. All negotiations toward settlement of the dispute or conflict must take place without the intervention or presence of the arbitrator/s.

The reason for the rule is that involvement in the talks for settlement may effect the arbitrator's impartiality, in the event negotiations for settlement break down. Hence, where it has become apparent that the parties desire to settle their dispute amicably, the arbitrator/s shall immediately inform the pastor, Conference minister, bishop, elder or respected leader of the Church of said development so the latter can assist the parties to reach an amicable settlement.

d. **Oath of arbitrator/s.** Before hearing any testimony, the arbitrator/s shall take the required oath before the Church Council, or Conference Council, or National Council to hear and examine the matters in controversy before them, with utmost fairness and impartiality, and to make a just award or decision according to the best of their ability and understanding.

e. **Stenographic record of testimony.** If feasible, the arbitrator/s shall arrange for the taking of stenographic record of the testimony of witnesses when such a record is requested by one or more parties, and when payment of the cost thereof is assumed by such party or parties. Where not feasible in some areas due to unavailability of a competent, trustworthy stenographer, the record of the testimony may be done in longhand, subscribed to by the person making the testimony and duly attested by the arbitrator/s.

f. **Power to administer oaths and to require attendance and testimony of witnesses.** Arbitrator/s shall have the power to administer the oaths to all witnesses requiring them to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, in any testimony which they may give in any arbitration hearing. This oath shall be required of every witness before any of his testimony is heard.

Arbitrator/s shall have the power to request any person whose testimony may be necessary or helpful to attend a hearing as a witness or to produce at such hearing such document or documents as will shed light on the matters in dispute and, if necessary, testify thereon.

The party or parties, in whose behalf a witness is requested to testify or produce a document and testify thereon, shall exert every effort to see to it that such a witness is present at the hearing. The continuous non-appearance of said witness who is in the Philippines and is not suffering from

any disability to testify, if she/he so desires, but who, despite repeated requests, does not attend the hearing may be construed by the arbitrator/s as an unwillingness to get involved in the dispute or to support the position of the party or parties in whose behalf said person has been requested to testify.

g. **Hearing.** At any time before or at the commencement of the hearing, the arbitrator/s may ask both parties to submit an agreed statement of facts, which shall be in writing and shall contain a concise, itemized summary of the facts admitted by the parties to be true and correct, leaving the presentation of evidence only to such effects that are still in dispute. The parties may be asked to give a brief statement of the issue or issues in controversy.

The arbitrator/s shall ascertain and rule on the relevancy and materiality of the evidence offered or produced by the parties. However, they shall not be bound by the technical rules of evidence but shall make every effort to see to it that the whole truth emerges from the hearing. Evidence that is obviously the product of gossip, rumor-mongering, pure speculation, or mere opinion not based on the facts shall be ruled out, or if admitted, shall not be taken into account in deciding the case.

Arbitrator/s shall receive as exhibits in evidence any document which the parties may wish to submit and the exhibits shall be properly identified at the time of submission, beginning with the Exhibits “A”, “B” and “C” and so forth for the plaintiff or complainant, or Exhibits “1”, “2”, and “3” and so forth for the defendant or respondent, as the case may be.

All exhibits shall be safeguarded by the arbitrator/s, and their photocopying (by xerox machine or any similar copier) may be authorized as soon as possible to make sure that each arbitrator and the Church Secretary, shall have a photocopy, signed on the back thereof by the parties, and the witness who identified or produced the same, indicating the date and the time of their signing or authentication. The originals of the exhibits, once photocopied, may be returned to the parties or to the lawful owners of said documents.

The arbitrator/s may make an ocular inspection of any article, material, machine, site, place or premises in dispute, in the presence of all the parties, unless any party who shall have received notice thereof fails to appear in which event such inspection shall be made in the absence of such party.

h. **Proceeding in lieu of hearing.** The parties to arbitration may, by written agreement, dispense with the oral hearing by submitting an agreed statement of all the essential facts, together with all the documentary evidence and the cause or causes of their disagreement or differences. Notwithstanding said written agreement, the arbitrator/s may decide to call the parties to clarify certain facts or submit evidence on certain points to assist the arbitrator/s in rendering the decision or award. The parties shall submit, within the time that shall be allowed by the arbitrator/s — which shall not be later than 15 days from the date of receipt of the order of the arbitrator/s — their respective memoranda which shall contain their analysis of the facts of their respective arguments, and a closing paragraph setting forth their willingness to abide by the award or decisions of the arbitrator/s with their genuine signature.

Each party shall provide all the other parties to the conflict or dispute a copy of all statements, documents and memoranda of argument submitted to the arbitrator/s. Each party shall have an opportunity to make a written reply to any other’s statements and proofs, but if such party fails to do so within seven (7) days after receipt of said statements, documents and memoranda, he/she shall be deemed to have waived his/her reply. Upon the delivery to the arbitrator/s of all statements and documents, together with the reply statements, if any, copies of which shall be furnished the Church Secretary for filing in the Church records, the arbitrator/s shall declare the proceeding in lieu of hearing closed.

Where only questions of law are involved and there is no disagreement with respect to the facts, the arbitrator/s shall render the award or decision in accordance with the next section. But where the legal questions are difficult, novel, or complicated, the arbitrator/s may with the written consent of the parties, refer the dispute or conflict to the NCDRC for an authoritative and final determination of the whole controversy. From the date the NCDRC receives all the records, statements, documents and memoranda of argument of the parties, the NCDRC deems it necessary to call the parties to a hearing for the purpose of clarifying certain facts or points, in which case the 30-day period shall begin as of the date the case is submitted for award or decision by the parties.

Article 5. Time for rendering award or decision. Except when there is a reference of the controversy to the NCDRC or unless the parties shall have stipulated by written agreement the time within which the arbitrators must render their award or decision, the written award or decision of the arbitrator/s shall be rendered within fifteen (15) days after closing of the hearings, or if the oral hearings shall have been waived, within fifteen (15) days after the arbitrator/s shall have declared such proceedings in lieu of hearing closed.

Article 6. Form and contents of the award or decision. The award must be made in writing, signed and acknowledged by a majority of the arbitrators, if more than one, and by the sole arbitrator, if there is only one. The award or decision must state in clear, concise and definite terms and facts the basis upon which it is based. Each party shall be furnished a copy of the award or decision. The arbitrator/s in the award or decision may grant any remedy or relief which they deem just and equitable and within the scope of the agreement of the parties. In cases arising out of failure to fulfill a contractual obligation, the relief may include the specific performance of the contract.

The disposition may take the form of granting the relief sought by the plaintiff or complainant, in which case it is called an award. Where the disposition is to dismiss the case for lack of merit or for insufficiency of evidence, it is called a decision. But where the disposition is to grant the relief in part and to dismiss the case in part it is called an award and decision.

The arbitrator/s shall have the power to decide only those matters which have been submitted to them. The terms of the award or decision shall, as a general rule, be confined to such matters.

The arbitrator/s shall have the power to assess in their award or decision the expenses of any party against another party, when such assessment shall be deemed necessary.

Article 7. Fees of arbitration. Arbitrator/s render their services as part of their religious obligation and as a form of witness to the outside world. There shall be no fees paid to them. The only exception is in unusually long or difficult cases, where the parties agree to such fees, the arbitrator/s make no objection and said agreement is approved by the Church council, as the case may be.

Article 8. Finality of the award or decision. As a general rule, the award or decision of the arbitrator/s after the lapse of fifteen (15) days from the receipt of the award or decision, is final and unappealable. The only exception under the canons of Church discipline is where the award or decision was procured by corruption, fraud, intimidation or duress.

The arbitrator/s may, however, issue an order modifying or correcting the award or decision, within forty eight (48) hours after receipt of the same, upon the application of any party to the conflict or dispute which had been arbitrated and with due notice to all the parties to the conflict or dispute so they may have the opportunity to file their objection, if any. Such modification or correction may be granted only in three (3) cases namely: (1) where there is a typographical or clerical error which materially affects the rights of said party; or (2) where there is an evident

mistake in the computation of figures which prejudices in a substantial way the rights of said party; or (3) where there is an unintentional mistake in the description of any person, thing or property referred to in the award or decision. In such a case, the period of 15 days shall be counted from the date of receipt of the modification or correction of the award or decision.

Article 9. Compliance with the award or decision. At any time within fifteen (15) days after the award or decision has become final, the losing party shall comply with the award or decision in accordance with his/her formal commitment. Where it is necessary to grant him/her more time for good and sufficient reason, the arbitrator/s may, in their discretion, allow him an extension of fifteen (15) days, or thirty (30) days all in all, to comply with the award or decision. Where after the lapse of said period, the losing party has not shown any desire to comply with the award or decision, and despite reminders by the arbitrator/s and the Church Council the winning party may apply to the appropriate regional trial court having jurisdiction, for an order confirming the award of decision, copy furnished the other party or parties, in accordance with the Arbitration Law (RA876), with the power to enforce the same on the basis of the manifestation and agreement of the parties. In addition, the winning party and/or the Church may avail of the remedies available under the UCCP By-Laws so that the appropriate disciplinary measure may be meted out to the losing party who has not shown any desire to comply with the award or decision.

Apostles' Creed*

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the God
and He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints:
the forgiveness of sins:
the Resurrection of the body:
and the life everlasting.
Amen.*

**From the New Century Hymnal, United Church of Christ in the United States of America,
The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1995.*

Nicene Creed*

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God; eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

What is the Magna Carta All About?

In a Nutshell:

A CODIFICATION OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES ELABORATING AND/OR STRENGTHENING STANDING PROVISIONS OF THE UCCP CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS PERTINENT TO THE MINISTRY OF CHURCHWORKERS

The Term Explained, Its Usage and Relevance:

The term Magna Carta (Great Charter) after its confrontational beginnings at Runnymede, England between a tyrannical king and his libertarian subjects in the early 13th century of the previous millennium, has been popularized by peoples throughout the world. Subsequent "great charters" have contributed to the evolutionary development of contemporary universal human rights concepts. These include the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (*L'Droits d'Homme*) and the Second Amendment to the American Constitution better known as the Bill of Rights. Despite or perhaps due to its limited context and concepts, the English Magna Carta had become the catchword for any codification of specific sectoral rights and privileges. The original Magna Carta also defines how a king may govern and therefore contains procedural rules and duties. Various groups have used the term Magna Carta to enumerate members' rights, duties and conduct. We have the Magna Carta for Teachers in the Philippines (Ganzon Law in the 1960s). There was in the House of Representatives an archived bill (Lagman) called the Magna Carta for Students Rights and Welfare intended to improve on and supplant the Education Act of 1980.

Numerous groups have, in one way or another, adopted their own "magna carta", if at the very least, to call attention to themselves as distinct entities. The Roman Catholic Church has its Canon Law for members of the priesthood as distinct from ecclesial laws governing the laity. The greatness of a certain charter is as far as those under it or those who subscribe to it are willing to go and achieve. Greatness might neither be a fact nor a given. It is, however, a noble aspiration and intention and not evil *per se*. We church workers are embarking on an immeasurably great ministry.

The original Great Charter (*Magna Carta is Latin because that was the official royal court language even in England*) was, indeed, the result of a confrontation. Most of our modern human rights are results of confrontations and upheavals. Confrontation, however, is not, again, an evil word. It is a fact of life. It is synonymous to contradiction. Change happens because of contradictions. It may or may not be violent. Having our own Magna Carta for Church workers is not necessarily a confrontation between the clergy and the laity. It is not for the purpose of showing the distinctive superiority of the clergy over the laity. After all, what is clergy but laypersons who were set apart yet never estranged from the lay? The term laity actually means people (of God) and the clergy are part of that peoplehood. The ordained are set apart because they have functions specific to them. To perform specific functions entails corresponding knowledge, skills, attitudes and orientations. If one is not going to the ordained or clergy status, he/she does not need those aforementioned. The laity, of course, has its own specificity. Again the distinction is not meant for negative confrontation between members of the one body. There will remain a confrontational dimension. In this dimension, we prefer the phrase *creative*

tension. There is always tension between encountering forces. The tension between the clergy and the laity should be characterized by creativity in doing the ministry.

As church workers, we are always in confrontation with the realities of our times. To have our identity enfolded in a Magna Carta is to define who we are in the course of ministerial engagement. As priests we are intercessors. While Christ is the ultimate intercessor between God and humanity, our intercession takes on the essence of advocacy. We are advocates of the people's issues and concerns and connect with them as they confront daily threats to existence. As prophets in the Old Testament tradition we confront the powers that arrogate upon themselves the power that belongs only to God. As preachers, we proclaim the Good News of God's Reign over the bad news of pretender rulers. As pastors, we do not only lead the flock to green pastures but are ready and able to defend them with rod and staff against predators positioned in dangerous highways and byways. In other words, we are able to confront because our identities, duties and responsibilities tell us so and compel us to duly equip ourselves for the task.

INTRODUCTION

After a lengthy and tedious but rewarding process, this document is now being presented for the direct benefit of our church workers with the fervent hope that such benefit for one sector may redound to the general welfare of the entire flock of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. The discussions within and comments sent by our conferences and various individual and collective entities have invaluable enhanced this Magna Carta for Church workers. Those comments and discussions show a dynamic and committed constituency. Several historical documents such as the previous Clergy Manual, the Manual for Ordination, copies of present and previous Constitutions and By-laws, the Statement of Faith and the Vision, Mission and Goals of the Church/Strategic Plan served as maps to guide us during the drafting journey. These documents provided us with references to the historical and historic development of the Church in general and of our church workers in particular. In their context, these past documents addressed concerns. Many of their formulations are still valid and legitimate except that some have been overtaken and superseded by polity changes, *i. e.*, Constitutional amendments. Today, at least for our time, given our limitations and smallness, we write our Magna Carta. Like all charters, these Magna Carta is not meant to be everlasting; it is not meant to stand the test of time but the test of relevance. In all likelihood, succeeding generations will come up with their own, either as a continuation, an enrichment or a replacement of what we have today. In the meantime, let us face the day's challenges.

A Companion Book

This is a companion book for all who intend to see the faith journey of church workers from the time the call to the ministry was discerned and processed during the preparatory stage of recruitment and ministerial formation to formal entry (licensing and ordination), actual assignment and performance of tasks (pastoral, pedagogical, *etc.*) up to retirement.

As they journey along, curious readers as well as the church workers (being readers of this document themselves) would be able to see the paths where they should continue to tread, the obstacles they need to hurdle (*better yet, challenges they have to overcome*), the tempting sidetrips they have to avoid and the material, spiritual and moral rests and pitstops (*benefits and incentives*) they may enjoy in an exciting albeit perilous journey.

For those who are not church workers, this provides them with a picture of what the journey would be if they themselves feel the call to join and embark on the formal ministerial journey. For those who wish to remain in their own journey as laypeople but who want more opportunities for the ministry, this is also a travelogue for unordained workers including lay preachers.

ARTICLE I

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

The ministry of the Church shall be take into consideration the following:

1. The Church is called and sent to serve the people of God. Our service or ministry is premised on our faithfulness and obedience as disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. All Christians therefore are ministers of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).
2. The ministry of the Church is a multi-faceted, multi-tasked endeavor. To do the mission entrusted to us means that we have to address holistic concerns of humanity and creation (John 10:10). The Church cannot afford the dichotomy of spiritual and material, sacred and secular, heavenly and worldly and must strive to look at the totality of such mission.
3. The ability to address such multiple concerns from following our call to minister relies heavily on the appreciation and practice of our gifts or talents (I Corinthians 12:1-11). We also call these gifts knowledge, skills, attitudes and orientation.
4. Having appreciated these gifts, a number would be set apart or consecrated to devote their lives wholly to the ministry as primary vocation. Others will remain in the daily secular struggle for sustenance but will find time to participate in the ministry (I Corinthians 12:28-30). Hence clergy and laity. This Magna Carta shall focus on those who are ordained/set apart or consecrated to the whole time and whole life ministry of the Church. The dynamics of lay ministry shall be tackled in a separate but similar document.
5. Being set apart and consecrated does not mean estrangement or alienation from the laity. In fact, such rites signal our full integration with the whole community of faith or people of God and immersion in their life-death-resurrection struggles. The set apart and the consecrated shall then harness their gifts to the fullest as they embark on their integrative service to the community of faith. Despite the many functions, we are still one Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-26).
6. Harnessing these gifts to the maximum entails recognition of potentials, sharpening these potentials through step-by-step formation and training from the education and nurture programs of the Local Church, preparatory apprenticeship, formal ministerial formation, and further/continuing education to testing in ministerial practice the theories learned.
7. Equipped with sharpened gifts, the church worker shall then strive to commit himself/herself to a full time ministry. As a general principle, the ministry is full-time because the Christian faith is a whole-time affair. Full- or part-time service pertains to the amount of working time contributed by the Church Worker to the whole ministry of the Church depending on his/her circumstances and availability.
8. The computation of service time is primarily on the framework of *kairos* (fullness or quality of time) more than on *chronos* (chronological time). The number of hours spent by the church worker should equally be measured qualitatively according to the demands of the programs and services rendered by the church. It is the duty of the church worker, by way of reminder, to inspire the church for more quantitative and qualitative ministry through expanding program areas and concerns. He/she should not lie contented on what is presently done by the church by way of activities. While he/she does not think of

programs for the church, he/she should enable the church leaders and members to venture into more dynamic and substantial ventures for the ministry. In other words, both the church worker and the church should feel bound to a fulltime ministry.

9. In terms of chronological time, a full-time church worker is expected to work in her/his pastoral assignment at least 5 days a week, and takes her/his pastoral assignment as primary vocation. Since all Christians are called to ministry, this is in the same sense as any other person engaged in secular professions observing standard number of days and hours in their work. The ability to work to the best of one's abilities for substantial working hours is based upon one's understanding of his/her work as vocation or calling.
10. While the church worker must not make as her/his primary concern financial and material gain, the Church shall exert all efforts to devise more substantive salary standardization and benefits schemes in order to realize full-time service for all church workers. Notwithstanding the financial remuneration and job description, church workers are expected to serve. This service shall not, however, mean being treated as employees of the church in the secular sense but as servant-leaders, called by God and sent by the Conference to be managers and executive officers of the Church.
11. Engagement in other professions outside the ministry, if unavoidable, shall be premised on "the tent-making of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila," that is, enabling and supporting quality ministry. Church workers engaged full-time in a secular profession to the detriment of the quality of her/his ministerial working time shall be advised by his/her Conference to consider channeling her/his energies and efforts instead to the ministry of the laity including but not necessarily up to giving up his/her ordination or commission. The Church may explore and study possibilities for contextualizing, setting directions and programming secular professional engagement in apostolates for its church workers (*cf. Roman Catholic Jesuit and other models where priests are encouraged and supported in education for secular disciplines, e.g., priest-lawyers, priest-physicians, priest-engineers, inter alia*). The bottom-line, however, for these possibilities remains to be effective and holistic ministry.
12. Church workers reach the culmination of their ministry. They either retire or die. In any of these stages, the Church shall ensure that such Church workers receive their just due in terms of benefits and through other support systems as a way of showing respect and appreciation to those who had been faithful servants.

ARTICLE II

THE CALL TO AND PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY

Section 1. Recruitment for the Ministry of the Church

In her journey as People of God, the Church has always expected her workers to have a strong sense of calling as manifested in their active participation in the life-work of the local church. This calling is nurtured by deep communion with God and varying experiences, exposures and training that enhance their capabilities to steadfastly express their personal commitment through intellectual, ethical, physical, emotional and spiritual gifts necessary for the work of the ministry of the Church and for the proclamation and living out, through faith in Jesus Christ, the sovereignty and life-giving presence of God in the world.

The Holy Spirit bestows on faith communities diverse and complementary gifts and members of these communities are called to discover, develop and employ these gifts for the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4) as she helps enable the world to know and experience the Creator's gift of life in its fullness (John 10:10).

The Church therefore needs women and men who would commit themselves to be enablers of faith communities so they would be "salt of the earth" and "light of the world," (Matt 5:13-16). Enlistment into the ministry is indeed a committed response to the act of God in Jesus Christ in calling and choosing, through the Holy Spirit and the faith communities, women and men to be church workers (John 15:11-17).

The experiences of the UCCP in her over half a century of life, mission and ministry have made her more aware of the great and urgent need to be more intentional and systematic in the preparation, nurture and development of church workers for the different ministries of the Church. The ministry is at the heart of the implementation of the mandate of the Church to have disciples of Jesus in the entire world (Matt. 28) and bring a new beginning and new life for all humankind and creation (John 10/ 2 Cor. 5/ Luke 4/ Rom. 8). The implementation of the mandate of the Church through committed, adequately equipped church workers who would help enable faith communities for witness in the world goes through a continuing journey from recruitment to retirement and beyond.

Section 2. The Recruitment Process

- a. As the primary locus of mission, the local church "recruits, recommends, and supports candidates for its varied forms of ministry" (Constitution, Art. V, sec. 4.e.). The local church therefore, through the Church Council, the Board of Christian Educators and the Church-Recognized Organizations, is responsible for recruiting prospective candidates in preparation for the ministry. When done seriously, sincerely and systematically, the recruitment process may come to prospective candidates for the ministry as the divine "call" they have been wanting to hear to confirm their desire to enter into full-time ministry of the Church.

The recruitment process starts in consciously scouting for candidates especially from the ranks of the youth. The ability to recruit and the availability of recruits is greatly enhanced by how the Christian education and nurture program of the church has prepared and formed members from childhood. Recruitment is further effected by and with close coordination with parents who help enhance the identified gifts and talents of their children who are prospective recruits for the ministry of the church. The recruitment process intentionally emphasizes gender equality and gender justice. This gender emphasis will remain a non-negotiable feature in the recruitment of candidates for the ministry, in ministerial formation and in the ministry of the UCCP.

- b. Prospective candidates for ministerial preparation are endorsed by the Board of Christian Educators to the Local Church through the Church Council.
- c. The Local Church, through the Church Council, recommends and endorses the candidates to the Conference Ministerial Formation Committee which reviews all the requirements; 1) academic records, 2) church endorsements, 3) pledges of support, 4)

- physical examination, 5) essay on the candidates' journey of faith and why she/he desires to prepare for the ministry.
- d. The Conference Ministerial Formation Committee interviews and screens the candidates. The screening includes having the candidates undergo psychological testing. Those who meet the requirements are recommended by the Conference Ministerial Formation Committee to the Conference Council for approval as ministerial formation students and confirmed by the Conference in its annual session.
 - e. The approved apprentices shall then proceed to the one-year Apprenticeship Program.

Section 3. The Apprenticeship Program

The one year Apprenticeship Program aims to offer venues to help the church discover the potentials of those who desire to go into ministerial formation for the ministry of the Church. The program will be conducted in Local Churches designated for the purpose. The apprenticeship centers are expected to provide the apprentices' exposures to and experiences of a dynamic and holistic ministry. The program intentionally aims to have the apprentices experience varying situations in their exposure, including exposures to tensions and conflicts that crop up in the local churches and in the different ministries of the Church as people endeavor to journey and witness together to the life-giving presence and transforming love of Jesus Christ.

- a. Objectives of the Program
 - a. Expose the apprentices to the different aspects and faces of the ministry of the Church.
 - b. Guide the apprentices in developing appreciation and understanding of the various aspects and faces of the Church's ministry and their roles in these ministries.
 - c. Prepare and assess the apprentices as regards their gifts, capabilities and potentials for growth and maturity in relation to the ministry of the Church.
- b. Responsibilities of the Apprenticeship Centers
 - a) Provide the apprentices a wide variety of support systems available in the host local church and in the different ministries of the Church.
 - b) Organize Sponsor Families that will host the apprentices.
 - c) Encourage, inspire and support the apprentices in developing
 - a) A steadfast faith in Jesus Christ and a holistic understanding of the ministry of the Church.
 - b) A regular devotional life and study time.
 - c) Lively reading habits and interest in a wide variety of subjects
 - d) Respect for cultural heritage
 - e) Gender sensitivity and gender justice
 - f) A sense of dignity of own personhood and of others
 - g) A capacity for listening and empathizing
 - h) Compassion for the suffering and the needy
 - i) Healthy and wholesome relationships
 - j) Stewardship of time, talents and resources

- k) Care for the environment
- l) A simple, humble, selfless and courageous lifestyle
- m) Emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual fitness for the life and work of the Church
- n) A recognition of personal weaknesses and strengths and potentials for change
- o) The ability and humility to recognize and admit errors, prejudices and biases

The ability to accept praise and recognition humbly and gratefully

Section 4. Support Groups and Mechanisms for the Apprenticeship Program

- a. An Apprenticeship Committee is formed to monitor, offer guidance and counsel and other forms of support and encouragement for the apprentice in close coordination with the host Local Church.
- b. The Apprenticeship Committee shall be composed of the following:
 - a) The Pastor of the Host Local Church
 - b) A Church Worker serving in the specific ministry of the intended apprenticeship
 - c) Representative of the Board of Christian Educators of the host Local Church
 - d) Representative of the Board of Elders of the Host Local Church
- c. The apprentice is presented by the Chair of the Conference Ministerial Formation and the Conference Minister to the Local Church where she/he is to be assigned.
- d. The Conference Ministerial Formation Committee and the Host Local Church of the apprentice shall ensure adequate provisions for apprenticeship and for ministerial preparation, which may include the following:
 - a) Personal contributions from the apprentice and/or his/her family
 - b) Home Church of the apprentice
 - c) Apprenticeship Center
 - d) Churches within the circuit/parish/district cluster of the apprentice
 - e) Conference
 - f) General Assembly
 - g) Donations
- e. The Apprenticeship Committee, together with the apprentice, plans and designs the apprenticeship program.
- f. The Apprenticeship Committee schedules periodic meetings with the apprentice. In the meetings the apprentice submits a progress report.
- g. Special meetings may be held upon request by the Apprenticeship Center and the apprentice.

Section 5. Apprenticeship Evaluation and Certification Procedures

- a. After thorough evaluation of the apprentice at the end of the apprenticeship year, the Apprenticeship Committee recommends to the Conference Ministerial Formation Committee any of the following;
 - a) Approval for ministerial formation
 - b) Extension of apprenticeship
 - c) Disapproval or deferment of candidacy
- b. The approved apprentice is endorsed by the Conference Ministerial Formation Committee to the Conference during its annual session.
- c. The Conference certifies the approved apprentice as ministerial student and endorses her/him to a Ministerial Formation Center.

ARTICLE III

FORMATION FOR THE MINISTRY

Section 1. Ministerial Formation

Ministerial formation is the preparation of members of faith communities who will become church workers, assume leadership and responsibilities in these communities and commit themselves to full-time work in enabling and nurturing, encouraging and empowering faith communities to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed and witness to God's life-giving presence in the world in Jesus Christ. For those who enter into the process of ministerial formation, their Local Churches and Conferences are always reminded that those who go through ministerial formation are church workers of the whole United Church of Christ in the Philippines and should be ready to be assigned where their talents, gifts and capabilities are urgently needed.

To perform their roles effectively and faithfully church workers need confidence and competence in doing their responsibilities as interpreters of the faith for faith communities and the larger world. The Christian heritage must then be taught in such a way that it becomes accessible to those engaged in ministerial formation as resource for discerning and discovering God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ for the "building up of the Body of Christ" and equipping her for dynamic and effective witness and service in the world.

Equal emphasis is given to the fact that truths of the Christian heritage can also be discovered in people's cultures and experiences. These, too, are basic components of ministerial formation.

Section 2. The Ministerial Formation Centers

The Ministerial Formation Centers aim to offer a most conducive, dynamic, helpful, friendly and gender-just atmosphere possible for the preparation and development of candidates for the ministry of the Church into learned and educated, effective and efficient, competent and committed church workers. The Ministerial Formation Centers should encourage and enhance community life among the candidates so that they continue to be attuned to the presence and

work of the Holy Spirit in their own lives and in their community and to be empowered to live and serve in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

The Church has recognized and accredited ministerial formation centers wherein students shall enroll for their basic formation depending on their proximity and/or degree program. The list of accredited ministerial formation centers may be requested from the Theological Education Board through the Office of the General Secretary. Likewise, Conferences shall be furnished an updated list. The possibility of cross-enrollment shall be left to the discretion of the Church and the ministerial formation centers. Allowing students to enroll abroad or in non-accredited institutions is a matter of study and discretion by the Church. As a matter of policy, no student shall be allowed on pain of rescission of approval of studies with future consequences on ministerial status, to choose what ministerial formation center to enroll in on his/her own.

Section 3. Entrance into the Ministerial Formation Centers

- a. A ministerial student who has completed 2 years of college will be recommended for bachelor level degrees in the Ministerial Formation Centers in the areas of Theology, Christian Education, Kindergarten Education or Early Childhood Education major, Church/Sacred Music.
- b. A ministerial student with a college degree will be recommended for graduate level courses in the Ministerial Formation Centers (Master of Divinity, Master of Christian Education, Master of Sacred Music)
- c. Documents required for enrollment at the Ministerial Formation Centers:
 - a. Essay on why the student wants to be a church worker.
 - a. Endorsements from the candidate's Local Church and Conference
 - a. Transcript of Records
 - a. Medical examination results
 - a. Psychological testing results
 - a. Pledges/schemes of financial support
 - a. Certification by the Ministerial Formation Committee

Section 4. Role of the General Assembly in Ministerial Formation

Through the Theological Education Board, acting under the direction of the Council of Bishops, the General Assembly shall

- a. Provide mechanisms for assessing and evaluating the work of Ministerial Formation Centers, curriculum review, faculty development and relationship with the Local Churches and Conferences.
- b. Grant scholarships to ministerial candidates to supplement financial contributions from the candidates' family, Local Church, Conference and Jurisdiction.
- c. Facilitate exchange of personnel, students and common use of resources among the Ministerial Formation Centers to bring about the quality of ministerial preparation required by the Church.

- d. Facilitate, in coordination with the Internship Directors of the Ministerial Formation Centers, their internship programs, field exposures and summer programs.
- e. Design, implement, monitor and evaluate continuing education for Church Workers.

Section 5. The Role of the Conference in Ministerial Formation

Through the conference Ministerial Formation Committee, the Conference shall

- a. Design and implement mechanisms to guarantee adequate financial support for ministerial students.
- b. Promote and supervise formation of students for the ministry of the Church
- c. Set up mechanisms for regular communication and consultation with the Ministerial Formation Centers for continuing counsel and care for ministerial students.
- d. In consultation with the Office of the Clergy, provide guidance and supervision for students in internship, field exposure and summer programs.

Section 6. Field Education in Ministerial Formation

- a. Field Education is an integral process of theological education. Through this program ministerial students are enabled to put into practice the theories and principles learned in the classroom setting. This educational process also helps students develop a growing capacity to engage in critical thinking, disciplined reflection and continuing exploration in the many aspects of the ministry.
- b. Field education emphasizes that the ability of church workers to engage in ministry can be greatly enhanced by engaging in ministry itself and attempting at all times to improve the quality of that involvement.

In sum, Field Education is an integrative factor in ministerial preparation where students bring their classroom knowledge and theories into the field and their experiences from the field into their classroom discussions and reflections. In the process, the students grow in their capability to articulate and verbalize their learning while they also grow in their ability to undertake more demanding tasks in the field.

- c. Included in the ministerial formation program are the following phases of Field Education:
 - 1. Concurrent Field Education is done by the student while on campus. It is a week-end assignment that takes place within the three (3) years of the student's residence in the Ministerial Formation Center. Venues for Concurrent Field Education are Local Churches and Church-Related/Owned Institutions and special Church-based projects in areas close to the Ministerial Formation Centers.
 - 2. Summer Field Education is done in 2 summers, each lasting for six (6) weeks. Areas of Summer Field Education shall include any of these ministries of the UCCP; rural life, urban-industrial, campus, clinical pastoral education, ecumenical and community.
 - 3. Internship shall be done by assigning students before their senior year (or post-senior, on a case-to-case basis) to a pastoral charge or ministerial position for two (2)

semesters within one (1) ecclesial year. Wherever they may be assigned, the final decision for such shall rest with the Settlement Committee of the Conference where the intern belongs.

Internship serves to test in practice the theories, knowledge and skills learned in the classroom and also as time-off for introspection and reexamination of one's vocational path.

Students who have, at least, five years of experience as a licentiate may have the privilege of exemption.

- d. Each Ministerial Formation Center shall have a Field Education Director who shall coordinate the implementation and supervision of the Field Education Direction program of the school and together with the students design a program for reflections and assessment of their summer work in their respective areas of exposure.
- e. The Conference Ministerial Formation Committee acting as the Field Education Committee together with Conference Minister, in coordination with the Ministerial Formation Center Field Education Director, designates a Local Church as Exposure Center that will host regular reflections of Field Education students facilitated by the Exposure Center Coordinator, an ordained Church Worker with a master's level Ministerial Formation Center degree and with at least 5 years' experience as Church Worker.
- f. Concurrent Field Education students meet monthly with the Exposure Center Coordinator. Shared reflections will be the subject of further discussions in the Ministerial Formation Centers with the Field Education Director.
- g. Interns shall meet quarterly with their Field Education Director for reflection, assessment and supplemental seminars. It is advisable and strongly suggested that the Conference assign a mentor-counselor from among the nearest and accessible ordained or diaconal ministers to care for the intern.

Section 7. Over-all Supervision of the Field Education Programs

- a. The over-all supervision of the Field Education Programs is coordinated by the UCCP Office of the Clergy.

Section 8. Summer Field Education Program Process

- a. Interview of students by the Ministerial Formation Center Field Education Director
- b. Communication by the Field Education Director of the MFC to the Office of the Clergy, UCCP National Office and to the Conference where such students belong, on students going into summer exposure; Exposure Centers are furnished copies of the letter
- c. Summer exposure students are informed of the orientation programs and actual schedules arranged by the Exposure Centers for summer exposure students
- d. As far as practicable, exposurees must be given time to attend their Conference Annual Sessions, ministerial students having been classified as voting members of the CAS with usual standing policies that they should be present before any action is taken on their behalf; such attendance in CAS shall be counted as part of the exposure proper

- e. Daily logbook of participants include recording of experiences/activities and theological reflections
- f. Periodic visits to students by Ministerial Formation Center Field Education Director
- g. Report-Writing by participants at the close of the exposure program with copies furnished to the Ministerial Formation Center Field Education Director, Exposure Center Coordinator, and the Office of the Ministry, UCCP
- h. Evaluation and group reflection of the summer exposure participants with the Field Education Directors of the Ministerial Formation Centers and Exposure Center Coordinators facilitated by the Office of the Ministry, UCCP

ARTICLE IV

WORKERS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Church Workers of the UCCP shall be classified as:

Section 1. Ordained Ministers

1. Ordained Ministers are those who have been called and set apart for the Ministry of the Word, Sacraments, Liturgy, and Pastoral Care and Leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ. Their talents, gifts and capabilities are seen to mirror the grace of God in Jesus and their contributions to the ministry are recognized and affirmed by the faith communities, as they respond to God's call by offering themselves in leadership as Ordained Ministers. The covenant of the Ordained Ministry is a full-time and lifetime commitment, and those who enter into that covenant dedicate whole life to the disciplines and lifestyle the covenant requires.
 1. The Ministry of the Word includes proclamation, preaching and teaching. By this the ordained minister not only does the proclamation, preaching and teaching but also inspires others by his/her leadership to participate and take active and significant roles in this line of the ministry. He/she should be sufficiently trained, promptly prepared, eloquent in his/her delivery and able to gauge the impact of his/her preaching and teaching on the congregational life and individual lives of members.
 2. The Ministry of the Sacraments includes administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and through these acts, the ordained minister helps enable the church to internalize the meaning of unity, community and solidarity and to strive in order that these sacraments may be concretized and realized in the daily life of the community of faith and beyond it. He/she should have thorough biblical, theological and ethical understanding of the sacraments in their meaning and application.
 3. The Ministry of Liturgy includes leadership in the acts and rites of public worship and other liturgical activities including the solemnization of marriages. Through this ministry, the ordained minister is able to mirror the everyday experiences of the community of faith through the liturgical movements, themes, symbols and rites and that these become actual synthesis, culmination of daily existence and signal to

commence a new week or day of mission and ministry possibilities. He/she should exercise creativity and resourcefulness in the preparation of the worship.

4. The Ministry of Pastoral Care and Leadership means the over-all shepherding and administration/management of the congregation. Shepherding includes spiritual nurture, empowerment, care and protection of the flock. The ordained minister while finding it useful that he/she is trained in the aspects of church administration and management should bear in mind that this pastoral leadership is primarily biblical, theological and ethical in its premise as distinguished from secular professional management. This means that whenever discussing a certain program or activity, he/she should be able to provide the biblico-theological and ethical perspectives rather than be unnecessarily drawn towards the whole gamut and details of the action. For example, the pastor's working knowledge of finances and fundraising does not mean that he/she will do the actual accounting, bookkeeping and solicitation. His/her understanding of variances in the financial standing is meant to prompt him/her to exhort the people towards their proper stewardship roles.
1. The ordained minister shall be accorded the title Reverend.

c. Qualifications for Ordination

To qualify for ordination, one must:

1. Be a graduate of a formal ministerial formation program in any of the approved ministerial formation centers of the church and have previously obtained at least two consecutive years of full-time satisfactory pastoral work as a licentiate in a Local Church and/or Church Institutions. *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 2a, page 24)*
2. Specific formal theological education programs for the ordained ministry shall be, based on the present offerings of accredited ministerial formation centers, as follows:
 - i. Master of Divinity
 - ii. Bachelor of Theology
- I.** If a graduate of a four-year theological program of other theological institution, not otherwise accredited by the UCCP, (i) undergo probationary pastoral work for two (2) years under supervision of a UCCP pastor in a Local Church, (ii) submit himself/herself to a required orientation course under the direction of the Conference Examination Committee in coordination with the Office of the Clergy, (iii) affirm his/her acceptance of, and adherence to, the Constitution, By Laws and statutes of the Church, and iv) have previously obtained at least two (2) consecutive years of full-time probationary work as a licentiate in a Local Church and/or Church Institutions. *(By-Laws Article II, Section 2b, page 24)*
- II.** Be certified through the examination process established by the Church as to his/her maturity, satisfactory preparation, growth in knowledge, experience and commitment to the ministry and mission of the Church. *(By-Laws Article II, Section 2c, page 25)*

III. Candidates for ordination shall not be less than 21.

d. The Ordination Process. The ordination to the ministry of men and women called for this purpose shall be standardized for the entire UCCP, as follows:

1. The Local Church, in which the candidate ministers, recommends the ordination of the candidate to the Conference through a resolution of the Church Council;
2. The Conference Examination Committee receives the resolution of the sponsoring Local Church and requires the candidate to undergo the following:
 - a) psychological test prepared by the Office of the Clergy,
 - b) practical examination which shall include inquiry into the lifestyle, his/her standing among peers and in the community, as well as his/her performance as a Local Church Worker, and
 - c) theoretical review and examination conducted in an accredited ordination review center, the results of which include the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate, and
3. Based on the results of the tests and examinations, the Conference in Session upon the recommendation of the Examination Committee, shall then decide whether or not the ordination of the candidate shall be approved, deferred, or denied. In the case of deferment or denial, the candidate shall be apprised of his/her weaknesses and deficiencies with the view of helping him/her overcome these within two (2) years.
4. The Bishop assigned to the Jurisdictional Area or his/her duly authorized representative, also a Bishop, shall preside over the ordination. (By-Laws, Article II, Section 3a-d, page 25)

e. Prescribed Vestments and Symbols during the Ordination Rites

The primary vestments of ordination shall be the ministerial gown, clerical collar and the stole. Symbols may include the anointing oil, the shepherd's staff and others which the ordinand feels significant to the occasion. It shall be required that the ordinand be given a copy each of the Holy Bible, the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws and the Magna Carta for Church Workers to remind him/her of the faith and order foundations upon which he/she engages in ministry. The Bishop shall issue the Certificate of Ordination to the ordinand at the close of the rites.

f. The liturgical rites of Ordination shall take place during the Conference Annual Session.

g. The Ordinand's Vow

I, <name>, do solemnly promise to be faithful to my calling as a minister of Christ set apart to serve the people. I will, at all times, obey and adhere to the heritage of faith and order of the Church as embodied in the Holy Scriptures, in its creeds and ethical teachings, in the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes. I shall dedicate myself to my tasks even beyond the call of duty and consider my efforts as gain enough. I shall remind myself that I lead as a servant and serve as a leader. As God is my witness, so let me remain steadfast as I pronounce this vow. Amen.

Signature _____ Date of Ordination _____

Section 2. Consecrated Workers

There shall be formally trained church workers who shall be consecrated by the Church to serve in specific lines of ministry.

a. Diaconal Ministers

1. Diaconal Ministers are those who are called and consecrated to serve in specific lines of ministry such as Christian Education, Church Music, Counseling, Chaplaincy, Early Childhood Education, Youth and Campus Ministry and some Practical Theological areas in Ministerial Formation such as Christian Educational Ministry, Church Music and Research.
2. Specific formal ministerial formation programs for the diaconal ministry shall be, based on the present offerings of accredited ministerial formation centers, as follows in the areas of Religious/Christian Education, Church/Sacred Music, Early Childhood Education/Kindergarten Education and Special Studies in Clinical Pastoral Education or Chaplaincy in addition to baccalaureate degree.
3. Candidates for consecration to the diaconal ministry shall not be less than 21.
4. The consecration process shall be the same as that of ordination except that all examinations in their specific lines of ministry shall be administered by the Conference Examination Committee until such time that the Church is able to come up with a similar review and examination process.
5. The liturgical rites of consecration shall take place during the Conference Annual Session.
6. Diaconal Ministers may seek ordination provided that they shall have undergone additional studies in whatever they lack in terms of academic preparation as per scrutiny of the Examination Committee.
7. The primary vestment of consecration shall be the *orarion** (*see glossary*). The anointing oil, towel and basin (*cf. John 13; Jesus washing the feet of the disciples*) may be used as symbols. It shall be required that the consecrated worker be given a copy each of the Holy Bible, the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws and the Magna Carta for Church Workers to remind him/her of the faith and order foundations upon which he/she engages in ministry.
8. The diaconal minister is both a title and an office and may be abbreviated in correspondence as DM. When referring to the office, the specific line of ministry may be appended (DM for Christian Education, DM for Sacred Music, DM for Early Childhood Education, etc.). Those who were classified as Christian Education Workers, Bible Women, Director of Church Music, etc. prior to this Magna Carta shall continue with their job descriptions and may now use the new title of diaconal minister.
9. The Diaconal Minister's Vow

The vow of consecration shall be the same as that of the ordinand (Section 1, g above) except that in lieu of "*set apart*", the term shall be "*consecrated*".

b. Licentiatees

1. Licentiatees are those who are called and licensed to serve in the pastoral ministry but who still lack the full qualifications for the ordained ministry. This clarifies that the licentiate is a transitional status and a step towards ordination.
2. Licentiatees are assigned to definite locations within the Conference area and may be permitted to administer the Sacraments.
3. To qualify for a Licentiate, one must have undergone two (2) years of theological training proper in an approved ministerial formation center or other pastoral formation programs of the UCCP.
4. The licensing process shall be the same as that of ordination except that all examinations shall be administered by the Conference Examination Committee until such time that the Church is able to come up with a similar review and examination process.
5. Renewal of authority to administer sacraments shall be on an annual basis after submission to the Conference through the Examination Committee of requirements (letter of renewed intent, endorsement by the church council with attached performance evaluation result [*instrument to be designed by the Office of the Clergy*], biblico-theological reflection on ministerial experience and new plans/perspectives for continuing ministry).

In instances when there arise problems and controversies, except of judicial or disciplinary nature, the Examination Committee shall first summon the licentiate and such other parties as may be involved, for a clarificatory interview before granting renewal.

6. The licensing rites shall take place during the closing liturgy of the Conference Annual Session.
7. Except for the anointing oil and the Holy Bible, no other symbol may be used during the licensing rites. He/she shall, however, be reminded of his/her faithfulness to the statutes of the Church. In the performance of his/her duties during liturgical services, he/she shall wear the stole.
8. The licentiate who has not finished formal ministerial formation may qualify either for the ordained or the diaconal ministry provided he/she has had five (5) satisfactory, consecutive full-time service in a local church, undergone additional, substantial and trainings/seminars/institutes accredited by the Church in addition to all the other requirements.
9. The licentiate shall have the title Conference Licentiate which may be abbreviated in correspondence as CL. He/she may also be called pastor by virtue of his/her office in the pastoral charge.

Section 3. Ministerial Students

- a. Ministerial Students are those who are undergoing formation and training for the ministry of the church. They are voting members of the Conference Annual Session as provided for in the UCCP Constitution (*Article VI - The Conference, Section 2e, page 10*). Their ministerial service starts from the moment they are recognized by the Conference as such and subsequent enrollment in the Ministerial Formation Centers.

b. Rights and Privileges

They shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges made available by the Church while undergoing preparation and education for the ministry, as follows:

1. to participate in Annual Sessions and other activities of the Conference
2. to avail of scholarship grants and other assistance as provided or facilitated by the Church during their studies
3. to have a mentor-counselor or life coach* who shall accompany them in their ministerial formation journey
4. to be given allowances, compensation and other benefits while they are assigned to local churches

c. Duties and Responsibilities

- 1) As Student Church Workers, they shall faithfully adhere to the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the Church in the performance of their assigned duties not only in Local Churches and to the Conference having care over them as in faithful attendance to activities where their presence is needed and in developing and practicing volunteerism by taking the initiative during activities and gatherings of the Local Church and/or the Conference.
- 2) As scholars, they should bear in mind that scholarship is more of performance rather than assistance. Their stay in the Ministerial Formation Centers means that they must:
 - i. study diligently
 - ii. be models of promptness in the submission of their academic requirements and to aspire and strive for quality in their academic achievements.
 - i. ensure that every work submitted must not only be done for the sake of satisfying academic requirements but that such work may find actual and immediate usability in and relevance to the mission and ministry of the Church
 - ii. be intellectually honest in doing research and to shun the crime of plagiarism
 - iii. be active participants and leaders in co-curricular affairs of the ministerial formation centers always mindful that they represent the interests and witness of the Church.

Section 4. Status of Church Workers.

Church Workers shall either be on active or retired status.

a. Active Church Workers are classified as follows:

- 1) Church workers officially and regularly assigned by the Conference to:

- i. Local Churches
 - ii. Church Owned Institutions such as Ministerial Formation Centers, and
 - iii. Wider bodies and programs.
- 2) Church workers officially and specially assigned to
1. Church-Related Institutions (including ecumenical ministerial formation centers) and ecumenical bodies;
 2. to ministries overseas
- 3) Church workers without official assignment are those who are not assigned to any charge but whose names are included in the roll of church workers.
- 4) Church workers on official leave of absence are those who have given formal notice to the Conference of their intention whether to take a furlough, sabbatical, or sick leave. Failure to give formal notice may be met with appropriate sanctions. Furloughs may last up to two ecclesial years. A church worker shall be entitled to a sabbatical leave after 6 years of continuous service with the duration dependent on the purpose of the sabbatical.

b. Retired church workers

Retired Church Workers are those included in the list of retired workers as covered by Article VII of the Magna Carta for Church Workers.

Section 5. Rights and Privileges of Church Workers. *(lifted from the By-Laws, Article II, Section 12, page 28)*

Church Workers in good standing shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To participate in all Conference sessions.
- b. To avail of the pastoral care, continuing education and other developmental programs of the Conference for Church Workers.
- c. To avail of the benefits granted by the Church to Church Workers.
- d. To be given a Church assignment.
- e. To vote and be voted upon in the Conference.

Section 6. Oversight and Support Systems.

a. Conference Committees on the Ministry *(By-Laws Article II, Section 9, page 27)*

- a. Ministerial Formation Committee. The Conference shall appoint upon nomination of the Conference Minister, a Ministerial Formation Committee composed of three (3) active ministers and two (2) lay persons who shall have oversight of the recruitment, apprenticeship and formation of ministerial students of the Conference. The Committee shall assist students in their work and needs, and certify to their progress and standing to the Conference.

- b. Examination Committee. The Conference in Session or its Conference Council, shall appoint, upon nomination of the Conference Minister, a Examination Committee composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom must be active ordained ministers and two (2) lay persons, not otherwise church workers, whose duty is to examine candidates for certification, licensure or ordination, including renewal of recognition of lay preachers, and those transferring from other communions.

- b. Settlement Committee. (*By-Laws Article II, Section 10, page 27*)
 - a. The assignment of Church Workers shall rest with a Settlement Committee, composed of two (2) active ministers and three (3) lay persons, to be appointed by the Conference. The Conference Minister and the president of the Church Workers' Organization shall be *ex officio* members of the Settlement Committee, without vote. The Settlement Committee shall meet at least annually before the meeting of the Conference.

 - b. The Settlement Committee shall, as far as practicable, ensure that:
 - i. all Church workers shall have an assignment in the local churches of the Conference and its recognized ministries;
 - ii. every local church and worshipping congregation shall have at least one church worker to take care of the life and work of the church;
 - iii. initiate arrangements for assignment in the absence of a call from the Local Church or congregation; and
 - iv. examine and confirm the arrangements on the call made by the Local Church or congregation.

 - c. Office of the Clergy. There shall be an Office of the Clergy under the direction of the Council of Bishops which shall have oversight of all matters concerning church workers of the UCCP including ministerial formation, orientation/reorientation, continuing education programs and active and retirement benefits.

ARTICLE V

ROLES, MOVEMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE MINISTRY

Section 1. Duties and Responsibilities of Church Workers (*lifted from the By-Laws, Article 2, Section 13, page 28*)

- a. As a Church Worker, to strive for maturity in spirituality, rectitude, faithfulness and stewardship.

- b. As a Learner, to learn humbly together with the congregation from the wisdom of Scriptures, and the way the Spirit works through the individual lives of Church members and world events.

- c. As a Teacher, to lead and enable others to grow into mature personhood after the manner of Jesus and so together attain unity and oneness in Christ.
- d. As a Counselor, to help Church members discern through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the deeper meaning and significance of crucial events in their lives and so allow healing and renewal to take place.
- e. As a Leader, to guide the congregation to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to discover where the Church is, where she ought to be going and what she ought to be, and together move and act in faithfulness to God's will at every historical moment of their life.
- f. As a Steward of God's creation, to care for and manage wisely together with the congregation, all that God sends into their lives as individuals and as a Church in terms of material gifts and giftedness so that they may share with those in need and all may enjoy fullness of life.
- g. As a Priest, to intercede for the people and to lead them to intercede before God for others and for all creation.
- h. As a Prophet, to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever the prophetic message is demanded in critical issues and human events in order to help empower the faith communities in making their united responses.
- i. As an Evangelist, to constantly remind the faith community of the need to proclaim the good news of salvation to everyone and the new beginnings Jesus brings to every person.
- j. As a Preacher, to offer self to the task of interpreting the Scriptures for the faith community and to lead the faithful in discovering the truth of Jesus' declaration, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!"
- k. As a Community Builder and Organizer, to manage the local church so that every member may discover her/his role, develop and employ gifts, talents and resources, and endeavor always to organize the church and the larger community for joint endeavors in bringing about life-promoting, peaceful and just communities.
- l. As Ecumenical Justice and Peace Advocate, to lead the faith community to work actively with other faith communities, institutions, agencies and organizations towards enabling especially the deprived and needy to know and experience a fuller life that the Church has always pursued so that the Church of Jesus Christ may witness to God's presence in the world as one in the midst of differences and help build with all others a better world.
- m. As a Pastor, to be one with the flock in whatever situation so that the community of faith may grow in their love for one another and witness together in joy and gratitude to God's steadfast love for all and ensure continuity of the work and line of full-time church workers through systematic and purposive recruitment.
- n. As a Church member, to be constantly aware that she/he is a part of the community of believers who seek earnestly to be with one another in faithfulness to God's purpose for all creation.

Section 2. Procedure for the Call of Church Workers

The procedure for the call of church workers shall include the following:

- a. The Church Council shall constitute a Church Worker's Call Committee;
- b. The Committee shall send a request to the Conference Settlement Committee for a Church Worker stating the needs of the Local Church and the desired qualities of the Church Worker;
- c. The Conference Settlement Committee shall recommend a Church Worker it deems appropriate for the Local Church making the request;
- d. Upon acceptance by the Committee of the recommendation, it shall submit the same to the Church Council for approval;
- e. Once approved, the Church Council shall endorse the recommendation to the congregation for confirmation;
- f. The confirmation shall be conducted in an appropriate time during the regular Sunday worship service; and,
- g. Upon confirmation by the congregation and acceptance of the call by the Church Worker, the installation ceremony shall be held in consultation with the Conference Settlement Committee.
- h. The Conference Minister or his/her representative shall officiate the installation rites.

Section 3. Assignment and Term of Church Workers

- a. The term of a church Worker assigned to a Local Church, Conference program or special Conference project shall be for two (2) years but not exceed four (4) years. Within the 2-4 year framework, the Conference may peg the number of years in a term for purposes of synchronization. He/she may be called for more than one (1) term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms. Review and evaluation of performance during terms may be conducted under the supervision of the Conference.
- b. The term of a Church Worker assigned to a Church-Related/Owned Institution in response to a call by the latter shall be according to satisfactory mutual agreement by the Conference, the Church Worker and the Institution. Before assignment is finalized, the Church Worker shall first undergo the processes required according to the policies of the UCCP.
- c. Ordained or Diaconal Ministers who will opt to become ministerial formators shall first satisfactorily serve fulltime in the Local Church(es) for a period of not less than two (2) years after ordination or commissioning and must undergo further studies in a graduate institution approved by the Church. This is so in order to provide the needed substantial and relevant experience in the field aside from the theoretical academic preparation.
- d. Ordained or Diaconal Ministers who will opt to become chaplains shall first satisfactorily serve in the Local Church/es for a period of not less than two (2) years in addition to

fulfilling the requirements of the institution where the chaplaincy is intended (e.g., military [ordained ministers only], police, hospitals, schools).

- e. Ministerial Formation Centers, after determining that a student has the potential for faculty development/graduate studies, shall advise the Conference having charge of the student of this future possibility to set in motion the process of eventual teaching. The Conference, after seeing to it that the student/minister has served in the local church/es according to standard policies, shall then advise the Ministerial Formation Center of the availability of the student/minister for further studies and teaching. The graduate studies may be done simultaneous with the assignment in local churches or other Conference programs/agencies provided that the same shall not be in conflict with the demands of the assignment. Having been admitted to the faculty, the church worker may serve in the institution until retirement.
- f. In order to facilitate determination of potential ministerial/theological formators, Ministerial Formation Centers, in consultation with the Office of the Clergy and the Conferences, shall develop a career-mapping program, led by Academic Deans, Offices of Student Affairs or any equivalent structure, for ministerial formandi based on their performances, attitudes and commitment from their first to senior year.
- g. The term of a Church Worker assigned in response to calls made by development agencies and ecumenical bodies here and abroad recognized by the church shall be according to satisfactory mutual agreement by the Conference, the Church Worker and the Agency/Body. Before assignment is finalized, the Church Worker shall first undergo the processes required according to the policies of the UCCP.
- h. Church Workers who are on assignment to Ministerial Formation Centers, Church-Related/Owned Institutions and Ecumenical Bodies locally shall be encouraged to take up weekend local church assignments, their workload and distance permitting, so as to keep in touch or maintain connection with the local church/grassroots base. At the minimum, they shall be expected to have an active involvement in a Local Church.
- i. Special assignment of a Church Worker to a non-Church-Related Organization or Institution may be allowed by the Conference provided that the Conference enter into a memorandum of agreement with such organization/institution outlining conditions in order to protect the integrity of church workers (GA2002-96 #2).
- j. The term of a Church Worker on loan to another Conference shall be two (2) years, after which she/he must return to his/her original Conference. A Church Worker desiring to stay after this period shall be advised to file a transfer to the Conference where her/his present assignment is located.
- k. A Church Worker's sabbatical leave shall be two (2) years after six (6) years of continuous fulltime service. Beyond the 2-year period the Church Worker will be classified as "unassigned worker". The sabbatical should coincide with the expiration of the term of the church worker in his/her assignment and official permission of the Conference shall be sought. Care should be exercised by the Conferences in allowing simultaneous sabbaticals so as not to unduly disadvantage the settlement processes by the lack of available church workers.

Section 4. Admonition and Suspension of Church Workers *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 6, page 26)*

In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order or statute of the Church, the admonition upon the erring Church Workers shall be given by the Conference Minister or a duly designated member of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution; and if there be acknowledgement of the fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the Church Worker may retain her/his good standing.

On second offense, the Conference Minister or duly designated member of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution shall take with him/her the Jurisdictional Bishop and shall strive to bring the Church worker to repentance.

On third offense, and if there be no satisfactory repentance by the Church worker, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension from his/her office.

Section 5. Termination of Status of Church Workers *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 7, page 26)*

The status of Church Workers can be terminated only by death, separation and expulsion from the ministry.

- a. A Church Worker shall be considered separated from the Church Workers' roll of the Conference when she/he

1. Gives official notice to the Conference of her/his desire and decision to be separated from the Church Workers' roll of the Conference; or,

The ministry continually broadens and the church worker may find himself/herself expanding his/her areas of concern and engagement. This may include direct participation in political governance and legislation of the church worker as a personal or collective crusade on behalf of larger society. In observance of the principle of separation of Church and State, church workers who run for political positions in government locally and nationally shall be considered automatically resigned from the ministerial roll and in the performance of ecclesial and liturgical duties (EC 92-44). Such resignation shall commence from the day of filing of candidacy and actual sitting (in the event of election) and end after one (1) year from candidacy and/or end of electoral/appointive term. The same policy applies to those who are appointed to executive and judiciary positions. Those who are serving their terms whether as elected or appointed to government positions shall, however, be reminded, counseled and prayed for by the Church to maximize their positions to live out the witness and service of the Christian faith while at the same time observing the proper ecumenical spirit in their dealings with people.

2. Takes on secular employment for at least three (3) consecutive years and does not obtain a leave of absence or recognition for special ministry.

- b. Delistment from the ministry

A Church Worker shall be delisted from the ministerial roll of the Conference when she/he fails, without valid excuse, to attend at least three (3) consecutive annual sessions of the Conference.

a. Expulsion from the Ministry

A Church Worker shall be expelled from the Church Workers' roll on any of the following grounds;

1. Having actively worked against the interest, unity and integrity of the Church;
2. Having intentionally violated the provisions of the Constitution, By-laws, and other statutes of the Church;
3. Having habitually committed such acts which do not befit a Church Worker as enunciated by the spiritual, moral and ethical standards of the Church; and,
4. Having been convicted by final judgment of a crime involving moral turpitude.

Section 6. Reinstatement of Church Workers *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 8, page 26)*

A Church Worker who has voluntarily withdrawn from the ministerial roll and who wishes to be reinstated as Church Worker in full standing, shall apply to her/his Conference for reinstatement. The Conference shall require of him/her a copy of the record of his/her original connection and status and if satisfied that he/she remains qualified in terms of integrity, competence and dedication, the Conference may reinstate him/her to full standing.

Section 7. Reception of Church Workers from Other Churches

Whenever an ordained Church Worker from another church presents himself/herself to the Conference, the Conference may receive him/her provided he/she fulfills all the requirements for ordination of the UCCP. An ordained minister from a member church of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) must present a certificate of transfer and clearance from the proper authority of his/her church, undergo the required orientation course under the Office of the Clergy, and affirm and adhere to the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the UCCP. *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 4, page 24)*

Section 8. Transfer to Another Conference or Church *(By-Laws, Article II, Section 11, page 28)*

A Church Worker desiring to transfer to another conference or Church shall secure a written release from the Conference or its Conference Council to be signed by the Conference Minister and Conference Secretary.

Section 9. The Church Worker's Code of Ethics

I, _____, called of God to be servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, to proclaim the unsearching riches of his love, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, voluntarily adopt the following principles in order that through dedication and self-discipline, I may set more worthy example of those whom I seek to lead and serve.

I. MY PERSONAL LIFE AND CONDUCT

I shall develop and nurture a disciplined and dynamic devotional life, meditation, prayer, and time management.

I shall practice a systematic regimen that would keep me physically, emotionally and intellectually fit, and be responsibly, effectively and efficiently responsive to the demands of the ministry.

I shall share and enjoy quality time with my family, nurture and sustain a gender-just, edifying and life-enhancing relationship with my family.

I shall develop and practice honest stewardship of resources, live within my income and will not leave unsettled debts with members of the Church, fellow-Church Workers and others.

I shall build a personal library and nurture serious, systematic study to keep abreast with current thoughts and trends in the different areas of disciplines in the field of ministry and national and international events.

I shall demonstrate a Jesus Christ-like life in my personal relationships, attitudes and conduct towards all peoples regardless of race, gender, class and creed.

I shall develop and put to life "fruits of the Spirit", namely: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22)

II. MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PARISH/ASSIGNMENT AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY

I shall perform my duties and responsibilities with zeal and enthusiasm until released in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and By-Laws and the Magna Carta for Church Workers.

I shall commit myself to service over remuneration.

I shall dedicate and commit myself to the prophetic, evangelistic and ecumenical traditions of the Church towards empowered, unhindered and united witness of the faith community to the life-giving and death-eradicating presence and power of God in Jesus Christ in the world.

I shall commit myself to uphold at all times, trust and confidence shared by parishioners and respect for every member of the faith community.

I shall observe impartiality in administrative, pastoral and other responsibilities to preserve and enhance the unity and integrity of the Church.

I shall lead and teach by example so that other members of the ministerial team and church staff may be inspired, encouraged and enabled to offer their best.

I shall dedicate myself to establish harmonious relationships with the faith community and the larger community without compromising Christian principles and ideals just to gain the reputation of being a "good" person.

I shall actively and responsibly participate in community affairs and concerns; be open and principled in working with government units and agencies, non-government and people's organizations, Churches and other institutions, towards the establishment of peaceful, gender-just and life-promoting communities.

III. MY RELATIONSHIP WITH KINDRED CHURCH WORKERS

I shall foster cooperation with and among my kindred Church Workers and refuse to enter into any competition with them, in order to secure a place of honor.

I shall render services to kindred Church Workers and their families in every way possible and will never accept fees for such services.

I shall uphold at all times the integrity of my kindred Church Workers and thus shall not speak ill of the character or performance of both predecessors and successors and other Church Workers.

I shall bring before the proper Church body, without spreading any rumor, cases of flagrant misconduct of kindred Church Workers in the spirit of desiring to offer help.

I shall respect the sanctity of pastoral charges and thus shall not provide ministerial services, such as: officiating weddings, baptisms, memorial and thanksgiving services, and other special occasions to former or other Church assignments except when formally invited by the incumbent Church Worker to do such.

I shall be open to and respect differing personal convictions, thinking, positions, stances of kindred Church Workers on theological and other issues and concerns, and shall strive to work towards healthy and dynamic sharing of convictions and concerns.

I shall be committed to preserving the unity and integrity of Churches, thus shall not proselyte from any Church directly and indirectly.

I shall offer retired Church Workers in the congregation all opportunities to contribute to the edification and strengthening of the faith community and shall dedicatedly continue giving loyal support to kindred Church workers even after retirement.

I shall respect and uphold procedures and processes in relation to Church assignments and thus shall refuse to make overtures to or consider overtures from a Local Church/other assignment where the Church Worker has not yet finished or terminated his/her term.

I shall protect kindred Church Workers from unnecessary burdens by refraining to send to their Local Churches/assignments questionable solicitors by referring them instead to established charitable institutions and government agencies.

Signature: _____ Date:

ARTICLE VI

THE MINISTRY WITHOUT BORDERS

Section 1. Special Assignments to Churches and Ecumenical Bodies Overseas

The UCCP recognizes the challenges of the widening field for her mission and ministry as part of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world and for the opportunity of UCCP Church Workers to participate in carrying out the mission of the Church overseas. Thus the UCCP may assign qualified Church Workers to Partner Churches and Ecumenical Bodies/Agencies overseas, and grant full recognition to UCCP Church Workers who have already been in overseas assignments with Partner Churches before the promulgation of the UCCP Magna Carta for Church Workers.

Section 2. Qualifications for Assignment Overseas

1. Having served in a Local church or other assignment for at least six (6) years.

2. Certified by the Conference Minister, in consultation with the Conference Settlement Committee, to be a Church Worker in good standing, and endorsed by the Conference.
3. Abide by the policies of the UCCP on special assignment overseas;
4. Possess the qualifications required by the overseas assignment.

Section 3. Assignment of Church workers overseas shall go through the selection and settlement process through the Office of the General Secretary. The selection and settlement process includes the following:

- a. Upon receipt of the request for an overseas assignment stating the need of the inviting Church and the qualifications/skills desired, the General Secretary shall inform the Bishops assigned to the Jurisdictional areas to announce the invitation to the Conferences through the Conference Ministers/Councils and submit a list of available qualified Church Workers;
- b. The incumbent Bishops and the General Secretary shall evaluate all the qualified candidates submitted by the Conferences in case the Partner Church does not specify a person and prepare a short list of three (3) candidates from which one (1) will be chosen and sent to the inviting Church;
- c. The General Secretary shall officially place the call with the Conference, through the Settlement Committee, which will release the Church Worker chosen by the inviting Church;
- d. In instances where a Local Church overseas calls a particular Church Worker, the negotiations will be between the inviting Local Church and the Church Worker. After the negotiations, the assignment may be made official by the UCCP through the General Secretary.
- e. The selection and settlement process shall culminate in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the inviting-receiving Partner overseas, the Church Worker, and the UCCP General Secretary.

Section 4. The UCCP covets the opportunity to provide all UCCP Church Workers with overseas assignments varying avenues for them to express their solidarity and unity with their co-workers in the Philippines and UCCP faith communities in their ministries and struggles for justice and peace and establishing gender-just and life-enhancing communities.

Section 5. The UCCP shall allow all UCCP Church Workers with overseas assignments the right to retain their membership/standing in their Conferences. The UCCP and the Partner Church shall together define policies on membership, assignments, rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities in order to guide the working relations between the UCCP, The Partner Church and the subject Church Worker with a view to enhancing, strengthening and expanding such partnership.

Section 6. UCCP Church Workers who may be granted dual membership shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges and shall perform the duties and responsibilities of UCCP Church Workers as provided in the Magna Carta for Church Workers. While attendance to Conference Annual Sessions may be waived for practical reasons of distance and financial limitations, all Church Workers assigned to Churches abroad

shall render annual reports regarding their locations/assignments, situation and activities. Failure to communicate despite reminders from the Conference for three (3) consecutive annual sessions shall result in delisting from the ministerial roll.

Section 7. The development of projects in the UCCP initiated by a Church Worker assigned overseas and the sourcing of fund support for such projects shall be in accordance with the UCCP Projects Development and Management policies.

Section 8. Church Workers who are working prior to this Magna Carta in non-partner denominations may develop partnership relations on behalf of the UCCP and/or his/her original Conference subject to approval after a study by the UCCP on the nature and character of the overseas denomination where he/she is presently connected.

Section 9. A returning retired Church Worker with dual membership who desires to work in the UCCP may be given special assignment subject to the provisions of the Magna Carta covering retired Church Workers.

Section 10. A qualified Church Worker who applies for work overseas in a Church/Denomination whether for a limited duration or eventual migration must first seek permission from the Conference where he/she belongs as well as from the Office of the General Secretary in addition to fulfilling all requirements for admission by the Overseas Denomination where he/she intends to work.

Section 11. All Church Workers who have been staying abroad especially those who are assigned to overseas denominations before the adoption of this Magna Carta shall be given the opportunity to be reinstated in their original Conferences so as to be classified under special assignment overseas and be given specific tasks in developing partnership programs/linkages between their original Conference and its counterpart judicatory/wider body. Partnership preference shall be with Churches who are already partners of the UCCP at the country-to-country level so that the same may be replicated in the intermediate level (e.g., conference-to-conference or its equivalent, sister/brother churches, program to program).

Section 12. Church Workers abroad whose original Conference no longer exists due to re-clustering/realignment may connect with the existing Conference which geographical boundaries encompasses or covers their previous Conference.

ARTICLE VII

BEYOND THE ACTIVE MINISTRY

Section 1. Retirement

Church workers reach the age or circumstance wherein he/she is placed on retirement. Retirement is not to be seen as the end of ministry but rather as a new phase when one could look back on and take a much needed respite from a rigorous yet rewarding labor in the vineyard of the Lord. It is also an opportunity for a church worker to explore new avenues and possibilities for ministry hitherto not given focus.

Church Workers may be placed in the retired list of the Conference according to the following categories:

- a. Those who, after at least ten (10) years of faithful, active and fulltime service, but due to illness, disability or some other infirmity, may be placed in the retired list of Conference Church Workers by vote of the Conference. Once approved they start receiving their pension benefits.
- b. Those who, after at least twenty (20) years of faithful, active and full-time service may elect to retire, provided that the retirement pension from the Church will be given her/him at age sixty (60).
- c. The mandatory retirement age for all workers shall be sixty-five (65) years, provided that they had served faithfully, actively and full time for at least, ten (10) years prior to retirement.
- d. Pension benefits will be the same for all Church Workers regardless of positions held in the Church before retirement until such time that the Church is able to come up with a strong and stable program of pensions and incentives.
- e. Enjoyment of pension benefits by retirees will be a minimum of ten (years). If they pass away before the 10-year period, the pension benefits will be sent to the spouse or the most needy beneficiary for the balance of the 10-year period.

Section 2. Re-calling Retired Church Workers

- a. Retired Church Workers who are still physically, intellectually and emotionally capable, and have the desire to continue to serve in the ministry so that their expertise and long years of service and experiences will continue to be shared with the Church, may be subject to re-call to serve as teachers, lecturers, program consultants in the local church, conference or the GA, COIs, CIs and ministerial formators in the MFCs.
- b. Assignment of retirees as pastors to local churches shall be on an interim basis pending availability of an active church worker.
- c. Stipend for re-called retired Church Workers shall be the responsibility of the judicatory/institution that made the re-call.

GLOSSARY

- Diaconal Minister.** A title borrowed from the United Church of Canada to classify church workers engaged in the ministry of education and other services apart from the ordained ministry. It is also a recent development in the United Methodist Church. From the previous order of deacon (whose only difference from elders is that they do not have any vote in their conference but both serve as pastors), they now have this new classification although the difference is that they ordain them for ministries other than the pastoral. It is proposed in this Magna Carta that we use the term for those previously classified as Christian Education Workers, Directors of Music and Early Childhood Educators. We have expanded the scope of their work by including those who are engaged in non-military chaplaincies, counseling or clinical pastoral education and campus ministries. Up to this day, even with Constitutional changes, a number of our women workers still address themselves and are addressed by members as deaconesses. To use diaconal minister is decidedly more inclusive of male church workers who are similarly situated.
- Orarion.** It is a stole worn diagonally from the left shoulder down to the hip. This is to distinguish those who are in the diaconal ministry from the ordained. This is commonly used by the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Evangelical Lutherans. The diagonal stole represents the towel by which Jesus girded himself before he washed the feet of the disciples to symbolize servanthood. An apron once represented the towel but its use has become outdated with the passing of time.
- Consecration.** Its means "*making holy*", "*sanctifying*" and "*setting apart*". By these meanings, it could be synonymous with ordination. Traditionally and ecclesially, we give the meaning "setting apart" to the act of ordination. Ordination, while having the sense of being set apart has, however, another definition, that of *decreeing* or *ordering* and therefore becomes a permanent mandate. In fact, consecrated workers, may aspire to be ordained, that is, from engaging in a specific, limited line of ministry to embracing the ministry in its fullness.
- Sabbatical.** A leave privilege granted to those who have served fulltime continuously for six (6) years. The seventh or sabbatical year may be used to take a must needed rest for replenishing energies. It may also be used for doing research, writing or further studies.
- Furlough.** A furlough is a break similar to a leave or sabbatical. It is usually the time, in the case of missionaries, to return for a period to their home countries for rest or other tasks/jobs. For our usage, this may apply to those who would seek the permission of the Conference to take time off from the ministerial task for engagement in other jobs including secular employment or business for a limited or temporary period.
- Life Coach.** A recent phenomenon in business, program and human resource development administration. A coach is someone who joins the one being coached in designing the game plan or ministerial plan, in this case, looks at strategies and tactics, gives instructions and critique but lets the player or church worker perform his/her role

as befits his/her training and assignment. There are agencies providing training seminars for life coaching.

IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

- a. The draft shall be presented to the National Council Meeting (October) for its approval.
- b. The approved document shall then be presented to the Annual Sessions of the Conferences in 2009 for their ratification.
- c. The Office of the Clergy shall take care of any additional correction or amendment for incorporation in the final document.
- d. After ratification and final corrections as to content and style, the Office of the General Secretary shall duly inform all constituencies of the Church that the Magna Carta for Church Workers shall be implemented at the start of Ecclesial Year 2009 (June 1).
- e. The Magna Carta shall then form part of the statutes of the Church.
- f. Policies that may run counter to the provisions of the Magna Carta shall be deemed superseded and rescinded.
- g. The Constitution and By-Laws shall continue to govern matters concerning Lay Preachers until such time that a separate manual for lay ministry shall have been drafted and approved.
- h. Licentiates who still have the ability and opportunity to complete their requirements shall be reminded by their conferences that the licentiate status is transitional and should lead to ordination. The Conferences with the help of the Office of the Clergy shall exert all efforts to prepare licentiates for eventual ordination. No longer shall licenses be granted to those who do not have the perspective of ordination.
- i. Licentiates who no longer have this ability and opportunity shall be allowed to serve until their retirement.
- j. Members of the Church who are currently serving as ministerial formators but who have not formalized their ministerial status with their conferences shall be given one ecclesial year to comply with all requirements. It is the intention of the Magna Carta that foundational courses (Theology/Ethics, Biblical Studies and History) as well as Church Administration, Pastoral Care, Christian Education and Liturgy be reserved for those who are in the ordained or diaconal ministry of the Church. Ministerial formation centers may only allow lay members to teach in non-foundational courses (Research and Community Ministries).
- k. Retirees who are invited to teach in ministerial formation centers shall be considered adjunct faculty. Their terms may be renewed annually. As a matter of respect, ministerial formation centers may not unilaterally terminate such retirees, but the retirees shall first be asked if they are still willing to continue as adjunct faculty. They shall be given the additional task of preparing or mentoring potential successors in their specific academic areas.

Amended Constitution and By-Laws, Magna Carta for Church
Workers and Jurisprudence

- l. Diaconal stoles shall be designed and manufactured by the Church for prospective candidates for consecration to the diaconal ministry.
- m. The Office of the Clergy under the direction of the Council of Bishops shall have oversight in matters relating to the formal ministry of the Church in the national level.
- n. At the Conference level, the Committees on the Ministry (Ministerial Formation and Examination) and the Settlement Committee shall work in coordination with one another to ensure smooth implementation of the Magna Carta. The Office of the Conference Minister shall lead in these coordinative efforts.

Appropriate bodies of the Church led by the Office of the General Secretary shall be immediately convened to flesh out policies such as on sabbatical leaves, furlough, and corresponding benefits to enable implementation of all such provisions of this Magna Carta within the span of 1 ecclesial year after its ratification in time for the Quadrennial General Assembly in 2010.

JURISPRUDENCE

of the

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Consolidated Lay-out of the
**PERTINENT RULINGS, OPINION &
RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Promulgated by the
**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON DISCIPLINE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION
(NCDCR)**

(formerly National Commission on Conflict Resolution)

Integrated with the Provisions of the
UCCP CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

FOREWORD

This manual entitled “Jurisprudence of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines: A Consolidated Lay-out of the Pertinent Rulings, Opinion, and Rules of Procedure Promulgated by the National Commission on Conflict Resolution” is doubtless an important document that would directly strengthen the faith communities of our Church. One of the major goals of our Strategic Plan is to develop strong faith communities committed to glorify God and serve humanity. By faith community, we refer not only to the fellowship of believers coming together for worship, theological and bible studies, mission, witness, service and fellowship. We include other basic organizational activities, such as small and informal religious groupings, local church or formal gatherings, council meetings, annual conference sessions, jurisdictional area cabinet meetings and general assemblies. By faith communities we also refer to the structures and patterns of relationship within the organizational set-up that govern our daily church polity. Church order and practice lie at the heart of church governance. The manual will certainly firm up our modality of ecclesiastical discipline and thereby help strengthening the faith communities of our Church.

As always emphasized, ours is a faith journey. We are always moving forward and can never be static. The process of changing legal interpretations is always stringent and tedious, but the rewards of maturing are profound, and the joy of mutual understanding is worth the struggle. It is in this light that we encourage church members to read, discuss and reflect on these NCCR actions.

Needless to say, this manual accomplish much by emphasizing the essential principles that should govern our church polity. While we stress compliance with the provisions of the ecclesiastical allow, we shall never ignore the spirit of the law, which should govern our relationships, namely, compassion, mercy understanding, patience, forgiveness and reconciliation. Everything must be seen in the light of God’s love and in the context of our relationships as members of the Body of Jesus Christ. Our highest aim is to clarify with realism, humility and live those aspects of ethical living and mutual care as embodied in this manual.

As a Church, we acknowledge the valuable contributions of all the members of the Commission in the completion of this project, i.e.; Atty. Emilio C. Capulong, r., dr. William R. Adan, Rev. Levi Alguso, Atty. Pastor Matias Angiwan, Mr. Gabriel Atega, Mr. Edilberto Euraoba II and Atty. Celestino B. Sabate. Special mention

goes to late Atty. Daisy Zambrano who played a major role in the early stage of conceptualization of this manual. To them, we express our heartfelt gratitude.

Let us continue our journey as a faith-community and “Press on toward the goad for the price of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

May God bless us all!



BISHOP ELMER M. BOLOCON

General Secretary

PREFACE

For purposes of the present work, jurisprudence pertains to the rulings, opinions, and rules of procedure promulgated by the National Commission on Conflict Resolution (NCCR) of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in relation to, and interpretative of, a good number of UCCP statutes, the statutes, in turn, refer to the body of UCCP Constitution and Bylaws. Said statutes and jurisprudence, along with the prevailing traditions of the UCCP, all taken together, constitute the polity of the Church.

It has now become quite urgent that a systematic rendering of the whole body of UCCP statutes and jurisprudence be made available. Quite often, the constituencies of the Church, both clergy and laity, when confronted by a given issue relating to our church polity, find it difficult to zero in on the applicable provision or ruling. With the present work, we endeavor to fill this need:

First, by juxtaposing the entire length of constitutional provisions, with the related or corresponding bylaws provisions, such that what comes out is a fully integrated lay-out of presently existing UCCP statutes; and

Second, by integrating into the aforesaid statutes the pertinent rulings, opinions, and rules of procedure promulgated by the NCCR.

By this means, we herein make available a logical and systematic exposition of all of the prevailing statutes and jurisprudence of the Church.

But to be sure, no body of statutes and jurisprudence, let alone those of a Church, can be considered permanent or unchanging. It is likely that in the near future, and in keeping the times and the needs of the Church, the present Constitution and Bylaws might well be amended, and new renditions from the NCCR might then issue forth, thus further refining and improving the over-all polity of our Church.

By setting up the present project, the Commission in effect hopes to introduce into our church governance a mode of discipline by which all present and future legal productions and increments could, as a matter of policy, be similarly organized and integrated into a systematic and comprehensive whole.

This project is a collective effort of the members of the Commission, to wit: Dr. William Adan, Rev. Levi Alguso, Rev./Atty. Matias Angiwan, Mr. Gabriel Atega,

Atty. Emilio C. Capulong, Jr, Mr. Edilberito Euraoba II, and Atty. Celestino B. Sabate. The late Atty. Daisy Zambrano, who had been, prior to her demise last year, an active member of the Commission, had actively contributed in the conception of this work. We are truly grateful for her commitment to the Commission and for her valuable initiative in the realization of this project.

January 15, 2005

EMILIO C. CAPULONG, JR.
Chairman

ARTICLE I

NAME

Section 1. The name of the Church is **UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES**, referred to as “UCCP” or “Church” whenever appropriate.

Section 2. All local Churches and church-owned entities shall bear prominently the name: United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

ARTICLE II

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Section 1. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is an integral part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

Section 2. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is a united and uniting Church, in response to the prayer of Jesus Christ “that they may all be one...that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (*John 17:21, RSV*).

Section 3. The doctrines and beliefs of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines are based on the Word of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and articulated in the historic Christian creeds, expressed in the diverse heritage of faith and practice brought into the union by its uniting Churches, and embodied in its Statement of Faith.

Section 4. The fundamental values of love, justice, truth, and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church.

Section 5. At all levels of its life and government, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall insure, as far as practicable, the equitable representation of its general membership in terms of gender, age, sector, and geography.

Section 6. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms the catholicity and ecumenicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the UCCP’s relations with other church bodies and in its support of efforts in interchurch cooperation and union in the Philippines and in the world.

Section 7. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its historic faith and its pastoral and prophetic witness in the life and culture of the Filipino people. The Church supports the people’s aspirations for abundant life and holistic redemption from all forms of bondage, in accordance with the vision of the reign of God.

Section 8. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines advocates vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions.

Section 9. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall encourage and provide the means for amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members, as well as those involving the Church and its constituencies.

Section 10. In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.

Section 11. As steward of God's creation, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and the integrity of creation.

Section 12. Consistent with the heritage and commitment of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the autonomy of the Local Church shall be respected. The scope of such autonomy shall be defined in the Bylaws.

ARTICLE III **MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Membership in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, shall be through one of its local churches or congregations. *(This provision is reproduced in the Bylaws, Art. 1, Sec. 1.)*

Section 2. Membership is acquired through baptism in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; or by dedication, confirmation, transfer and reception, public confession of faith or affiliation.

Section 3. The categories of membership, including honorary membership, the acquisition, loss or recovery of membership, and the rights and privileges as well as the obligations and commitments of the church members, including the institution and maintenance of discipline, shall be provided for in the Bylaws.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 2. TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP. Membership may be regular, associate, affiliate, preparatory or honorary.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 3. REGULAR MEMBERS. Regular membership shall be held in only one Local Church. The regular members are the following:

- a. Those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and dedicated or confirmed in the Local Church;
- b. Those who are not yet baptized or who wish to be baptized, and who by public confession of faith and baptism, are accepted as such members; and
- c. Those who are members of other denominations or communions whose baptism uses the Trinitarian formula, and
 - 1) Who, upon having obtained a letter of transfer from their Local Church, are duly received by the Local Church.

- 2) Who, having officially resigned or withdrawn their membership from their former Church, profess and are accepted as such members by the Local Church; or
- 3) Who, by marriage to members, profess to become such members of the Local Church.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 4. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS. Associate members are those members of another Local Church whose circumstances make it necessary to participate in the ministry of another Local Church and obtain associate membership in such Local Church. Except for the right to vote and be voted upon, associate members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of regular members.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 5. AFFILIATE MEMBERS. Affiliate members are those members of other Christian communions who are temporarily absent from their home church and who, upon application, are received as affiliate members. Except the right to vote and be voted upon, affiliate members shall enjoy the rights and privileges of regular members in the Local Church they are affiliated.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 6. PREPARATORY MEMBERS. Preparatory members are the following:

- a. Those baptized or dedicated as infants; and
- b. Adults who are seeking to be baptized.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 7. HONORARY MEMBERS. Honorary membership may be granted to members of other Christian churches who have performed extraordinary service.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 8. RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERS. Membership in the Local Church bestows the following rights and privileges:

- a. Continuing nurture in the faith and pastoral care;
- b. To be informed of, and participate in, all programs and other activities of the Church;
- c. To avail of the service of the Local Church; and
- d. In the case of regular members, to vote and be voted upon in, or appointed to, any position in the Local Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-005, MAY. 6, 2000. No distinction between “active members” and “inactive members” in the availment of rights and privileges from Local Church.

In the availment of the service/s of the Local Church, the Constitution and Bylaws do not make any distinction between “active” members and “inactive” members. The enjoyment of rights and privileges of a member is not based on his being

“active.” In this regard, Art. II, Sec. 4 of the Constitution, under the Declaration of Principles, provides that “the fundamental values of love, justice, truth, and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church.”

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 9. COMMITMENTS OF MEMBERS. Membership in the Local Church entails the following obligations and commitments:

- a. To proclaim the Gospel and bear the personal witness in both word and service in the context of one immediate community, the nation and the rest of the humanity;
- b. To lead a peaceable and godly life worthy of one’s Christian calling; and to endeavor to be a follower of Jesus Christ;
- c. To be diligent in prayer, the faithful practice of family worship and Bible study; and attendance at services to public worship of the Church;
- d. To exhort one another in the faith; and to strive in every way to strengthen the unity and fellowship of the Church;
- e. To study and practice the principles of Christian stewardship, cheerfully giving of one’s tithes, pledges, time, talents and possessions;
- f. To protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of God’s creation; and
- g. To affirm and adhere to the historic Christian creeds, the UCCP Statement of Faith, and the UCCP Constitution and Bylaws.

BYLAWS, ART. 1, SEC. 10, TRANSFER, LOSS AND RESTORATION OF MEMBERSHIP.

- a. **Certificate of Transfer of Members.** Whenever a regular member moves from one Local Church to another, he/she shall obtain a certificate of transfer, signed by the Pastor and Secretary of the Church Council. In the absence of the Pastor, the Chairperson of the Church Council becomes a signatory.
- b. **Notice of Forwarding Certificate.** The Pastor who issues a certificate of transfer as provided for in the immediately preceding sub-section shall forward such certificate, with appropriate explanation to the Pastor of the Local Church to which the member bearing the certificate shall be received.
- c. **Notice of Reception of Members on Certificate.** Upon reception of a member bearing a certificate of transfer, the Local Church of origin shall be properly notified.

- d. **Limitations of Certificate.** A transfer certificate issued to a member as provided for in the preceding sections must be presented to a Local Church or returned to the church of origin within eighteen (18) months, beyond which time, it becomes null and void.
- e. **Loss of Membership.** Members shall be delisted membership roll on account of:
- 1) death;
 - 2) absence from his/her home church for a period of three (3) consecutive years, and despite diligent efforts by the Local Church, his/her whereabouts remain unknown; and
 - 3) expulsion.
- f. **Expulsion of Member.** A member may be expelled for committing any of the following offenses:
- 1) Offense against unity or integrity of the Church;
 - 2) Offense against accepted norms of morality;
 - 3) Offense against religious worship and other sacred ceremonies and rituals of the Church;
 - 4) Disrespect for the Church, its councils and officials, and fellow members; and
 - 5) Willful and flagrant violation of the Constitution, Bylaws and statutes of the Church, including decisions of the National Commission on Conflict Resolution (NCCR).
- g. **Admonition and Suspension.** In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word or disobedience of any order of the Church, admonition shall be given by the pastor or a duly designated member of the Board of Elders upon such erring member; and, if there be acknowledgment of fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the member may retain his/her good standing.

On a second offense, the Pastor or duly designated member of the Board of Elders shall take with him/her one of the faithful member and strive to bring the offender to repentance.

On a third offense, and if there be no satisfactory repentance of offender, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension for such period as may the Board of Elders fix.

- h. Restoration of Membership. A regular member whose name has been delisted from the Local Church shall be restored as a regular member after giving satisfactory evidence of his/her conduct to the Board of Elders and reaffirming his/her faith before the congregation. He/She shall be restored to his/her original standing as member upon confirmation by the Church Council and acceptance by the congregation.**

A member may not, earlier than one (1) year from date of his/her expulsion, apply to the Local Church from which he/she was expelled from restoration of his/her membership, and no other local Church has authority to restore him/her to full membership after the period of his/her suspension.

As the penalty for expulsion is applied only in extreme cases, great care should be taken by the Board of Elders in recommending (a) the expulsion of a member, or (b) the restoration to full membership of one who has been expelled from the Local Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 98-004, DEC. 19, 1998. Re “delistment” from one local church and “enlistment” into another.

Under Art. I, Sec. 10-e, of the Bylaws, one of the grounds provided for delistment from the membership roll is when the member absents himself from his home church for a period of three (3) consecutive years, and his whereabouts remain unknown despite diligent efforts by the Local Church in seeking him. In line with the same principle, if the member absents himself from his original Local Church for a period of three (3) consecutive years on account of his regular attendance in another recognized Local Church, he should, upon indication that he will no longer return to the former, be delisted therefrom, and in turn, be enlisted with the Local Church where he presently renders regular attendance.

ARTICLE IV

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. In faithfulness to Jesus’ proclamation of his own mission (*Luke 4:18:19*), and the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:19:20*), the Church, as the people of God, is called to a ministry of love and service and the search for peace based on justice and reconciliation, in obedience to, and as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Having been given a diversity of gifts, all church members are called upon to participate in this ministry, looking forward to the attainment of unity in faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and mature personhood according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (*Ephesians 4:13*).

Section 2. Within the Church, some are called as ordained ministers, lay church workers and other charged to perform specific ministries to enable the Church to fulfill its mission and service, and to build up the body of Christ (*Ephesians 4:11:12*).

Section 3. Schools, health-care institutions, service agencies, sectors and organizations duly recognized by the Church shall contribute to the fulfillment of its life and ministry.

Section 4. The ordination of ministries and the classification and assignment of all church workers shall be provided for in the Bylaws.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 1. ORDAINED MINISTER. An ordained minister is one who has been called and set apart for the ministry in accordance with the requirement of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ORDINATION. To qualify for ordination, one must:

- a. Have finished a formal ministerial formation program in any of the approved ministerial theological seminaries and/or ministerial formation centers of the Church; or, be a graduate of four year theological programs of other theological institutions, although not in the UCCP approved list, provided he/she (i) submits to a required orientation course under the direction of the Office of the Clergy; (ii) undergoes probationary period in a Local Church for one ecclesiastical year; and (iii) affirms his/her acceptance of, and adherence to, the Constitution; or, while without formal theological training, have substantial pastoral experience as a licentiate for at least five (5) years and have undergone studies and instructions in the ministerial formation programs of the Church;
- b. Have at least two (2) consecutive years full time satisfactory pastoral experience as a licentiate; and
- c. Be certified through the examination process established by the Church as to his/her maturity, satisfactory preparation, growth in knowledge, experience and commitment to the ministry and mission of the Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-002-A, FEB. 9, 2000. *The “two consecutive years” need not correspond to either ecclesiastical year or calendar year.*

Art. II, Sec. 2-b, of the Bylaws provides for “two consecutive years.” There is no qualification whether the “year” referred to is ecclesiastical or calendar. Such being the case, the term should encompass any 12-month period, and that the phrase “two consecutive years” should simply mean a 24-month period, regardless of the period’s starting month.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-003, FEB. 9, 2000. The reference point in the computation of the “two consecutive years” is the intended date of ordination.

In computing the “two consecutive years” provided for in Art. 11, Sec. 2-b of the Bylaws, the reference date to reckon with is the date of “ordination.” The word “ordination” as used in Sec. 2, in conjunction with Sec. 1, should refer to the ceremonial act through which the candidate becomes “called and set apart for the ministry in accordance with the requirements of the Church.” Whereupon, the “two consecutive years” should be reckoned from the intended date of said ceremonial act, and not from the execution of any of the processes or functions leading to it.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 3, THE ORDINATION PROCESS. The ordination to the ministry of men and women called for this purpose shall be standardized for the entire UCCP, as follows:

- a. **The Local Church, in which the candidate minister, recommends to the Conference, through a resolution of the Church Council, the ordination of the candidate;**
- b. **The Conference Examination Committee receives the resolution of the sponsoring Local Church and requires the candidate to undergo the following:**
 - 1) **psychological test prepared by the Office of the Clergy;**
 - 2) **practical examination which shall include inquiry into the lifestyle, his/her standing among peers and in the community, as well as his/her performance as a Local Church worker; and**
 - 3) **theoretical review and examination conducted in an accredited ordination review center, the results of which include the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate; and**
- c. **Based on the results of the tests and examinations, the Jurisdictional Bishop, in consultation with the Examination Committee, shall then decide whether or not the ordination of the candidate shall be approved, deferred, or denied. In the case of deferment or denial, the candidate shall be apprised of his/her weaknesses and deficiencies with the view of helping him/her overcome these within two (2) years.**

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-002-B, FEB. 9, 2000. As to who recommends if candidate for ordination is member not of a local church, but of a worshipping congregation.

If the candidate minister is a member not of a Local Church, but of a worshipping congregation, then it is the Conference which will sponsor and recommend him to the Conference Examination Committee.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 4. RECEPTION OF MINISTER FROM OTHER DENOMINATION. Whenever an ordained minister from another church presents himself/herself to the Conference, the Conference may receive him/her provided he/she first fulfills all the requirements for ordination of the UCCP. As ordained minister from a member church of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) must present a certificate of transfer and clearance from the proper authority of his/her church, undergo the required orientation course under the Office of the Clergy, and affirm here to the Constitution, Bylaws and other statutes of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 5, CLASSIFICATION OF ORDAINED MINISTERS. Ordained ministers are classified according to the status of their service, as follows:

- a. **Active Ministers.** Active ministers are those serving under the appointment, direction or official recognition of the Conference or the General Assembly;
- b. **Ministers on Special Assignment.** Ministers on special assignment are active members assigned in church-related institutions, programs, special Conference work, government chaplaincy or ecumenical bodies recognized by the Church;
- c. **Unassigned Ministers.** Unassigned ministers are those who are not assigned to any charge by the Conference and whose names are included in the roll of ministers.
- d. **Retired Ministers.** Retired ministers are the following:
 - 1) Those who, after years of faithful service, are placed in the retired list by vote of the Conference due to illness, disability or some other infirmity; and
 - 2) Those who after at least twenty (20) years of faithful, active and full-time service, or having reached the age of 65 years, elect to retire; provided, that in the case of the latter, their assignment may be reviewed on a year to year basis.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 6. LAY CHURCH WORKERS. Lay Church Workers do the basic ministries of the Church in varied ways. They are regular members of the Local Church who receive a calling to serve the Lord in the Local Church, show maturity of faith, a spirit of unity, a life of prayer and study of Scriptures, manifest at least a gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit; are appointed by the Conference for specific duties; and are recognized through a service of consecration of the UCCP.

Lay Church Workers include Christian education workers, music directors, licentiates, local lay preachers, and such other lay offices as may be established by the General Assembly or the National Council.

- a. **Christian Education Workers.** Any deaconess or other person who has satisfactorily completed the course of study prescribed in any of the approved training schools for religious education and duly consecrated and/or installed into service as Christian education worker or director;
- b. **Music Director.** Any person who has satisfactorily completed the course of study prescribed in any of the approved schools in sacred church music and duly consecrated and/or installed into service as Christian music director.
- c. **Christian Educators for Early Childhood.** A Christian educator for early childhood is one who has satisfactorily completed the prescribed course of study in any of the approved schools for early childhood Christian education and is duly consecrated and commissioned in accordance with the rites of the Church.
- d. **Conference Licentiates.** Conference licentiates are those lay workers who are licensed by the Conference to teach and preach the Gospel and are assigned by the Conference to a definite location within the Conference Area. To become a Conference licentiate, one must:
 - 1) have completed two (2) years study in an approved theological school or studied in ministerial or Bible institutes or other pastoral formation programs of the UCCP; and have been issued certification by the Conference Examination Committee as to his/her satisfactory growth in knowledge, experience and commitment to the ministry and mission of the Church. Conference licentiates may be permitted by the Conference to administer the sacraments, solemnize marriages, and perform such other duties belonging to the ministry. Such permission shall be subject to annual review by the Conference.

Local Lay Preachers. The following may be given appointment as local lay leaders upon recommendation of the Local Church Council:

- 2) Any accepted student for the ministry in an approved theological school or seminary, but has not completed two years of study; and
- 3) Any person, having an aptitude to teach but who, by circumstances, is unable to study in the seminary, or to accept Conference assignment or charge. Appointment as local lay preacher shall be subject to annual review and recommendation by the Local Church Council.

***NCCR OPINION NO. 01-004, OCT. 22, 2001. Status of “Local Lay Preachers”
and “Conference Licentiates.”***

“Local Lay Preachers” under Art. II, Sec. 6, par. 2-e, of the Bylaws, are engaged by the Local Church. It is only when they are duly recognized and appointed as such by the Conference that they become Church Workers of the Conference. From then on, they remain to be so, unless duly terminated (as provided for in the Bylaws, Art. II, Sec. 8). The same rationale in the termination of ordained workers, should apply for other church workers recognized by the Conference, including Lay Preachers.

The Examination Committee may not terminate a church worker from the service by failing him in an examination. The Examination Committee examines candidates for certification, licensure, or ordination, and those transferring from other conferences. But the Committee may not fail those who are already recognized or appointed by previous conferences. In this regard, it can be noted that the task of “Annual Review” is given to the Local Church Council (Bylaws, Art. II, Sec. 6 par.2-e-2) Since it is the Local Church Council that recommends, it also can recall, through this process of review. And this process resides not with the Examination Committee, but with the Local Church Council.

With regard to the possibility of an “imbalance” in the representation to the Conference brought about by the number of recognized Lay Workers coming from a particular Local Church, there is nothing in the Constitution and Bylaws that makes them (the Conference-recognized Lay Preachers) representatives of the Local Church. They are, in fact, representatives of the Conference, notwithstanding their limited assignment within the Conference. The Conference may not then limit, nor infringe upon, the representational rights of anyone entitled to be in the Annual Conference, on the basis of a perceived imbalance in representation from the Local Churches.

The Conference Council should strive to increase, and not limit, the number of Conference-recognized Local Lay Preachers. The responsibility of limiting, categorizing, and instituting policies relating to Lay Church Workers rests with the National Council and the General Assembly. This is provided for in Art. II, Sec. 6, 2nd par., of the Bylaws, which states, “Lay Church Workers include Christian Education Workers, music directors, licentiates, Lay Preacher, and such other lay offices that may be established by the General Assembly or the National Council.”

Under the above provisions of the Bylaws, a Conference Licentiate is “assigned by the Conference to a definite location within the Conference Area.” There is, however, no prohibition for him to be invited to serve, just like ordained pastors, at any other place in the Conference. He does not cease to be a Conference Licentiate outside of his area of assignment. Once a Licentiate, always a Licentiate -- until he is removed from the list of Licentiates, or terminated, in the manner provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws, as in the case of the other church workers,

whether ordained or not. Similarly, with regard to his transfer to other Conferences, the procedure laid down for such transfer of church workers should, just as equally, apply to them.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 7. ADMONITION AND SUSPENSION OF CHURCH WORKERS. In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order or statute of the Church, the admonition upon the erring Church workers shall be given by the Conference Minister or a duly designated member of the Conference Committee on Discipline; and if there be acknowledgment of the fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the Church worker may retain his/her good standing.

On second offense, the Conference Minister or duly designated member of the Conference Committee on Discipline, shall take with him/her the Jurisdictional Bishop and strive to bring the Church worker to repentance.

On a third offense and if there be no satisfactory repentance by the Church worker, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension from his/her office.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 97-004, DEC. 11, 1999. Entitlement to backwages if suspension is nullified by NCCR.

A church worker, whose order of suspension by the Conference is thereafter nullified by the NCCR, becomes entitled to backwages and related benefits covering the period of suspension.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 8. TERMINATION OF STATUS OF CHURCH WORKERS. The status of being Church workers can be terminated only by death, separation and expulsion from the ministry.

a. **Separation from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be considered separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference, where he/she:

- 1) gives official notice to the Conference of his/her desire and decision to be separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference; or
- 2) takes on secular employment for at least three (3) consecutive years and does not obtain a leave of absence or recognition for special ministry.

b. **Delisting from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be delisted from the ministerial roll of the Conference when he/she fails, without valid excuse, to attend at least three (3) consecutive annual sessions of the Conference.

c. **Expulsion from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be expelled from the ministerial roll upon any of the following grounds:

- 1) having actively worked against the interest, unity and integrity of the Church;

- 2) **having intentionally violated the Constitution, Bylaws and other statutes of the Church;**
- 3) **having habitually committed acts which do not befit a minister as enunciated by the spiritual, moral and ethical standards of the Church; and**
- 4) **having been convicted by final judgment of a crime involving moral turpitude.**

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 00-004, AUG. 2, 2002. The penalty of expulsion is for very serious offenses.

Expulsion is an extreme penalty. Our Church is steeped in the tenets of graciousness and compassion, and, therefore, expulsion can only but relate to very serious offenses which tend to either wreak havoc upon the spiritual moorings of the Church or totally imperil its unity or integrity as an institution.

In the present case, the records reveal sad instances of infractions, even of apparent breakdown, in the administrative functioning of the local church. Moreover, there appears to be stark failure in the establishment of good rapport and relationship, let alone of courtesy and consideration, among the parties involved. Quite obvious from the records is the “relationship” problem or that of “personality conflict” among said parties. This is not to hold that Respondent is either totally blameless in the various incidents recited in the Complaint, or that all the recitals in the Complaint are completely irrefutable. What we do hold is that the penalty asked for in the Complaint cannot be sustained; that there is a crucial need to reform the interpersonal relationship among the parties concerned; and that, in fine, a little effort, genuinely exerted, towards mutual understanding and forgiveness might do wonders. It is true that, as the Commission noted from the records, attempts at conciliation and mediation had reportedly failed. Such efforts, however, should probably not be given up too easily by the jurisdictional pastoral leadership. It should be tried again and again. And the parties – at the very least – should be receptive to it.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-003, SEPT. 6, 2003. Grounds for expulsion are only those provided under Art. II, Sec. 8 of the Bylaws.

In the present case, three grounds were pointed out as bases in the expulsion of the Pastor, to wit: refusal to leave the local church where he was called and the refusal to accept another assignment; working against the unity of the church, because he depended solely on the influence of the Church Council; and refusal to abide by the decision of the Settlement Committee. However, the aforesaid grounds are not among the offenses for expulsion as enumerated in Art. II, Sec. 8 of the Bylaws. Moreover, refusal by a Pastor to follow the decision of the Settlement Committee, on the basis of one’s right to keep an assignment based on a valid call, and as confirmed by the congregation, cannot be made a basis for expulsion.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 9. REINSTATEMENT OF CHURCH WORKERS. A Church worker, who has voluntarily withdrawn from the ministerial roll and who wishes to be reinstated as Church worker in full standing, shall apply to his/her Conference for reinstatement. The Conference shall require of him/her a copy of the record of his/her original connection and status and if satisfied that he/she remains qualified in terms of integrity, competence and dedication, the Conference may reinstate him/her to full standing.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 10. CONFERENCE COMMITTEES ON THE MINISTRY. The Conference Committees on the Ministry are the following:

- a. **Ministerial Formation Committee.** The Conference shall appoint upon nomination by the Conference Minister, a Ministerial Formation Committee composed of three (3) active ministers and two (2) lay persons who shall have oversight of the recruitment, apprenticeship, and formation of ministerial students of the Conference. The Committee shall assist the students in their work and needs, and certify to their progress and standing to the Conference.
- b. **Examination Committee.** The Conference shall appoint, upon nomination by the Conference Minister, an Examination Committee composed of five (5) ministers, at least three (3) of whom are active ministers, whose duty is to examine all candidates for certification, licensure or ordination and those transferring from other communions.

BYLAWS, Art. II, Sec. 11, Settlement Committee.

- a. The assignment of Church workers shall rest with a Settlement Committee, composed of two (2) active ministers and three (3) lay persons, to be appointed by the Conference. The Conference Minister and the President of the Church Workers' organization shall be ex officio members of the Settlement Committee, without vote. The Settlement Committee shall meet at least annually before the meeting of the Conference.
- b. The Settlement Committee shall, as far as practicable, insure that:
 1. All Church workers shall have assignment in the local churches of the Conference and its recognized ministries.
 2. Every local Church and worshipping congregation shall have at least one Church worker to take care of the life and work of the Church.
 3. Initiate arrangements for assignment in the absence of a call from the Local Church or congregation; and
 4. Examine and confirm the arrangements on the call made by the Local Church or congregation.
- c. Any minister shall have the right to appear before the Settlement Committee to present his/her case in regard to his/her appointment. Any

pastoral charge may also appear through not more than two (2) representatives, properly authorized in writing and appointed from the members at a regular or special meeting of the Church Council.

NCCR OPINION NO. 02-001, MARCH 9, 2001. An ex officio member of a committee may not serve or act as chairman of that committee.

An ex officio member, without vote, of the Settlement Committee may not serve or act as chairman of that Committee. The position of an ex officio member of a committee, without vote, is thoroughly distinct and separate from the office of a regular member, let alone from that of chairman.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-004, OCT. 22, 2001. Task of Settlement Committee with respect to financial arrangements connected with the call.

The Settlement Committee may properly examine the corresponding financial arrangements on the call made by the Local Church, but not to impose new ones; insure that there is a clear understanding and acceptance of such financial arrangements from both sides, and that the arrangements, under the circumstances, are fair. Considering that arrangements of this nature have become points of contention or jealousy between workers, the Committee should handle information of this nature with discretion and strict confidentiality. In addition, with respect to these arrangements, the Committee would do well to consult with the officers and pastoral committee of the Local Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-005, MAY 3, 2001. The concept of a church worker being in “good standing.”

Respecting Rule VI, Sec. 2, of the UCCP Rules of Settlement which provides, “A church worker is deemed in good standing when he or she has no criminal complaint or case filed against him or pending before any officer, administrative body, court or tribunal; or any civil complaint for any act involving moral turpitude; or any complaint or case pending before any committee, commission or instrumentality of the UCCP” – said rule does not jibe with the fundamental principle of law and procedure that an accused or respondent in a case is “presumed innocent unless the contrary is proved.” Said principle should be a basic norm even in the consideration of cases and conflicts in our Church, and in our appreciation of the concept of “good standing” of a church worker. Otherwise, in the matter of church assignments, any party, for some questionable motives, may very easily obstruct the assignment of a church worker by the simple expedient of filing even a baseless complaint with a committee of the Church.

We hold that a church worker’s “good standing” is presumed, and may be overcome only with a final adverse decision or resolution of the case or complaint lodged against him.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 12, TRANSFER TO ANOTHER CONFERENCE OR CHURCH. A Church worker desiring to transfer to another conference or church shall secure a written release from the Conference or its Conference Council to be signed by the Conference Minister and Conference Secretary.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 13, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF CHURCH WORKERS. Church Workers in good standing shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To participate in all Conference sessions;
- b. To avail of the pastoral care, continuing education and other developmental programs of the Conference for Church Workers;
- c. To avail of the benefits granted by the Church to Church Workers;
- d. To be given a Church assignment; and
- e. To vote and be voted upon in the Conference.

BYLAWS, ART. II, SEC. 14. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH WORKERS. Church Workers shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. To strive for maturity in spirituality, rectitude, faithfulness and stewardship;
- b. As a learner, to learn humbly together with the congregation from the wisdom of the Scriptures, and the way of the Spirit works through the individual lives of Church members and world events;
- c. As a teacher, to lead and enable others to grow into mature personhood after the manner of Jesus Christ and so together attain unity and oneness in Christ;
- d. As a counselor, to help Church members discern through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the deeper meaning and significance of crucial events in their lives and so allow healing and renewal to take place.
- e. As a leader, to guide the congregation to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to discover where the Church is, where it ought to be going and what it ought to be, and together move and act in faithfulness to God's will at each historical moment of their life;
- f. As a steward of God's creation, to care for and manage wisely together with the congregation, all that God sends into their lives as individuals and as a church in terms of gifts and giftedness so that

all may enjoy fullness of life to share with all who are in need;

- g. As a priest, to intercede for the people and to lead them in interceding before God for others and for all creation;**
- h. As a prophet, to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever this is demanded in critical issues and human events and so help empower the people in their response; and**
- i. As a Church member, to be constantly aware that he/she is a part of the community of believes who seek earnestly to be with one another in faithfulness to God's purpose for all creation.**

NCCR OPINION NO. 99-001-B, MAR. 20, 1999. A Pastor on sabbatical leave is generally not relieved of his other responsibilities in the Conference.

When a Pastor takes sabbatical leave, he is not considered relieved from his other responsibilities in the Conference which he might be having (for instance, as ministerial member in the Conference Council, or as the Conference representative to the National Council), except if it becomes evident that the Pastor, by reason of the leave, can no longer physically discharge his regular tasks in said other position/s.

ARTICLE V

LOCAL CHURCH

Section 1. Nature. A local Church is a congregation of baptized or dedicated persons who adhere to the Statement of Faith of the UCCP, who worship in a particular place and carry out the Church's mission and ministry. It is the basic unit of the Church.

Section 2. Recognition. To be recognized as a Local Church, a congregation shall have at least seventy-five (75) members, who subscribed to the Constitution and the statutes of the Church, and shall have demonstrated their capability to conduct their life, ministry and administrative affairs for at least two (2) years.

Section 3. Rights and Privilege. The Local Church shall enjoy the rights and privileges of membership accorded the basis units of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

BYLAWS, Art. III, SEC. 1, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH. The Local Church shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To conduct its worship life in light of the Gospel and in accordance with its witness and service to all of God's creation;**

- b. To make a call for pastor and other Church workers in accordance with the procedure laid down by the UCCP; and**
- c. To elect delegates to, and be represented at, the Conference and other higher Church bodies.**

Section 4. Duties and Functions of the Local Church. The Local Church shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) proclaim the Gospel in Witness and service;
- b) provide for the growth and nurture of its members;
- c) promote stewardship and the other program thrusts of the church;
- d) ensure the its worship is orderly and solemn yet joyful and meaningful;
- e) recruit, recommend and support candidates for its varied forms of ministry;
- f) support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church;
- g) hold an annual congregational meeting;
- h) submit to the Conference an annual report of its life and work;
- i) strive to fulfill faithfully and promptly all obligations to the other church bodies;
- j) relate and respond to the life and concerns of society;
- k) relate with other local churches and worshipping congregations within the Conference towards a more holistic ministry; and
- l) perform other duties and functions that may be assigned to it.

BYLAWS, Art. III, SEC. 2, BYLAWS. ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING. Unless otherwise set by the Church Council, the annual congregation meeting of the Local Church shall be held not later than the last Sunday of December of each year and shall be for the following purposes:

- a. To receive the written report of the Pastor, a copy of which shall be furnished the Conference;**
- b. To review the actions of the Church Council;**
- c. To approve plans and programs for the ensuing year;**
- d. To adopt an annual budget to support its approved plans and programs for the ensuing year and which shall include the assessment and contribution to the Conference and the General Assembly;**
- e. To elect the officers and delegates to the Conference and other Church bodies; and**
- f. To act on such other matter as may validly come before the body.**

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 28. SCOPE OF THE LOCAL AUTONOMY. The primary locus of mission is the Local Church. Hence, the UCCP upholds the autonomy of the Local Church particularly as to its rights and power to conduct its ministry free from outside control, provided the same is in line with the Constitution, Bylaws and statutes of the Church, thereby enabling the Local Church to become effective instrument in the ministry and mission of the Church and ensuring its positive contribution to the unity and strengthening of the whole Church. Specifically, autonomy of the Local Church includes the authority to do the following:

- a. To call and support its Pastor and other Church workers, keeping in mind the basic policy of the Church to call its ministry pastors and Church workers belonging to the UCCP, subscribing to the UCCP Statement of Faith and paying allegiance to the Constitution, Bylaws and statutes of the Church. Pastors, ministers and workers of other church affiliated with the UCCP may be requested to serve in the Local Church with the prior written permission of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary;
- b. To administer, maintain, encumber or dispose of its personal or real properties pursuant to a resolution of its Board of Trustees and approved by its Church Council and, where real properties are involved, with the written consent of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary;
- c. To invite pastors, ministers, workers and lay leaders of other churches to speak, preach or otherwise enter into fellowship with the Local Church, from time to time, in consonance with Article II, Section 6, of the Constitution, provided that the authority and integrity of the UCCP, as well as the unity of the Local Church, shall never be impaired or compromised;
- d. To nominate and elect its officers, in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws, and hold annual and such special meetings as it may deem necessary and proper;
- e. To admit qualified persons into the membership of the Local Church, help ensure their nurture and spiritual developments, and promote and develop among them the idea of loving service, stewardship and missionary outreach;
- f. To celebrate its worship services that are orderly and solemn, yet joyful and meaningful, reflective of the faith and life of the Church and responsive to the needs of the community in terms of witness, service and prophetic ministry;
- g. To support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church and recruit, recommend and support candidates for the ministry;

- h. To adopt its own budget and financial program and fulfill its obligations to the wider bodies; and**
- i. To do all things as it may deem wise, necessary and proper, without encroaching on the prerogative of, and interfering with, the wider Church bodies, ensuring at all times that its action contribute to the unity and strengthening of the whole UCCP.**

Section 5. Structure. The Local Church may consist of the following:

- a) the Congregation;
- b) the Church Council;
- c) the Board of Elders;
- d) the Board of Deacons;
- e) the Board of Christian Educators;
- f) the Pastor(s) and other Church workers; and
- g) the Board of Trustees; as may be necessary

Section 6. The Congregation. Authority in the Local Church emanates from the congregation in light of God's Word.

Section 7. Composition. The congregation shall consist of the following:

- a) officers and members of the Church Council; and
- b) communicant members of the Local Church.

Section 8. Duties and Functions of the congregation. The duties and functions of the congregation shall be the following:

- a) receive members into the Church according to the provisions for membership and ensure their nurture and continuing holistic educational and spiritual development;
- b) acquire, dispose of or encumber the properties of the church in accordance with the statutes of the UCCP and the applicable laws;
- c) call and support church workers;
- d) elect officers and members of the Church Council;
- e) approve, support and monitor the implementation of the programs of the Local Church;
- f) adopt an annual program and budget and approve plans for the ensuing year;
- g) affirm, modify or reverse the actions of the Church Council in appropriate cases;
- h) assess the life and work of the Local Church;
- i) elect delegates to the Conference and other church bodies; and
- j) perform such other duties and functions as are vested in the congregations.

Section 9. The Local Church Council.

A. Composition. The Local Church shall be governed by a Church Council which shall consists of the following:

Amended Constitution and By-Laws, Magna Carta for Church
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- 1) Chairperson;
- 2) Vice Chairperson;
- 3) Secretary;
- 4) Treasurer;
- 5) Financial Secretary;
- 6) Auditor;
- 7) Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- 8) Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- 9) Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators;
- 10) Heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- 11) Where applicable, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees;
- 12) Pastors and other Church workers, without vote;
- 13) Where applicable, the representatives of Church-owned or related schools, health-care, institutions, and other institutions operating in the area, without vote;
- 14) Such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and
- 15) The Conference Minister, without vote.

B. Duties and Functions of the Church Council. Except those duties and functions that are vested in the congregation under this Constitution, the Church Council shall have the following duties and functions:

- 1) exercise functions and implement programs consistent with the thrusts set forth by the General Assembly;
- 2) submit reports on the church's life and work, including those on the spiritual growth of the congregation, its outreach programs as well as the financial reports and the proposed budget for ensuing year;
- 3) transmit request and questions to the appropriate committees of the Conference;
- 4) attend to matters beyond the competence of standing committees;
- 5) act on requests or petitions submitted by church members;
- 6) recommend to the Conference candidates for the ministry and for appointment as lay preachers or licentiates, subject to the confirmation of the congregation;
- 7) call a special meeting of the congregation upon the request of one-third (1/3) of the members; and
- 8) exercise other duties and functions as may be assigned to it by the congregation.

BYLAWS, Art. III, Sec. 3. Meetings of the Church Council.

- a. The Church Council shall determine its regular meeting at least once every three months or as often as may be feasible; and
- b. Whenever necessary, special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or in his/her absence, by the Vice-Chairperson, or at the request of the Pastor, or by at least two members of the Church Council. Notice of special meetings shall be given to all the members of the Church Council before the meeting stating the purpose or purposes thereof.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 4. QUORUM. A majority of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 5. CHURCH COUNCIL OFFICERS AND MEMBERS; ELECTION AND TERM. In addition to the head Pastor, the officers of the Church Council are:

- a. Chairperson;
- b. Vice-Chairperson;
- c. Secretary;
- d. Treasurer;
- e. Financial Secretary; and
- f. Auditor

The Members are:

- a. Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- b. Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- c. Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators;
- d. Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, where applicable;
- e. Heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- f. Other Church workers, without vote;
- g. Representatives of Church-owned or related schools, health-care institutions and other institutions operating in the area, where applicable, without vote;
- h. Such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and
- i. Conference Minister, without vote.

Except for the Pastor, the officers shall serve for a term of one year and may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

Where a Local Church is composed of more than one hundred members, in the interest of equitable representation in the Church Council, no family shall be represented by more than one member during any term of the Church

Council. The term “family” shall include all persons related within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity (These include parents and children, immediately uncles and aunts, up to the first cousins).

Election shall be by secret ballot and there shall be no campaigning.

NCCR OPINION NO. 98-004-B, DEC. 19, 1998. Relationship to the church council of the “church-owned or related schools” and the “prep-schools operated by the church council.”

Under Art. V, Sec. 9-A-13, of the Constitution, and reiterated in Art. III, Sec. 5, of the Bylaws, “representatives of church-owned or related schools” are considered members of the Church Council. A “prep-school operated by the Church Council” does not fall under the same category as a “church-owned or related school.” The latter is already represented in the Church Council by the Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators, while the former operates separately from the Local Church, but whose “administration, operation, and maintenance shall be subject to the annual review by the National Council to ensure the quality of their service and their constitution to the mission of the Church” (Art. V, Sec. 28, Bylaws). In view of this, the Principal of a prep-school operated by the Church Council is not ipso facto member of the Church Council, although the latter, under Art. V, Sec. 9-A-14 of the Constitution and Art. III, Sec. 5, of the Bylaws, may nevertheless decide to designate him as such.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 6. DUTIES OF THE CHAIRPERSON. The Chairperson of the Church Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To preside over the meetings of the Church Council;**
- b. Unless otherwise decided by the congregation to preside over the meetings of the congregation;**
- c. To prepare, in consultation with the Pastor, the agenda for the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;**
- d. To vote in case of a tie;**
- e. To represent the Local Church in contacts, instruments, or letter-agreement approved by the Church Council except those involving real properties which should be approved by the congregation and the proper Church authority; and**
- f. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.**

BYLAWS, Art. III, SEC. 7. DUTIES OF THE VICE-CHAIRPERSON. The Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the position of the Chairperson when he/she is absent or when the vacancy due to resignation or other causes; and
- b. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 11. DUTIES OF THE CHURCH SECRETARY. The Church Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep a full and complete record of all proceedings of the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
- b. To have custody of all records and documents of the Church, including the regular updating of the official record of members, indicating their names, dates of their admission, their category of membership and such other personal data as may be necessary, and the registration of marriages, baptisms and deaths;
- c. To issue notices of meeting of the congregation and the Church Council; and
- d. To perform such other duties and functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 12. DUTIES OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. The Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To act and serve as the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- b. To implement such stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designated and adopted by the Board of Deacons;
- c. To keep and regularly update the record of the Local Church budget;
- d. Together with the Pastor, the Treasurer and the Board of Deacons, to prepare the annual budget of the Local Church based on the plans and programs for the ensuing year for submission to the Church Council;
- e. To ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget;
- f. To lead in the stewardship campaign for tithes, pledged and donations in support to the annual budget of the Local Church; and
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 13. DUTIES OF THE CHURCH TREASURER.

The Church Treasurer shall have the following duties:

- a. **To receive all funds of the Local Church and deposit the same in such bank or banks as may be designated by the Church Council**
- b. **To disburse the funds of the Local Church in accordance with the budget, including the prompt remittance of the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies, under the direction of the Church Council, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the Church Council, and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the Chairperson and/or other duly authorized officer of the Local Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specially intended for any program, project, or activity of the Local Church. In respect to the funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Local Church, such funds shall be disbursed strictly according to the specific instructions of such individuals or organizations.**
- c. **To keep a complete record of all financial transactions, including but not limited to, vouchers and official receipts;**
- d. **To present financial reports to the Church Council quarterly or as often as it may require; and**
- e. **To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.**

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 14. DUTIES OF THE CHURCH AUDITOR. The Church Auditor shall have the following duties:

- a. **To audit the books of the Local Church regularly and submit a report thereon to the Church Council and the congregation;**
- b. **To formulate, devise and submit to the Church Council an integrated audit system and procedures;**
- c. **To present audited financial statement to the Church Council and the congregation at least once a year; and**
- d. **To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.**

Section 10. Local Church Workers. Local Church workers are those called by the Local Church and assigned officially by the Conference.

The Pastor is the spiritual leader, shepherd, and executive office of the Local Church. He/She is the representative of the Church to the congregation, as well as the representative of the congregation to the other bodies of the Church and the larger society.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 8. THE PASTOR. The Pastor, who should be an ordained minister or licentiate of the Church, must:

- a. Uphold and abide by the UCCP Constitution and Bylaws; and
- b. Exercise pastoral leadership.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 9. TERM OF THE PASTOR. The term of the Pastor shall be for two (2) years but not to exceed four (4) years. He/She may be called for more than one term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

NCCR OPINION NO. 02-009, FEB. 24, 2002. The word "Pastor" in Art. III, Sec. 9, of the Bylaws refers to both ordained and licentiate Pastors.

The word "Pastor" in Art. III, Sec. 9, of the Bylaws refers to any and all pastors, whether ordained ministers or licentiates, assigned by the Conference to a Local Church following the procedure prescribed in Art. III, Sec. 10, of said Bylaws.

NCCR OPINION NO. 02-009, FEB. 24, 2002. Fixing the term of office of the Pastor.

The Local Church shall abide by the "term of the Pastor" fixed by the Conference in session. If, however, the Conference has not fixed the term, then the Local Church may exercise its discretion of fixing the term within the parameters set by Art. III, Sec. 9, of the Bylaws.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 10. PROCEDURE FOR THE CALL OF PASTORS AND CHURCH WORKERS. The call of pastors and other Church workers shall, as a general rule, be as follows:

- a. The Church Council shall constitute a Church Workers Call Committee;
- b. The Committee shall send a request to the Conference Settlement Committee, for a Church worker stating the needs of the Local Church and the desired qualities of the said Church worker;
- c. The Conference Settlement Committee shall recommend a Church worker it deems appropriate for the Local Church making the request;
- d. Upon acceptance by the Committee of the recommendation, it shall submit the same to the Church Council for approval;
- e. Once approved, the Church Council shall endorse the recommendation to the congregation for confirmation;
- f. The confirmation shall be conducted in an appropriate time during the regular Sunday worship service; and

- g. Upon confirmation by the congregation, and acceptance of the call by the Church worker, the installation ceremony shall be held in consultation with the Conference.**

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-007, OCT. 22, 2001. Church workers are members of the Local Church.

Are church workers, in general, and Christian Educators for Early Childhood, in particular, members of the Local Church? They definitely are. While the Constitution and Bylaws do not categorically declare them to be so, some provisions do indicate implicitly that they automatically are. For instance, Sec. 9.A.12, Art. V, of the Constitution provides that the pastor of the Local Church and other church workers are members of the Local Church Council without vote. One cannot be a member of Local Church Council if he is not a member of the Local Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-007, OCT. 22, 2001. Church workers as members of the Conference.

Apart from this, they are also members of the Conference. This includes church workers, like ordained ministers and lay church workers, music directors, licentiates and local lay preachers, who are called by the Local Church, assigned officially (Sec. 10, Art. V of the Constitution) and accredited by the Conference (Sec. 2a, Art. VI of the Constitution). If, however, Local Churches, which operate a pre-school or child-learning center, should directly hire Christian education childhood workers without the participation or imprimatur of the Conference, then, by that token, they are not members of the Conference, but only of the Local Church that hires their services.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-007, OCT. 22, 2001. As to whom church workers are accountable.

As to the church body to which Church Workers, in general, and the Christian Educators for Early Childhood, in particular, are accountable, it will be to whichever authorities that called/hired them. For Christian Education Workers whose services are hired by a Local Church without the participation of the Conference in their recruitment or assignment, they are accountable to the Board of Christian Educators of the Local Church as far as the education program of the school is concerned, and, generally, to the Local Church Council for operations and management.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-007, FEB. 1, 2003. Congregational confirmation is a vital and very significant component in the “call” and “assignment” of a church worker.

We view the congregational confirmation, provided for in Art. III, Sec. 10, of the Bylaws, not as a mere formal ritual, nor a ceremonial gesture, of the Local Church,

but that it is a vital and very significant component in the process, and that absence of this particular phase would necessarily render defective the call and assignment of the church worker. While the work of the Settlement Committee (in coming up with the assignment of the available church worker) and the role of the Church Council (in making out the necessary action and recommendation) are quite indispensable, still, somewhere along the line, the members of the congregation should themselves be made to say “yes” to the assignment. This is the polity of the UCCP as laid down in the statutes.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-003, SEPT. 6, 2003. As to whether Conference Council (or, for that matter, the Settlement Committee) has the authority to “recall” or to “rescind a call” which had earlier been made on a church pastor.

The call of the Local Church for the service of a Pastor is a constitutional right and privilege given to the Local Church and its Congregation (Constitution Art. V, Sec. 3, 6, 8c; Bylaws Art. III, Sec. 1b). As it is a right, it cannot be subordinated to a decision or recommendation of the Settlement Committee or of any other Committee of the Conference, unless the call itself is not valid (e.g., non-acceptance by the pastor. . . lack of congregational confirmation . . . the pastor had already served beyond the maximum number of terms allowed for pastoral service in a local church). The Settlement Committee may not impose conditions in, nor is it vested with any authority to modify or limit, the exercise of this right and privilege of the local church.

The Settlement Committee and the Conference, may intervene only in either of two situations: 1) when a local Church does not have a pastor or that no pastor is responding to its call; 2) when a pastor does not have any assignment. The Settlement Committee “initiates an assignment in the absence of a call” (Bylaws, Art. II, Sec. 11b3). The Conference or its Settlement Committee may not set aside a valid call on the basis of complaints coming from some members of the congregation. Such complaints should be dealt with in the manner, and under the procedure, provided for in the Bylaws (Art. VI and VII) -- but not as basis to countermand a valid call. Neither may the Conference or its Settlement Committee, being not so authorized by our statutes, impose as a condition, for the continuation of a valid call, that the called Pastor should be able to settle a dispute with some members in the congregation. As the right to make a valid call is a vested right belonging exclusively to the Local Church – then, conceivably, only the Local Church may rescind, overturn, or reconsider the same.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-003, SEPT. 6, 2003. Validity of a call on the Pastor is not based on his subsequent installation.

The duty of the Conference to “install ministers in their respective assignments” is ministerial – one that should be performed to support and solemnize a valid call earlier made by the Local Church. As in a marriage ceremony, the consent of the parties to be married is not subject to the approval of the solemnizing minister, for

as long as there are no legal impediments. The minister has no choice but to solemnize the decision of couple to get married. But the marriage should not be seen as being subject to the approval of the solemnizing minister. In like manner, the duty of the Conference to install, vital as it is, cannot be made an instrument to withhold assignment of a Pastor who has already been granted a valid call.

Section 11. The Board of Elders. The Board of Elders, which shall also act as the Board of Christian Mission, shall attend to the spiritual welfare and discipline of the church members, the mission concerns of the Local Church, and matters affecting church membership including the maintenance of discipline.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 15. ELECTION, COMPOSITION AND TERM OF BOARD OF ELDERS. The members of the Board of Elders shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms. There shall at least be three (3) Elders for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve (12) Elders to compose the Board of Elders.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 16. QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER. To qualify for election of Elder, one must be a regular member of good standing for five (5) years in any UCCP Local Church and in the Local Church for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election, a respected member of the community where he/she resides, of good moral character and with demonstrated maturity in faith and witness, commitment and support to the mission and ministry of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 17. DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF ELDERS. The duties of the Board of Elders are the following:

- a. To serve as example of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness by the grace of God;
- b. To be responsible for the admission of persons into full membership, the grant of honorary memberships and approval of issuance of certificates of transfer and clearances;
- c. To assist the Pastor in the administration of the sacraments, including the preparation of the Lord's Supper;
- d. To supervise all services of public worship;
- e. To act as a Board of Christian Mission and, as such, formulate, design and carry out holistic evangelism and mission programs of the Local Church that shall include, among others, the establishments of outreach centers;

- f. To formulate, design and implement an integrated plan for membership growth and development, including the annual review of the Local Church membership and visitations;
- g. To oversee the conduct of, and, subject to the approval of the Church Council, exercise disciplinary powers over the members; and
- h. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

Section 12. The Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons, which shall also act as the Social Concerns Committee, shall oversee the effective and efficient implementation of the stewardship program of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 18. BOARD OF DEACONS. The members of the Board of Deacons shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three (3) years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms. There shall be at least three (3) Deacons for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve (12) Deacons to compose the Board of Deacons.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 18. QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON. To qualify for election as Deacon, a regular member must have been such member of good standing for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election; a respected member of the community where he/she resides; of good moral character; has working knowledge of finance, accounting and budget planning, and an exemplar of cheerful giving.

BYLAWS, Art. III, Sec. 20. Duties of the Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as responsible stewards in their personal, family and church life;
- b. To formulate, develop and adopt a vigorous stewardship practice that shall include the giving by members of their tithes, time, talents and possessions to ensure the financial and material support of the programs and activities of the Church;
- c. To act and serve as the financial planning arm of the Local Church, with the Financial Secretary as the Chairperson;
- d. To formulate, develop and design a stewardship education program for the Local Church;
- e. To act as a social concern committee;
- f. To assist the Financial Secretary in the preparation of the annual budget and plan for its attainment for submission to the Church Council;

- g. To ensure that the assessment and other contribution due to wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget; and**
- h. To prepare such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.**

Section 13. The Board of Christian Educators. The Board of Christian Educators shall oversee the education program of the Local Church.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 21. BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS. The members of the Board of Christian Educators shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three (3) years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms. There shall be three (3) Christian Educators for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve (12) Christian Educators to compose the Board of Christian Educators.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 22. QUALIFICATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR. To qualify for election as Christian Educator, he/she must have the same qualifications as an Elder.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 23. DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS. The Board of Christian Educators shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as a model of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness to growth and development of persons;**
- b. To develop and supervise the over-all Christian education and nurture program of the Local Church;**
- c. To ensure that the education, nurture, discipleship and leadership development programs for all groups are carried out in the Local Church;**
- d. To encourage and challenge the members, especially the youth, to a calling in the varied ministers and mission of the Church; and**
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.**

Section 14. The Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church properties.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 24. BOARD OF TRUSTEES. The Board of Trustees shall be established whose members are the officers of the Church Council, including the Administrative Pastor as ex officio member, without vote.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 25. DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

The Board of Trustees shall have the following duties:

- a. To oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church buildings and other properties;
- b. To formulate, develop and design an integrated property development plan for the Local Church.
- c. To ensure that the acquisition by purchase, donation, bequests or any other means, and the registration of real properties should be in trust for the UCCP for the use of the Local Church;
- d. To recommend to the Church Council, for the approval of the congregation and the proper Church authority, the sale, lease and other disposition of real properties of the Local Church to undergird the integrated property development of the Local Church; and
- e. To perform such acts or duties as may be assigned by the Church Council;

Section 15. Term, Election, Other Matters. The qualification, term of office, duties and responsibilities of the Pastor and Officers of the Local Church, the procedures for election and other matters pertaining to its structure and government shall be provided for in the Bylaws and the statutes of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. III, SEC. 26. PROVISIONS COMMON TO THE BOARDS.

The following provisions shall have common application to the Boards:

- a. The Board shall function within the scope of their authority and, whenever necessary, in coordination with each other. Their action shall not become final and executory until affirmed by the Church Council or confirmed by the congregation;
- b. The Church Council may affirm, modify or alter the action of one (1) Board which may be in conflict with the action of the another Board, or when there is clear error, injustice, or deviation from existing policy. It shall also act on appeals brought to it by any of the Boards;
- c. The regular meetings of the Boards shall be held every month on such date as may be determined by the Board in consultation with the other Boards and the Church Council. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or upon written request of the Pastor, or of at least two (2) Board members. The purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the notice;
- d. The Pastor and the Chairperson of the Church Council are ex officio members of the Board, without vote;
- e. In case of vacancy in the membership of any Board, the same shall be filled by the candidate who garnered the next highest number of votes in the

- immediately preceding election for the Board or, in default thereof, in any other manner as may be determined by the Church Council; and**
- f. **Except when expressly given permission in writing by the Church Council, no Board member shall have financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any contract or transaction of the Local Church. No Board members shall participate in the Church Council or Board deliberation on such contract or transaction where he/she may have financial interest or on matters affecting the employment of his/her spouse, parents, children or other relatives by consanguinity or affinity within the fourth civil degree.**

ARTICLE VI

THE CONFERENCE

Section 1. Nature and Composition. The Conference is an organized body of no less than thirty (30) local churches, in a defined area with no less than ten (10) ordained ministers with pastoral assignments.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 1. CONFERENCE. The Conference shall encompass a contiguous area, and all local churches and worshipping congregations within the area shall belong to such Conference.

Section 2. The Conference in Session. The Conference in session shall be composed of the following:

- a) church workers accredited by the Conference;
- b) one (1) lay representative from each Local Church for every two hundred (200) members; or major fraction thereof; provided that where there are more than one delegate the duly recognized youth organization shall be represented; provided finally that a Local Church shall have a least one (1) but not more than five (5) delegates;
- c) officers and members of the Conference Council;
- d) ministerial students under the care of the Conference;
- e) retired church workers;
- f) whenever applicable, designated representatives of partner churches, without vote;
- g) representatives from accredited ecumenical and service agencies within the Conference; without vote; and
- h) one (1) representative from each worshipping congregation, without vote.

BYLAWS, Art. IV, Sec. 2. Conference Sessions.

- a. **The annual sessions of the Conference shall be set in consultation with the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet; and**

- b. In a special session of the Conference, where a vacancy occurs by reason of death, resignation, transfer or incapacity of an accredited delegate in the last regular session, the same shall be filled by the Local Church concerned.**

Section 3. Officers. The Conference shall have the following officers:

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) Secretary;
- d) Financial Secretary;
- e) Treasurer;
- f) Auditor;
- g) Conference Minister, without vote;
- h) Deputy Conference Minister, without vote; and
- i) Other officers which the Conference or its Council shall deem necessary, without vote.

Section 4. Duties and Functions. The Conference shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) proclaim the faith and promote the expansion of the Church;
- b) affirm and apply in all its activities and programs the Declaration of Principles;
- c) ordain candidates for ministry according to the procedures of the Church;
- d) appoint and consecrate licentiates and other law Church workers;
- e) install ministers in their respective assignments, with the Conference Minister or the duly appointed representative officiating;
- f) receive ministers from other communions according to the regulations of the Church;
- g) ensure that every Local Church within the Conference shall have a church worker and that every active church worker shall have an assignment;
- h) exercise supervision over local churches and pastoral assignments within its area; review the status of existing local churches; and organize or recognize new ones;
- i) support, spiritually and financially, the lay and clergy formation program of the Church;
- j) elect delegates to the General Assembly;
- k) elects its representative to the National Council;
- l) elect members of the Conference Council and Conference representatives to other church bodies;
- m) receive and act on petitions and appeals from the local churches or on matters referred to it by the higher bodies of the Church;
- n) develop, implement and evaluate programs consistent with the program thrusts of the General Assembly in the Local Churches;
- o) review all acts of the Conference Council;
- p) adopt a Conference budget;
- q) coordinate the programs of the church-recognized organizations;
- r) endeavor to fulfill faithfully and promptly all financial and other obligations to other church bodies; and

- s) provide adequate salaries of church workers within the area.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-007, JULY 15, 2000. Requirement as to the time when ordination should be made.

Paragraph C of the above provision states that one of the duties and functions of the Conference is to “ordain candidates for the ministry according to the procedures of the church.” But there is no requirement in the Constitution and Bylaws that the ordination of the candidates for ministry should be held during, or at the time of, the holding of, the annual session of the Conferences. What appears to be the controlling operative requirement is that such ordination be carried out pursuant to the authority granted by the Conference.

Section 5. Sessions.

- a) The Conference shall meet annually.
b) Special sessions may be called by the Conference Ministers upon request of the Conference Council;
c) The delegates to the special session of the Conference shall be the accredited members in the last regular session. Vacancies by reason of death, transfer, incapacity, or resignation, shall be filled as prescribed in the Bylaws.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 97-007, MAY. 22, 1999. Conference session should be held within its corresponding ecclesiastical year.

In light of the provision (Art. IX, Sec. 2, Constitution) that “the ecclesiastical year of the Church shall be from June 1 to May 31 of the following year,” a particular conference session should be held within, and not after, the corresponding ecclesiastical year.

Section 6. Quorum. A majority of the Local churches through their accredited representatives shall constitute a quorum, provided that not less than (5) ordained ministers and five (5) other church workers of the Conference are present.

Section 7. The Conference Council. Every Conference shall have a Conference Council composed of the following:

- a) officers of the conference who shall be the officers of the Council; the Conference Minister without vote;
b) three (3) ordained ministers elected by the Conference;
c) three (3) unordained church workers elected by the Conference;
d) three (3) lay persons elected by the Conference from among the men, women and youth;
e) heads or representatives of church-recognized organizations;
f) the Conference representatives of the National Council;
g) whenever applicable, heads or representatives of church-owned or –related schools or institutions within the Conference;

- h) other officers and members as may be designated by the Conference;
- i) the Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, without vote unless he/she is a member of the Conference; and
- j) whenever applicable, the Bishops Emeritus residing in the area.

NCCR OPINION NO. 99-003, MAR. 20, 1999. The Deputy Conference Minister is without vote in the Conference Council.

The Deputy Conference Minister sits in the Conference Council without vote. The reason is that since the Deputy Conference Minister is without vote in the Conference at session (Art. VI, Sec. 3-h, Constitution), it follows that he should also sit in the Conference Council without vote, considering that the latter is but the interim body of the Conference (Art. VI, Sec. 8, Constitution).

Section 8. Duties and Functions. The Conference Council shall serve as the interim body of the Conference. It shall act on all matters referred to it except those that pertain to the Conference in session.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 17. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE COUNCIL.

As the interim body of the Conference, the Conference Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To act upon matters referred to it by the local churches, the Conference and the General Assembly or National Council;
- b. To recommend an integrated short and long range strategic plan and annual budget for approval by the Conference during the annual session;
- c. To meet not later than one month prior to the annual session of the Conference to finalize the agenda for the annual session;
- d. To make full report of its actions to the Conference during the annual session; and
- e. To provide for an external audit of the Conference.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 98-002, DEC. 1, 1998. As to when Conference Council may elect an Acting Conference Minister.

The Conference Council, if there is an earlier mandate on the matter made by the Conference, may properly elect an Acting Conference Minister.

Section 9. Meetings.

- a) The Conference Council shall meet three (3) times a year.
- b) Special meetings may be called by the Conference Minister.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 3. MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE COUNCIL.

- a. The Conference Council shall hold three (3) regular meetings every year on such dates and time as the Conference Council may set; and

- b. **Notice of special meetings shall be sent personally or by the most expeditious means available to all the members of the Conference Council at least one week before the special session, and shall state the purpose or purposes thereof.**

Section 10. Quorum. At least fifty percent (50%) of the voting members of the Conference Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 11. The Conference Minister.

- a) The Conference Minister shall be the spiritual leader, shepherd and chief executive of the Conference.
- b) **Qualifications.** To qualify for election as Conference Minister, a person must be an ordained minister of good standing in the Church, have formal theological training or its equivalent, be at least 30 years of age at the time of election, and must have rendered full-time active service as an ordained minister for at least five (5) years, two years of which as a full-time minister of a Local Church of the UCCP. The candidate must also have served within the Conference for at least two (2) years immediately prior to election.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 8. EQUIVALENT THEOLOGICAL TRAINING OF CONFERENCE MINISTER. The “equivalent” formal theological training required of Conference Minister in Article VI, Section 11(b) of the Constitution, refers to the formal theological training obtained from theological institutions not accredited or recognized by the UCCP.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 9. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE MINISTER. The Conference Minister, being the shepherd of the flock in the Conference, shall serve the Conference in a full time capacity and shall have the following duties:

- a. **To promote the unity and cooperation of all the constituents units of the Conference;**
- b. **To plan Conference programs of action, together with the members of the Conference Council, consistent with the direction and orientation of the General Assembly program thrusts;**
- c. **To ensure effective implementation of Conference programs through teamwork and cooperation among Conference leaders and Church workers;**
- d. **To facilitate and enhance the continuing education and development of Church workers and leaders within the Conference area;**
- e. **To promote Conference programs in the local churches through visitation and consultation with the Local Church workers and lay leaders;**

- f. To support Local Church workers in assessing the needs of local churches in pursuing their mission and ministry with respect to specific local situations; and
- g. To perform other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

NCCR OPINION NO. 99-001, MAR. 20, 1999. *The “five year-two year” requirement to qualify as Conference Minister may be staggered, and need not be continuous or successive.*

*Under Art. VI, Sec. 11-b, of the Constitution, one of the qualifications for the position of Conference Minister is that “he should have rendered full-time active service as an ordained minister for at least five (5) years, two years of which as a full-time minister of a Local Church of UCCP.” This particular requirement has two components, both of which must be met, to wit, **one**, that the Pastor, at the time of the election, should have already rendered full-time active service as an ordained minister for at least five (5) years, and **two**, that two years of these five years were served as full-time minister of a Local Church of UCCP. It is, however, quite evident from the provision that the requirement of five years full-time active service as an ordained minister, as well as, that of the two years of said five years being full-time minister of a Local Church of UCCP, need not be continuous or successive, but may be staggered, and need not be completed immediately before the election to the office of Conference Minister*

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-001, NOV. 2, 2002. *The meaning of the requirement that, to qualify as Conference Minister, “the candidate must also have served within the Conference for at least two (2) years immediately prior to election.”*

The words “serving within the Conference” relates not strictly or solely to the services rendered within the geographical or physical configuration of the Conference. “Serving within the Conference” should necessarily include services rendered for and on behalf of the Conference wherever they are carried out, including those exercised outside the geographical confines of the Conference. A contrary construction would lead to an untenable and incoherent outcome, which certainly could not have been the intention of the framers of the Constitution. If, for instance, an officer of a Conference were assigned by the latter to a training program in another Conference, or in some other place in the country -- such stint cannot be classified as a “break” in the continuity of the period of his service to the Conference, and said commissioning or assignment is obviously to be taken as part and parcel of his entire rendition of service within the Conference.

In the present case, the Respondent, during the disputed period, had NOT been transferred, nor released, nor removed, nor turned over by the Conference to the national office. Assign is the operative term here. It is the precise term used in the

basic document of authorization. We are not at liberty to change or modify the meaning or signification of this term, nor to substitute our own suppositions or inclinations about the meaning of the term in place of what the term ordinarily means. To assign, according to Webster and in the context of its use in the authorization letter, means “to delegate to a specific purpose.” Because he was officially assigned by the Conference, it follows that it was not at his sole behest nor by dint of his exclusive choice that he rendered service at the National Office – but that it came about on account of a special mandate, given by the Conference, in connection with a specific program or concern of the Church. When the assignment was made, the Conference thereby became the assignor, and the Respondent the assignee. In law, the assignee gets to be an extension of the legal personality of the assignor. Consequently, for all legal intents and purposes, the service rendered by the assignee, for as long as he does the service within the ambit of authority specified in the assignment, becomes itself a service falling within the domain of the assignor.

It is true that in statutory construction, there is that axiom to the effect that where the words in a legal provision are clear, the literal meaning shall apply. In the present case, however, the clause “serving within the Conference” can precisely be susceptible to not just a single exclusive meaning. Whereupon, we find that an interpretation of said clause is in order. As it is, the meaning of the clause can either be: 1) serving exclusively inside the bounded geographical confines of the Conference, or 2) serving for and behalf of the Conference, both inside and outside of the geographical boundaries of the Conference. It is our view that the latter concept is more in accord with reason, practicality, and common sense. But more important, granting arguendo that the subject clause were to be taken as one that is already clear, still a corollary rule in statutory construction would have to apply: that the intent in the provision prevails over the letter of the provision, and that the latter must yield to the former. It is our view that the intent in the clause “serving within the Conference” comprehends services rendered in the name, or by authority and mandate, of the Conference, and performed either outside or inside its geographical confines.

c) Election.

- 1) The election of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister shall be presided over by the Bishop of the Church assigned in the jurisdictional area.
- 2) The Conference Minister and the Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected by the accredited members of the Conference in session from among the qualified ministers who have recorded their availability with the Secretary of the Conference. Election shall be by ballot, without nomination or discussion, and shall be preceded by a period of quiet meditation and prayer. A majority vote of the members present and voting shall be required for election.

- d) **Term.** The Conference Minister shall be elected for a term of two (2) years, with two (2) possible re-elections.
- e) **Duties.** The duties and functions of the Conference Minister shall be prescribed in the Bylaws.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-001, NOV. 30, 2002. That the winning Conference Minister was the sole candidate does not make his election invalid.

In alleging that there was violation of Art. VI, Sec. 11 (2) of the Constitution, what was actual put to question was the inordinate constriction of the field of choice for Conference Minister, in that because of the alleged “gentleman’s agreement” among the ministers, only one candidate – and winner – came out. It might have been a more regular (and, probably, more satisfactory) electoral proceedings had the Conference delegates been made to choose from at least two available ministers. But the procedural guideline laid down by Art. VI, Sec. 11(2) always carries the possibility that only one (or, in fact, even no one) might end up as an available candidate. That is why, an amendment to the Constitution might later have to be considered by the Church, to provide for a mechanism that would insure at least a 2-cornered contest in the election of a Conference Minister.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-001, NOV. 30, 2002. Announcement of a “gentleman’s agreement” prior to election on the alleged choice of candidate, while probably imprudent or undesirable, does not invalidate the result of the election. The act of a Conference delegate (assuming arguendo that such act had been done) in making an open announcement to the body about an earlier “gentleman’s agreement” arrived at by the ministers – or even the very act itself (again, assuming arguendo that such act had been done) of formulating said “agreement” prior to the election – might not exactly be the most prudent and desirable gesture or activity in a Conference gathering. But neither is it expressly proscribed by our statutes. Nor is there any indication that any of the delegates, on that occasion, demurred or objected to the alleged act or acts complained of. Plainly, what Art. VI, Sec. 11(2) prohibits is the “making of nomination” or the “carrying out of any discussion” during the conference session itself when an election is about to be conducted.

RULING, NCCR CASE NO. 02-001, NOV. 30, 2002. Questions about propriety and civility in the conduct of elections do not necessarily mean their invalidity.

This Commission is duty bound to examine – and interpret – the meaning, context, and intent of our church statutes. On the other hand, questions about propriety, civility, and effective and credible modality in the conduct of any assembly or proceedings under the auspices of the Church – these necessarily belong to the other areas or departments of our church leadership. Indeed, there is no question that all election proceedings, especially those held within a church body, should always in the least be civil and decorous, free from any semblance of impropriety.

But to attain this, it is the skill and competence of the chairman or presiding officer, along with the humility, and the high sense of responsibility and commitment, of the constituent members which would come forth as the prime requisite.

Section 12. Other Officers. The qualifications, terms of office, manner of election, duties and functions of the other offices of the Conference, and the filing of vacancies shall be provided for in the Bylaws and statutes of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 10. DEPUTY CONFERENCE MINISTER. The Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected in the same manner and shall have the same qualifications as the Conference Minister.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 11. DUTIES OF THE DEPUTY CONFERENCE MINISTER. The Deputy Conference Minister shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the duties of the Conference Minister in the event of the latter's absence, disability, resignation or inhibition; and
- b. To perform such duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 12. OTHER CONFERENCE OFFICERS.

- a. The Conference Secretary, Conference Financial Secretary, Conference Secretary and Conference Auditor shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session and shall serve for a term of two (2) years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

Members of the Conference Committees shall likewise serve for a term of two (2) years, without prejudice to reappointment.

- b. The Conference, if it so desires, may appoint other officers as may be necessary for its efficient and effective management and administration. These officers, such as administrative officer, office manager and/or liaison officer, shall perform such duties and functions as the Conference may assign.

NCCR OPINION NO. 98-003, OCT. 20, 1998. Conference delegate to the National Council may be reelected for another term, not to exceed three consecutive terms.

The conference delegate to the National Council in effect falls under the provision for "Other Officers" set forth in Art. VI, Sec. 12, of the Constitution, and, in line with Art. 10, Sec. 12, of the Bylaws, may likewise "be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms."

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 13. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY. The Conference Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep and maintain faithful record of all proceedings of the Conference and the Conference Council in a book specially provided for the purpose;
- b. To keep such other records of the Conference as may be entrusted to his/her custody;
- c. To issue certifications or certified copies of documents and records of the Conference; and
- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 14. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE FINANCIAL SECRETARY. The Conference Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. Together with the Conference Minister and Conference Treasurer, to prepare the Conference annual budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference;
- b. Together with the Conference Minister, Conference Treasurer and Conference Program Coordinators, to prepare and design a stewardship program to generate funds to support the Conference annual budget;
- c. To implement stewardship campaign for tithes, pledges and donations in support of the Conference budget;
- d. To lead in the stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designed and adopted by the Conference or Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the financial secretaries of the local churches to ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the annual budgets of the local churches and that the same are promptly remitted to the Conference;
- f. To keep and update financial records of the Conference; and
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or Conference Council.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 15. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE TREASURER. The Conference Treasurer shall have the following duties:

- a. To have custody, for and on behalf of the Conference, of all funds, securities, tithes, assets and other properties in the name of the Conference, which shall come to his/her possession;

- b. To receive and deposit, in the name of the Conference, all funds of the Conference in accredited bank or banks, as may be designated by the Conference Council;
- c. To disburse funds in accordance with the approved accounting procedures and the approved budget of the Conference;
- d. Together with the Conference Minister, to prepare the budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the treasurer and boards of deacons of the local churches to ensure the inclusion in the annual budgets of the local churches the assessment and other contributions due to wider Church bodies, and the prompt remittance of such assessment and other contributions to the Conference;
- f. To submit quarterly financial report to the Conference Council and a yearly audited financial report to the Conference; and
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 16. DUTIES OF THE CONFERENCE AUDITOR.

The Conference Auditor shall have the following duties:

- a. To audit the books of the Conference and submit an audit report to the Conference or the Conference Council;
- b. To formulate, design and implement a systematic and simplified audit systems and procedure; and
- c. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

BYLAWS, ART. IV, SEC. 18. CONFERENCE PROGRAM COMMITTEES.

The Conference may create program committees to implement its program thrusts consonant with the program thrusts of the Church as defined by the General Assembly or National Council.

NCCR OPINION NO. 99-005, MAR. 18, 2000. Re a "Faith and Order Committee" within the Conference.

As to the legality of constituting a "Faith and Order Committee" within the Conference, the intent of the Constitution, on the basis of the structural polity of the Church, is that the sole body which would "establish norms and standards of doctrine, order and discipline in the Church" (Art. VII, Sec. 22-a), and would "conduct studies and reflections with local churches and other sectors of the Church, taking into account their sentiments and views on important issues of church and public life" (Art. VII, Sec. 22-b), is the Faith and Order Commission.

The aforesaid intent will necessarily be impinged if separate Faith and Order outfits in the Conferences, with identical functions as those exercised by the Faith and Order Commission, were to be established. Such set-up cannot be warranted.

ARTICLE VII

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 1. Nature. The General Assembly is the highest policy-making body of the Church.

Section 2. Composition. The General Assembly shall be composed of the following:

- a) four (4) delegates from each Conference for every five thousand (5,000) members or a major fraction thereof; provided, that at least one (1) of them shall represent the youth; provided further, that one of them shall be the Conference representative to the National Council; provided furthermore, that fifty percent (50%) shall represent women; and provided finally, that each Conference must have at least four (4) but not more than twelve (12) delegates;
- b) Conference Ministers;
- c) Bishop Emeritus;
- d) All Officers of the General Assembly;
- e) One (1) representatives from each duly recognized national organization;
- f) One (1) representative each from the aggrupation of the Church-owned or – related schools, health-care institutions and service agencies; and
- g) Other members as may be co-opted by action of the General Assembly.

Section 3. Duties and Functions of the General Assembly. The General Assembly shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) Proclaim the faith, determine the ministry and mission policies of the Church, provide for the conduct of mission, and approve statements on important public issues and concerns;
- b) Formulate policies and determine program thrusts and priorities of the Church in consultation with local churches, conferences and other constituencies;
- c) Elect and proclaim the Bishops of the Church and assign them to their respective jurisdictional areas;
- d) Elect the other officers of the Church;
- e) Set-up the organizational and operational structure of the Church;
- f) Review the actions of the National Council;
- g) Dispose of matters referred to it with respect to worship, general welfare and government of the Church;
- h) Recognize new Church bodies, reorganize existing ones, and determine their geographical boundaries based on standards set by the Church;
- i) Foster union and/or partnership with churches and other bodies whose purposes and aims are consistent with that of the UCCP;

- j) Receive through the Conference other local churches which adhere to the UCCP Statement of Faith, its Constitution and statutes; and
- k) Act on proposed amendments to the Constitution or call for a Constitutional Convention as stated in Article X of the Constitution.

(Reproduced in the Bylaws, Art. 5, Sec. 1)

Section 4. Meetings. The General Assembly shall meet every four (4) years in the month of May inclusive of the anniversary dates.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 4. SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. In addition to the regular sessions of the General Assembly as provided in Article VII, Section 4, of the Constitution, special sessions may be called in the following manner:

- a. By two-thirds (2/3) vote of all members of the National Council;
- b. By vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the total number of conferences. Any of the conferences or its Conference Council may, through a resolution, initiate the call for special session of the General Assembly. The resolution shall be circulated to all conferences for the purpose of obtaining the required vote for such call. When the two-thirds (2/3) vote is obtained, notice of the special session of the General Assembly shall be sent by the Office of the General Assembly to all the members at least one (1) month before the date of the special session. For this purpose, the expenses required shall be covered by a supplementary budget.

Section 5. Quorum. A majority of the Conferences duly represented shall constitute a quorum.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 5. QUORUM. In determining the quorum pursuant to Article VIII, Sec. 5, of the Constitution, a majority of all the conferences should be duly represented and accredited.

Section 6. Officers. The General Assembly shall have the following officers who shall also serve as such in the National Council:

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) General Secretary;
- d) Bishops;
- e) National Treasurer;
- f) National Auditor; and
- g) Other officers as may be designated by the General Assembly.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 6. ELECTION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICERS. Except for the General Assembly and the National Treasurer, the officers of the General Assembly shall be elected by and from among the members of the General Assembly.

Section 7. Term, Election, Qualifications, Duties of Officers. The Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the National Auditor shall be elected from among the members of the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years without re-election. The General Secretary and the National Treasurer shall be elected for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) re-election. Their qualifications, duties and responsibilities shall be provided for in the Bylaws.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 7. REMOVAL OF ELECTED OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Elected officers of the General Assembly may be removed by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the General Assembly in a special session called for the purpose, or by three-fourth (3/4) vote of the National Council for loss of confidence.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 9. MANNER OF NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF OTHER GENERAL ASSEMBLY OFFICERS. The nomination of election of the General Assembly officers shall be in the following manner:

- a. Nomination shall be made through the Nomination Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;
- b. The nominees shall be notified of his/her nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- c. Based on its screening, the Nominating Committee shall submit the list of the qualified nominees to the General Assembly;
- d. The Election Committee, created by the General Assembly under the immediately preceding section, shall conduct the election; and
- e. The elections shall be by secret ballot and the nominee obtaining the highest number of votes shall be declared elected, except that in the case of the General Secretary, a majority vote is required for his/her election. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 10. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE CHAIRPERSON. Apart from being a member of the General Assembly, to qualify for election as Chairperson of the General Assembly, one must be a regular member of good standing for five years and has had some experience in the conduct of meetings. He/She shall have the following duties and functions:

- a. To preside over the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- b. To prepare with the General Secretary the agenda for the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- c. When so specifically authorized, to act as the spokesperson of the General Assembly in meetings, conventions, and the like; and
- d. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-008, JULY 14, 2001. As to whether there is any legal impediment for the Chair of the General Assembly to be appointed as “Consultant/Resident Theologian” of the Church.

It is to be noted that the position of Resident Theologian is a new office created by the National Council. On the other hand, the Faith and Order Commission is an independent constitutional body whose members are appointed by the General Assembly, or its National Council, and with specific duties expressly provided by the Constitution.

Evidently, it could not have been the intention of the National Council, with the setting up of the office of the Resident Theologian, to create an independent office, whose functions and responsibilities might possibly traverse or conflict with those of the Faith and Order Commission. Therefore, such Office of the Resident Theologian should be seen as an office subordinated to, or made an adjunct of, the Faith and Order Commission. Under the UCCP structure of government, the General Assembly/National Council is the highest policy making body of the church. The Commissions, on the other hand, are independent line-departments which flesh out and execute policies of the Church. Under this premise, it seems in appropriate for the Chairman of the General Assembly/National Council to, at the same time, serve as an official/personnel of an independent constitutional commission. To avoid interlocking of interests and responsibilities, it will be meet and prudent for the nominated Resident Theologian, should he choose to accept the nomination, to relinquish his present post as Chairman of the General Assembly/National Council.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 11. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE VICE-CHAIRPERSON. The Vice-Chairperson of the General Assembly shall have the same qualifications as the Chairperson and shall assume the Chairperson’s duties and functions in his/her absence, disability, inhibition or resignation.

Section 8. Bishops and Bishops Emeritus: Qualifications, Terms and Election.

The Bishops shall act as a collegial shepherds of the Church.

To be qualified for election as Bishop, one should at least be forty-five (45) years old and not more than sixty-one (61) years old at the time of assumption of office; provided, that he/she is theologically trained in a UCCP-approved and accredited theological seminary; must have been an ordained minister in good standing for at least ten (10) years, and with at least ten (10) years of active service in a UCCP Local Church prior to his/her election.

They shall be elected by the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) year reelection.

Bishop Emeritus are all elected Bishops of the Church whose terms have ended and who have served at least one (1) term.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-004, OCT. 22, 2001. The “45-61 year old” qualification for election as Bishop.

In the provision – “to be qualified for election as Bishop, one should at least be forty-five (45) years old and not more than sixty-one (61) years old at the time of assumption of office” – the guiding word is “assumption.” If the Nomination Committee is in a position to determine the exact scheduled date of assumption of office, then it may proceed to figure out if a candidate will meet the specified requirement at the time of assumption. Otherwise, it is well that the candidates should have the qualifying age at the time of election. The sixty-one (61) year old requirement anticipates that the candidate may reach the age of sixty-five (65) by the end of his/her term, and this is understood to be the age of retirement. This may not apply in the case of reelection of a General Secretary who is serving term as such for the first time, as there is an entitlement for one re-election.

Section 9. The Council of Bishops. There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of incumbent Bishops and Bishops Emeritus whose duties and functions are as follows:

- a) Attend to matters of faith, life, mission, and welfare of the Church;
- b) In consultation with the Faith and Order Commission, issue pastoral letters and public statement on various questions and concerns reflecting the life and mission of the Church;
- c) Settle issues and conflicts relating to faith and doctrine; and
- d) Supervise the clergy formation program of the Church.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-012, JAN. 12, 2001. Re the duty of Council of Bishops in issuing pastoral letters and public statements.

One of the duties and functions of the Council of Bishop (par. B) is: In consultation with the Faith and Order Commission, issue pastoral letters and public statements on various questions and concerns reflecting the life and mission of the Church. An equivalent provision appears in Art. 7, Sec. 22, which states (par. C) that the Faith and Order Commission shall, among others, prepare theological statements pertaining to doctrinal and contemporary issues of public interest to be issued by the Council of Bishops.

We are inclined to support the view that, as a general rule, consultation with the Faith and Order Commission is necessary. But on urgent matters requiring immediate issuances of statement, in which time is of the essence, the Council of Bishops may base its statements on existing policies and programs instituted by the Church.

If circumstances of urgency are evident, and the moral and spiritual bases of the subject statement are along the general direction of the policies followed by the Church on kindred issues, it is hereby held that, in the absence of an opposing view

on the matter from the Faith and Order Commission, the validity of Statement has to upheld.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 8. MANNER OF NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF BISHOPS. The Bishops of the Church shall be elected in the following manner:

- a. Nomination for Bishop shall be made in writing and submitted to the Nominating Committee at anytime before the last session of the National Council;
- b. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- c. The election shall be conducted by an Election Committee, composed of three members, to be created and appointed by the General Assembly; and
- d. The election shall be by secret ballot and the first four nominees obtaining the highest majority vote shall be declared duly elected. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 22. JURISDICTIONAL AREA. A Jurisdictional area shall consist of at least five (5) contiguous conferences, with no less than 150 local churches and at least 50 ordained ministers with pastoral assignments.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 23. JURISDICTIONAL AREA CABINET. A Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall be established by the General Assembly or the National Council for each Jurisdictional Area with the following duties:

- a. Coordinate the promotion and implementation of the programs, projects and other undertakings of the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area consistent with the programs thrusts of the General Assembly;
- b. Monitor, assess and evaluate the results of the implementation of Conference programs and submit recommendations thereon to the General Assembly or the National Council;
- c. Design a comprehensive human resources development program for the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area; and
- d. Design and implement a promotional program aimed at disseminating and popularizing the thrusts of the Church and generating support for its programs.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 24. JURISDICTIONAL BISHOP. The Jurisdictional Bishop shall have the following duties:

To serve as the pastor of pastors by exercising pastoral care and responsibility with the Church workers of his/her jurisdictional area;

- a. To call and preside over the meetings of the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet; provided, that in his/her absence or incapacity, the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall elect from among the Conference Ministers a temporary presiding officer;**
- b. To implement a systematic program of visitation, consultation and promotion of programs of the General Assembly in the conferences;**
- c. In consultation with the Conference Ministers, coordinate scheduling of, and attend, the annual sessions of the conferences within his/her Jurisdictional Area;**
- d. To officiate the ordination of candidates for the ministry; and**
- e. In the absence of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister, to perform their duties and functions until one has been duly elected.**

In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of a Jurisdictional Bishop, or inability to discharge his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops may designate from among its members a temporary Jurisdictional Bishop until the General Assembly or National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term.

NCCR OPINION NO. 00-006, JULY 15, 2000. Re authority of National Council to elect successor to serve unexpired term of a Jurisdictional Bishop.

Under the above provision, the National Council, in between the sessions of the General Assembly, shall elect a successor to serve the unexpired term of a Jurisdictional Bishop who died, resigned, etc. during his term of office. The procedural rules to be followed in the aforesaid election is not defined in the Bylaws. Art. V, Sec. 8, of the Bylaws is the procedure laid down for the regular election of a Bishop by the General Assembly, and, therefore, does not apply with regard to the election by the National Council of an interim Bishop. On this basis, the National Council may adopt or devise its own rules with regard to this particular electoral exercise. Under the general principle of law, given the fact that the National Council has the plenary authority to elect an interim Bishop, it follows that the lesser authority included therein (i.e., the laying down of the procedure to effectuate said election) should perforce be fully recognized. In this regard, it will not be inappropriate for the National Council to observe those procedural guidelines provided for in Art. 5, Sec. 8, which are adoptable (i.e., "that the nominee shall be notified of the nomination. . . that the nominee shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing . . . that the election shall be by secret ballot.")

Section 10. The National Council: Composition. There shall be a National Council which shall serve as the interim body of the General Assembly composed of:

- a) officers of the General Assembly;
- b) one (1) representative each from duly recognized national organizations;
- c) one (1) representative each from the nation aggrupation of church-owned and – related schools, health-care institutions, and other service agencies;
- d) one (1) official representative from each Conference to be elected from among the members of the Conference in session with an alternative delegate in case the official representative cannot attend; and
- e) Others as may be co-opted by the National Council.

Section 11. Duties and Functions of the National Council. The National Council, which shall also serve as the Board of Trustees, shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) Device mechanisms for the implementation of the program thrusts, policies and priorities of the Church;
- b) Adopt an annual program and budget;
- c) Appoint members of programs and project committee upon the recommendation of the General Secretary;
- d) Act on matters referred to it affecting the life and witness of the Church, except those reserved exclusively to the General Assembly in session; and
- e) Constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and representative from the Conferences, which shall receive and screen nominee for all officers of the Church.

(The above provision is reproduced in the Bylaws, Art. 5, Sec. 2, thereof)

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-001, JAN. 12, 2001. Re “Representatives from the Conferences” who are members of the Nominating Committee.

Under the above provision, one of the duties and function of the National Council is “to constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and representatives from the Conferences, which shall receive and screen nominees for all officers of the Church.”

“Representatives from the Conferences” being among those to comprise this Nominating Committee, should said representatives be elected anew by the Conferences, or are the incumbent Conference Delegates already seated in the National Council to be deemed ipso facto the “representatives from the Conferences” for purposes of constituting the Nominating Committee?

It is the intent in the Constitution that those delegates already seated in the National Council be the ones who should be deemed members of said Nominating Committee, provided that the general strictures of law with respect to the nature of a Nominating Committee are observed, so that, for instance, those who are candidates, or would themselves be nominated, for any position, should inhibit

themselves, or be considered disqualified, from membership in the Nominating Committee.

NCCR OPINION NO. 02-003, March 9, 2002. As to whether National Council may approve new names for Conferences.

The National Council, as the interim General Assembly, has the authority to accept new names for conferences which had been originally named, created, and organized by virtue of a General Assembly resolution, provided that such action of the General Council is thereafter confirmed by the General Assembly.

Section 12. Meetings. The National Council shall meet annually. Special meetings may be called in accordance with the provision of the Bylaws.

Section 13. Quorum. A majority of the members of the National Council shall constitute a quorum.

Section 14. General Secretary. The General Secretary, who shall be a Bishop, shall be the spiritual head and executive officer of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 12. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY. To qualify for General Secretary, one must possess all the qualifications for Bishop as provided in Article VII, Section 8, of the Constitution and shall have demonstrated spiritual and pastoral leadership, and executive and administrative ability. He/She shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as the spiritual leader, executive officer, and spokesperson of the Church;
- b. To head the National Secretariat;
- c. To have custody of all land titles, minutes and all other important documents of the Church;
- d. To preside over the meetings of the Council of Bishops; and
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 13. VACANCY OF THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY. In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of the General Secretary, or inability to discharge his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops shall designate from among its members temporary General Secretary until the National Council shall have been elected an acting General Secretary to serve the unexpired term.

Section 15. The National Secretariat. There shall be a National Secretariat, the members of which shall be appointed by the General Secretary in accordance with the organizational and administrative structure of the UCCP.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 14. NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. The National Secretariat shall serve as the administrative, coordinating and monitoring center of the Church in the overall implementation of its program.

Section 16. The National Treasurer. The National Treasurer, who shall act as the corporate treasurer, shall be the custodian of all funds and properties of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 15. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE NATIONAL TREASURER. To qualify for election as National Treasurer, one must be a regular member of a Local Church, of irreproachable moral character, preferably a certified public accountant, and with demonstrated ability in corporate financial planning. He/She shall have the following duties and functions:

- a. To serve as the custodian for and on behalf of the Church of all funds, securities, assets and other properties of the Church which shall come into his/her possession, keep regular books of account, and deposit all funds in the name of the Church in such bank or banks as may be designated by the National Council;
- b. To disburse funds of the Church provided in accordance with the duly approved budget, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the General Assembly or the National Council and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the General Secretary and/or other duly authorized officer of the Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specifically intended for any program, project, or activity of the Church. In respect to funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Church, such funds shall be disbursed according to the specific instructions of such individuals organizations.
- c. To submit his/her books for audit as may be ordered by the Church or when requested by the National Auditor and render audited statement as may, from time to time, be required by the General Assembly or the National Council, and present as may be required and at the end of the ecclesiastical year, an audited financial report to the General Assembly or the National Council;
- d. In consultation with the General Secretary, to formulate and prepare long-term financial plans, including the annual budget or any supplemental budget as may be required of the Church for submission to, and approval by, the General Assembly or the National Council;
- e. To coordinate with the treasurers of the conferences to ensure the prompt and faithful remittance of assessments, contributions, and other obligations;
- f. To post such bond either in cash or by a reputable surety company acceptable to the National Council in such amount as may be fixed by it; and
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the National Council

NCCR OPINION NO. 02-002, MARCH 9, 2002. All funds of Commissions are under custody and stewardship of National Treasurer.

All funds of the Commissions of the Church should be under the custody and stewardship of the National Treasurer, and that the National Treasurer should always be a primary signatory in all of the bank accounts thereof. There is nothing in the Constitution and Bylaws which can warrant the diminution of this authority and responsibility of the National Treasurer.

Section 17. The National Auditor. The National Auditor shall act as the corporate auditor.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 16. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE NATIONAL AUDITOR. The National Auditor shall have the same qualifications as the National Treasurer, except that he/she must be a certified public accountant. He/She shall have the following duties:

- a. To examine or authorize the examination of the books and records of the Church in order to ascertain and verify that the annual report of the National Treasurer regarding the financial position and operations of the entire Church is in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles and with the policies, statutes and procedures established by the Church;
- b. To formulate, devise and submit to the General Secretary or the National Council accounting and auditing systems and procedures for the entire Church;
- c. To recommend adequate and effective system of accounts, the proper recording of transactions and the safeguarding of the assets of the entire Church;
- d. To conduct, in coordination with the Conference Auditor, audit of funds allocated by, or coursed through the General Assembly, to the Conference, and submit report thereon to the National Treasurer; and
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 17. EXTERNAL AUDITOR. There shall be annual financial audit of the Church to be conducted by an external auditor who shall be appointed by the National Council upon the recommendation of the General Secretary.

Section 18. Jurisdictional Area Cabinet. There shall be a Jurisdictional Area Cabinet for each of jurisdictional areas designated by the General Assembly. It shall be composed of the following:

- a) Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, who shall serve as the presiding officer;
- b) Conference Ministers;
- c) Program coordinator of the Jurisdiction; and

- d) Others who may be co-opted by the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet, without vote.

Section 19. Duties and Functions. The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) To coordinate and correlate the work of the Conferences and promote such programs, projects and activities as shall be undertaken jointly in the jurisdictional area, consistent with the program thrusts and priorities of the General Assembly; and
- b) To provide spiritual care and nurture; fellowship and mutual support among leaders and church workers within the jurisdictional area.

Section 20. Meetings. The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall meet as often as may be necessary.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 22. JURISDICTIONAL AREA. A Jurisdictional Area shall consist of at least five (5) contiguous conferences, with no less than 150 local churches and at least 50 ordained ministers with pastoral assignments.

Section 21. Faith and Order Commission. There shall be a Faith and Order Commission whose membership shall be appointed by the General Assembly or its National Council from among those members of the Church who have the required expertise and experience for the task of the Commission.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 18. BYLAWS. FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION. The Faith and Order Commission shall consist of five (5) members, three (3) of whom must be ordained ministers, and who shall serve for a term of four (4) years. To qualify for appointment to the Commission, one must possess theological understanding, be committed to the doctrines and discipline of the Church, of unquestionable moral character, and awareness of the pressing social issues.

Section 22. Duties and Functions. The Faith and Order Commission shall:

- a) establish norms and standards of doctrine; order and discipline in the Church;
- b) conduct studies and reflections with local churches and other sectors of the Church, taking into account their sentiments and views on important issues of church and public life; and
- c) prepare theological statements pertaining to doctrinal and contemporary issues of public interest to be issued by the Council of Bishops.

Section 23. Commission for Church Unity and Union. There shall be a Commission for Church Unity and Union whose members shall be appointed by the General Assembly from the membership of the Church. Its duties and functions shall be:

- a) To dialogue with other denominations and communions in the interest of Christian Unity;

- b) To negotiate with local, independent churches seeking affiliations with the UCCP; and
- c) To represent the UCCP in negotiations for organic church union.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 19. COMMISSION FOR CHURCH UNITY AND UNION. The Commission for Church Unity and Union shall be composed of five (5) members, who shall serve for a term of four (4) years. To qualify for appointment to the Commission, one must possess familiarity with the UCCP's vision for Christian unity and ecumenicity and must be committed to the establishment of the "One Body of Christ."

Section 24. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, in fulfillment of its stewardship responsibility, shall establish a comprehensive and nationwide resource development program, distinct from the present administrative structure, but complementary to it, in order to support its total life and ministry. This program shall be set forth in the statutes of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 20. COMMISSION ON STEWARDHIP AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT. In accordance with Article VII, Section 24, of the Constitution, the General Assembly or the National Council shall create and constitute a Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development, composed of five (5) members, who shall serve a term of four (4) years. To qualify for appointment to the Commission, one must be a regular member of a Local Church, of good moral character, has competence in material and human resource development, and an exemplar of generous giving. The Commission shall establish comprehensive and nationwide property and resource development programs to generate income for the support of the Church.

Such programs shall include the establishment of mechanism for property and human resources utilization that shall make the Church financially self-reliant and enable it to participate in the mission of the Universal Church.

For this purpose, the Commission shall encourage the formation of cooperatives and endeavor to establish Church-related institutions that shall provide insurance, hospitalization, retirement and pension plans for its Church workers, and assist the local churches in the establishment of memorial plans and parks for the members.

Real properties of the Church shall be developed for the benefit of the entire Church. In this regard, all local churches and church institutions not otherwise separately incorporated, shall be allowed to use the incorporation papers of the UCCP for such purposes. Guidelines in the sharing and distribution of the proceeds from the development of Church properties shall be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

In the acquisition, utilization and development of Church properties, the UCCP shall strictly abide and comply with the laws, statutes and accepted

principles for the promotion of ecological balance and integrity of God's creation.

NCCR OPINION NO. 01-003, JAN. 12, 2001. CSRD is part and parcel of UCCP administrative structure.

Under Art. VII, Sec. 24, of the Constitution, it is provided that "The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, in fulfillment of its stewardship responsibility, shall establish a comprehensive and nationwide resource development program, distinct from the present administrative structure, but complementary to it, in order to support its total life and ministry. This program shall be set forth in the statutes of the church." Pursuant to this and to Art. V, Sec. 20, of the Bylaws, a Commission on Stewardship and Resources Development was created.

The clause in the constitutional provision – "distinct from the present administrative structure, but complementary to it" -- has elicited confusion as to whether the Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development is supposed to be a separate unit from the UCCP structure or not.

There is no basis for the confusion. The clause says that the program is distinct from the present administrative structure. It does not say separate from the present administrative structure. Therefore, CSRD is not a separate unit from the UCCP structure. It remains part and parcel of the UCCP administrative outfit.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 3. CONSTITUTIONAL AND NATIONAL PROGRAM COMMISSIONS, AND OTHER NATIONAL CHURCH BODIES. The Church shall plan, determine and implement its ministry and mission through the Constitutional Commissions and such program commissions and other Church bodies as the General Assembly or National Council shall define the structure and composition of the program commissions and other Church bodies, prescribe the qualifications of their members and term of office, appoint their members in accordance with Article II, Section 5, of the Constitution and approve their budget. These program commissions and other Church bodies shall elect their own officers. National Church organizations and Church-owned and related institutions shall be attached to the Office of the General Secretary for coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 21. PROCEDURE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSION MEMBERS. Members of the various Commissions shall be appointed in accordance with the following procedure:

- a. Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;
- b. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing; and

- c. **The General Assembly or National Council, as the case may be, shall appoint the members of the various Commissions from the corresponding list of qualified nominees submitted and certified by the Nominating Committee.**

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 25. BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CHURCH.

For the purpose of complying with the requirements of the Corporation Code of the Philippines, the National Council shall serve as the Board of Trustees of the Church, pursuant to Article VII, Section 11, of the Constitution.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 26. INCORPORATION OF CHURCH BODIES.

Henceforth, a Local Church or Conference may be incorporated only upon prior approval of the General Assembly or the National Council, provided that its Constitution and Bylaws are consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Church. All local churches and conferences, which are separately incorporated, shall be subject to periodic review by the General Assembly or the National Council in regard to their incorporation. In the event of dissolution, all the properties and other assets of the Local Church and Conference shall be ceded back to the UCCP.

All local churches and conferences already incorporated before the effectivity of the Constitution and Bylaws shall be persuaded, when they encounter, convey or dispose of their real properties, to seek the approval of the National Council, through the General Secretary.

BYLAWS, ART. V, SEC. 27. NATIONAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

In addition to the existing and duly recognized national organizations representing youth, women and men, the Church shall encourage the formation and establishment of voluntary church organizations based on sectoral, gender or to meet specific or particular needs or other interests of the Church and the community, and promote the ministry and mission of the Church. These voluntary church organizations may seek recognition by, and representation in, the different levels of the Church. To be recognized by, and represented in the General Assembly or the National Council as a national organization of the church, a voluntary church organization must be organized in at least two-thirds (2/3) of all the conferences, have a base membership of at least two thousand members and adhere to the Constitution and Bylaws, including all statutes and ordinances of the Church.

ARTICLE VIII

INTEPRETATION OF LAWS AND RESOLUTON OF CONFLICT AND DISPUTES

Section 1. System of Conflict Resolution. A system of conflict resolution is hereby established for the authoritative interpretation of laws and statues of the Church and the settlement of conflict and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the

Church itself, its instrumentalities and agencies, including church-owned and –related institutions, which are collectively referred to as constituencies.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 1. BYLAWS. SYSTEM OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION. Realizing that litigations in courts and administrative tribunals between and among members of the Church, or those involving the Church itself and its constituencies, are unseemly in God’s sight and do not reflect well on the Church itself and its members, apart from being expensive in many instances and disruptive of cordial relationships within the Church fellowship, a system of conflict resolution is hereby established at all levels of the UCCP.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS. The term “conflicts” and “disputes” are often used interchangeably in this Article. Technically, however, a conflict exists where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between the various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the proper interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, Bylaws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church. A dispute arise where a serious legal disagreement between and among Church officials or members, or between a member of the Church itself, or its constituencies, has reached a point where the parties have formulated claims and counterclaims sufficiently definite as to ripen anytime into a litigation before a court or administrative tribunal, board or commission established by the Senate.

Justiciable cases are those controversies that may be tried or heard before courts or justice or administrative tribunals. As a general rule, disputes are justiciable.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 3. AMICABLE SETTLEMENT. As the fundamental values of truth, justice and love are the distinguishing marks of Christian discipleship, the amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the Church itself shall be encouraged (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17) and every effort shall be exerted to discourage litigation before the civil courts, boards or commissions established by the State (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). This is part of every member’s witness to the outside world. Apart from the fact that litigation may involve such much expense and delay, its adversarial character also tends to exacerbate the strained relations between and among church members who are parties to a controversy.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 7. METHODS OF SETTING CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES. The parties to a controversy are expected to settle their conflict or dispute through direct exchange of views between themselves. But where their relations have become so strained as to rule out direct negotiations, the following method as herein defined shall be resorted to:

- a. **Good offices.** The pastor, or an Elder, or a respected member of the Church, shall bring the parties together or provide the occasion for negotiations to take place between themselves. For example, the Pastor (or Elder or a respected member of the Church) may invite the parties to the controversies to his office or residence for the said purpose. At the Conference level and that of the General Assembly, the tender of good offices may be initiated or done by the Conference Minister, the Officers of the Conference, the General Secretary, and other Officers of the General Assembly, or by any respected lay leader of the Church.
- b. **Mediation.** Where the one tendering his/her good office actively participates by proposing a solution and offering his/her advise to the parties to the controversy, he/she plays the role of a mediator. Good offices and mediation may take place on the same occasion. The mediator does not concern himself/herself with the merits of a dispute: his/her task is to encourage compromise rather than advise adherence to legal technicalities.
- c. **Conciliation.** This is the process of settling a controversy about disputed facts by referring the same to a person or persons, designated by agreement of the parties to the conflict of dispute, for the purpose of clarifying and elucidating the facts in issue between the parties in the hope of bringing them to a compromise settlement.
- d. **Arbitration.** This is a quasi-judicial, informal procedure for the settlement of a controversy between the parties by referring the conflict or dispute to one or more impartial persons for final and binding determination. The arbitrator or board of arbitrators, not more than three (3) in number, shall be freely chose by the parties themselves for a pool of Church arbitrators. In arbitration there is a legal obligation on the part of the parties to the controversy to comply with the award or decision.

Arbitration shall be resorted to by the parties where there is a failure or inability to arrive at a settlement through such means as good offices, mediation, or conciliation and there is a strong probability that litigation may ensue between or among Church members who are parties to a controversy,. In such a situation, the Church Council, in case of a controversy at the level of the Local Church, shall adopt a detailed procedure of arbitration, in accordance with the UCCP Constitution and Bylaws and in line with such rules as may be issued from time to time by the National Commission on Conflict Resolution (NCCR). For this purpose, said Council shall immediately constitute a pool of arbitrators, not more than five (5) in number, who are known for their moral integrity, competence, impartiality, and independence of mind. Where the controversy occurs at the level of the National Church, the Conference Council or the National Council, as the case may be, shall do likewise.

An example of an Arbitration Agreement, which may be modified to suit the requirement of a particular case, is found at the end of these Bylaws as Appendix II.

The decision or award of the arbitration or arbitrators freely chosen by the parties to a controversy, shall, as a general rule, be final, binding and unappealable in accordance with law.

For the purpose of insuring that said decision of award shall be recognize and enforced by the courts, boards or commissions established by the State, the NCCR shall promulgate the procedural rules that shall serve as guide to the Local Churches, the various Conferences and the National Church, on the basis of the Manual of Arbitration appended to these Bylaws as Appendix III, particularly with respect to such matters as qualifications of arbitrators, manner of affecting arbitration, procedure of arbitration, the decision or award and the compliance therewith by the parties. The Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III) shall apply in toto as the procedural rules to all cases submitted for arbitration pending promulgation of said procedural rules or in case of inability or failure of the NCCR to promulgate the same.

In case the present Arbitration Law is amended, the NCCR shall make the necessary modification or adjustment in its procedural rules.

- e. Traditional method of adjudication. Those church members who are involved in a justiciable case and wish to waive or forego arbitration, after having failed to settle their dispute through the use of good offices, mediation or conciliation, may entrust the resolution of their controversy through the traditional method of adjudication. If and when such a situation arises, the Church Council shall establish a local unit of the NCCR (formerly the Local Judicial Commission), in accordance with the procedural rules that shall be adopted and promulgated by the NCCR.**

In drafting and promulgating said procedural rules, the NCCR shall take into account applicable provisions of the 1974 Bylaws concerning the Local Judicial Commission with provision for appeal to the higher bodies in the context of the system of Conflict Resolution under the present Constitution, always keeping in mind that controversies involving church members, officers, and the Church itself shall be resolved in a non-adversarial, non-combative way and in light of the fundamental values of truth, justice and love.

In line with Article XI, Section 4, of the UCCP Constitution, “cases pending in the National Judicial Commission at the time of the effectivity of the present Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable methods set forth in Article VIII”, namely, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. In the absence of such a desire, the cases, if any, will be resolved in accordance with the

rules of procedure prevailing before the effectivity of the present Constitution.

NCCR RULES, RULE II, SEC. 5 Local Commission on Conflict Resolution (LCCR) and Conference Commission on Conflict Resolution (CCCR) as the Subordinate Commissions. Subordinate Commission refer both to the Local Commission on Conflict Resolution (LCCR) and to the Conference Commission on Conflict Resolution (CCCR). Pursuant to the Bylaws, the Board of Elders of each Local Church is, at the same time, hereby constituted as its Local Commission on Conflict Resolution, and the Conference Committee on Discipline of each Conference is, at the same time, hereby constituted as its Conference Commission on Conflict Resolution (Art. VIII, Sec 11, Constitution; Art. VII, Sec. 2 & 4, Bylaws.)

Section 2. Exhaustion of Intrachurch Remedies. In all conflicts and disputes which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the rules of exhaustion of remedies (*Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6*), including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration, as provided for in the Bylaws. These shall be availed of as a condition to the assumption of jurisdiction by the units in various church levels of the National Commission on Conflict Resolution. No member who is party to any dispute or conflict as these terms are defined in the Bylaws, may institute any suit or proceeding or apply for remedy before any civil courts, administrative tribunal, board or commission without first showing compliance with this procedure of exhausting all intra-church remedies.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 4. EXHAUSTION OF ALL REMEDIES WITHIN THE CHURCH IN JUSTICIABLE CASES. In all disputes and conflicts which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the rule of exhaustion of remedies including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and the traditional method of adjudication through the National Commission on Conflict Resolution (formerly National Judicial Commission).

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 5. BINDING EFFECT OF THE RULE. To insure the binding effect of the rule of exhaustion of intrachurch remedies, all members of all local churches, conferences and all other bodies of the UCCP, 18 years or over, shall manifest, in a form prescribed for the purpose, their individual conformity to the rule. The Church, at all levels, shall keep a separate register of the said manifestations of conformity. At the local level, members who reach 18 years of age and those adults who are scheduled to be received into the fellowship of the Church, shall be similarly enjoined to manifest their conformity to the said rule, as part of their Christian witness.

The form, entitled “Manifestation of Conformity,” is found at the end of these Bylaws as APPENDIX I.

NCCR RULES, RULE III, SEC. 1 Intrachurch Remedies of Good Offices, Mediation, Conciliation, and, when applicable, Arbitration, should first be resorted to. Before the NCCR or any of the Subordinate Commissions may assume jurisdiction of a case, the Intrachurch Remedies, as heretofore defined, of Good

Offices, Mediation, Conciliation, and, when applicable, Arbitration shall first be resorted to.

NCCR RULES, RULE III, SEC. 4 Exhaustion of Intrachurch Remedies. No cases shall be filed with any of the Commission without first exhaustion of the Intrachurch Remedies heretofore provided.

Section 3. Arbitration; Decision/Award Final and Non-Appealable. A procedure of arbitration shall be established at all levels of the Church, and for this purpose a pool of arbitrators at such levels shall be constituted in accordance with the Bylaws. The award or decision of the arbitrators shall, as a general rule, be final and unappealable.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 9. REPORT OF THE RESULT OF THE ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS. The Arbitration body, preferably composed of three (3) arbitrators in serious cases, shall conduct its proceedings at the earliest possible time, resolve the facts in dispute, either acquitting or convicting the Respondent, in whole or in part, but always leaving it to the proper disciplinary body of the Church—the Board of Elders, Conference Committee on Discipline, or the NCCR, as the case may be—to impose the proper penalty in case of conviction. Nothing herein contained shall authorize said disciplinary bodies to alter the findings of fact and applicable law of the Arbitrator or Arbitrators.

Section 4. National Commission on Conflict Resolution. A National Commission on Conflict Resolution (NCCR) is hereby established to dispose of, with finality, all requests for advisory opinions on the interpretation of the Constitution, By-Laws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church and its constituencies and likewise decide all justiciable case brought before it in the exercise of its original or appellate jurisdiction.

BYLAWS, Art. VII, Sec. 4. National Commission on Conflict Resolution as the Highest Disciplinary Body. In addition to the powers and responsibilities vested upon it under Article VIII of the Constitution, the NCCR shall be the highest disciplinary body of the Church. It shall have the following functions and duties:

- a. To adopt such rules of procedure as it may deem necessary and proper for the purpose of implementing these Bylaws, ensuring at all times that due process and fair play are observed;
- b. To administer and maintain Church discipline in appropriate cases involving officers and members of the General Assembly or the National Council, Conference Minister and other elected Conference offices; and
- c. To see to it that there is no overlapping of duties, responsibilities and functions in administering and maintaining discipline at the various units and agencies of the UCCP.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 3. CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINE. A Conference Committee on Discipline, composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom shall be active ministers of the Conference and two of whom shall be laypersons, shall be appointed by the Conference as its disciplinary body. The Jurisdictional Bishop and the Conference Minister shall sit as ex officio members of the Conference Committee on Discipline, without vote.

The Committee shall elect its own chairperson. No member of the Conference Council shall be a member of the Committee.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 2. BOARD OF ELDERS. Pursuant to Article V, Section 9, of the Constitution, the Board of Elders shall be the disciplinary body of the Local Church.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 1. DISCIPLINE. Discipline is the prevention and correction of offenses for the purpose of maintaining the unity and integrity of the Church.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 5. CLASSIFICATION OF CASES. There are three classes of cases which may involve the imposition of disciplinary measures of the Church:

- a. Direct Misbehavior, obstruction or interruption of religious worship, sacred ceremonies, or official proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, or flagrant disrespect toward the Church or its officers and/or members in the course of or immediately before or after said proceedings, meetings or sessions.
- b. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging moral, unethical or improper conduct and an admission of culpability on the part of the offender who is an officer or member of the Church.
- c. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging immoral, unethical or improper conduct on the part of an officer, or member of the church, but there is no admission by the respondent and the facts are in dispute or in doubt.

In the first class of cases, the Board of Elders may summarily deal with the offense by causing and effecting the physical exclusion or removal of the offender from the Church premises or sessions from the venue of the proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, with the assistance, should this become necessary, of law enforcement authorities and other members necessary, of law enforcement authorities and other members of the Church. In addition, the Board of Elders may cause the prosecution of the offender in accordance with the Revised Penal Code (Articles 131; 133; 153). Where the offender is a Church member, the Board of Elders may, after due deliberation, impose the penalty of expulsion in very serious cases, or the suspension of the offender from membership for such length

of time as may be considered proportionate to the gravity of the offense. At the Conference level, the imposition of the penalty shall be the function and duty of the Conference Committee on Discipline, but where the said Committee has not yet been organized or its Chairperson and members are not present for any reason whatever, the appropriate disciplinary measure are set forth above shall be imposed by the Conference, or in default thereof, by the Conference Council; at the General Assembly level or that of the National Council, the imposition of the proper penalty shall be the function and duty of the NCCR; but where the NCCR has not yet been organized or its Chairperson or members are not present for any reason whatever, the appropriate disciplinary measure shall be imposed by the General Assembly or the National Council, as the case may be.

The procedure as set forth in Section 7 and 8 thereof shall be observed with respect to the second and third classes of cases.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 6. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS AND RUMORS. Anonymous complaints, gossips, rumors shall be discouraged by the officers and disciplinary bodies of the Church since these are unseemly in a fellowship based on love, fairness, and truth. Any member found responsible for circulating the same, after his/her attention shall have been called to such practice, shall be subjected to the appropriate disciplinary measures, including admonition, suspension and, in extreme cases, expulsion.

BYLAWS, ART. VII, SEC. 7. WRITTEN COMPLAINT. For the purpose of the second and third cases, where a verbal complaint has been presented to the Pastor or other offices of the Church, the Conference, or the National Council, as the case may be, and the same involves immoral, unethical or improper conduct on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, the pastor or other officers of the Church, the Conference or the National Church, as the case may be, shall ask the complainant or offended party, who may or may not be a Church member, to reduce the same to writing, with particulars as to time, place and persons, so that the complaint may be presented to, and discussed by, the Board of Elders, the Conference Committee on Discipline, or the NCCR, as the case may be, for its proper disposition.

BYLAWS, Art. VII, Sec. 8. Action on the written complaint. Where the written complaint is sufficient in content in that it names the parties (the offended and the alleged offender), with enough details as to time, place and circumstances constituting the alleged immoral, unethical or improper conduct, the Pastor or an Elder or a respected member of the Church may seek a private meeting or conference with the alleged offender to inform the latter of his charge or charges in as tactful a manner as possible and ascertain his or her reaction or attitude. In case of an admission of the truth of the charge or charges or of the essential facts constituting the offense, the matter shall be reported to the whole Board of Elders or Conference Committee on

Discipline, or the NCCR. As the case may be, for the imposition of the appropriate penalty, taking into account the mitigating circumstances of the offender's admission of the truth. In every case, the offended party shall be informed of the steps being taken by the Church or by the Board of Elders in acting on his/her complaint.

Where, however, there is no admission of culpability on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, or there is an admission of some facts but with the invocation of certain justifying or extenuating circumstances, the Board of Elders, in the exercise of its discretion, may resort to the process of mediation or conciliation, as defined in Article VI, Section 7 or these Bylaws, which is in accordance with the teaching of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:15-17). Where these are clearly inappropriate or have failed, it shall ask the parties to enter into an Arbitration Agreement for a prompt, fair, and decisive settlement of the dispute in accordance with these Bylaws, the Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III), and such rules as may be promulgated from time to time by the NCCR.

Where the complaint, however, alleges a serious or grave offense and the initial or preliminary proceedings of the Board of Elders and/or the Arbitration Panel indicate a prima facie violation of the laws of the land—such as in cases of arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like, including rape, adultery, and other sexual assaults—the proceedings may be suspended so as to allow the complainant and officials of the State, whenever appropriate, to proceed to the resumption of the proceedings before said Board as soon as circumstances permit and only for the purpose of administering and maintaining the system of discipline in the Church.

BYLAWS, ART, VII, SEC. 10. INTERIM ORDERS. The following twin principles shall guide the disciplinary bodies of the Church in the performance of their duties and functions.

- a. No Church organization can long endure without order and harmony in the Church. The maintenance of a sound system of discipline is a necessary condition to the integrity and growth of the Church.**
- b. But order and harmony may not last unless based on truth, justice and the willingness to reconcile and forgive. Reconciliation shall be encouraged but without sacrificing truth and justice. In case guilt or culpability exists, contrition and repentance, including restitution where proper, are pre-conditions to genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Always, our example is the great teacher, Jesus Christ.**

NCCR RULES, RULE V, SEC. 1 Exclusive original jurisdiction of Local Commission on Conflict Resolution (LCCR). The LCCR shall have exclusive original jurisdiction over the following kinds of conflicts or disputes in which the parties to the controversy are the members of the Church.

- a. *Those between relatives on matters of personal and property relations, inheritance rights, and ownership of properties;*
- b. *Those between and among members involving alleged violations of contracts, like payment of loans;*
- c. *Those between members and local church officers; and*
- d. *Criminal cases involving light felonies, as this term is defined in the Revised Penal Code, such as slight physical injuries, malicious mischief, and the like, for which the penalty imposed is from 1 day to 30 days, public censure or a fine or less than 200 pesos. (Art. VI, Sec. 6, 1st and 4th pars., Bylaws)*

NCCR RULES, RULE V, SEC. 2 LCCR Decisions are final; exceptions. *Decisions of the LCCR are final, except those which call for expulsion of members, or those alleged to have been rendered with abuse of authority and without substantial evidence, in which case, appeal may be made to the Conference Commission on Conflict Resolution, whose decision on appeal shall be final.*

NCCR RULES, RULE VI, SEC. 1 Exclusive original jurisdiction of Conference Commission on Conflict Resolution (CCCR). *The CCCR shall have exclusive original jurisdiction over all cases involving pastors and members of the Conference and its appointive officers. Said cases may be appealed to the NCCR.*

NCCR RULES, RULE VI, SEC. 2 Appellate jurisdiction of CCCR. *The CCCR has appellate jurisdiction over decisions from the LCCR which call for expulsion of members, ore those alleged to have been rendered with abuse of authority and without substantial evidence. Their decision on said cases on appeal shall be final.*

NCCR RULES, RULE VI, SEC. 1 Exclusive original jurisdiction of National Commission on Conflict Resolution (NCCR). *The NCCR has exclusive original jurisdiction over the following questions, conflicts, and disputes in which the parties to the controversy are members of the Church:*

- a. *Requests for authoritative opinions on the interpretation of the constitution, bylaws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church and its constituencies. Said requests may be tendered by the General Assembly, the National Council, the Council of Bishops, or the Conferences, and upon disposition thereof, shall be final (Art. VIII, Sec 4 & Sec. 6, par. 1, Constitution). The opinion shall be rendered, after due consultation and thorough deliberation, within a period of thirty (30) days, counted from the date issue is considered duly submitted. If the issue involves only the interpretation of ecclesiastical laws, there shall be no appeal from said advisory opinions to the courts, commissions or boards established by the State (Art. VI, Sec. 8, Bylaws). Where there is disagreement with respect to the relevant facts upon which the opinion being sought shall be based, the NCCR shall appoint a commissioner, or set up a fact-finding body, to determine said relevant facts relative to the controversy, and within a*

designated period, said commissioner or body shall submit the corresponding report to the NCCR. The opinion shall immediately be communicated to the requesting party and those who may be affected thereby, and shall take effect and be binding upon promulgation.

b. Cases on church discipline involving officers and members of the General Assembly or the National Council, of the Conference Ministers, and of elected Conference officers (Art. VII, Sec. 4 & Art. VIII, Sec. 6, Bylaws).

NCCR RULES, RULE VII, SEC. 2 *Appellate jurisdiction of NCCR. The NCCR shall have appellate jurisdiction over all appropriate cases brought on appeal from the CCCR.*

Section 5. Questions beyond the Jurisdiction of the Commission. All questions of policy shall be referred to the appropriate policy-making bodies of the Church. Cases brought before the NCCR involving matters clearly pertaining to faith and doctrine shall be referred to the Council of Bishops. All questions of state policies and those involving the public justice of the State are beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 6. QUESTIONS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SYSTEM OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION. Questions involving misunderstanding or disputes between relatives on matters of personal and property relations, inheritance rights, ownership of properties, disagreement between and among Church members involving alleged violations of contracts, non-payment of loans, the conduct or outcome of elections in Church and Church organizations, the relations between Church authorities and members, and the like, are all included in the system of Conflict Resolution and are subject to this Article, provided the parties to the controversy are members of the Church.

But all questions of Church policy, shall as whether to send delegates to certain international conferences, or whether the Church should support the Government's family planning program, its peace initiatives, its socio-economic plan and the like, and those questions that involve the public justice of the State—for instance, such criminal cases as arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, the like—are beyond the system of conflict resolution.

Special proceedings, as the term is known in the Rules of Court, which do not involve conflicts and disputes, such as adoption, change of name, voluntary dissolution of corporations, declaration of absence and death, and similar proceedings such as naturalization, all of which require judicial or governmental action, are not, as a general rule, included in the system of conflict resolution.

However, criminal cases involving light felonies, as this term is defined in the Revised Penal Code, such as slight physical injuries, malicious mischief and the life, for which the penalty imposed is from 1 day to 30 days, public censure or a fine of less than 200 pesos, and such other criminal cases involving other

penalties which, in the best judgment and discretion of the Church Council, may be amicably settled in the interest of the Church fellowship and of the parties themselves, may be included in the system of conflict resolution, provided such amicable settlement will not be in violation of law, morals or public policy.

***NCCR RULES, RULE VIII, SEC. 1 & 2 Cases outside the system of Conflict Resolutions.** All questions of church policy, such as whether to send delegates to certain international conferences, or whether the Church should support the Government's family planning program, its peace initiatives, its socio-economic plan and the like, and those questions that involve the public justice of the State – for instance, such criminal cases as arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like – are beyond the system of conflict resolution. (Art. VI, Sec. 2nd paragraph, Bylaws)*

Similarly, special proceedings, as the term is known in the Rules of Court, which do not involve conflicts and disputes, such as adoption, change of name, voluntary dissolution of corporations, declaration of absence and death, and similar proceedings, such as naturalization, all of which require judicial government action, are not, as general rule, included in the system of conflict resolution. (Art. VI, Sec. 6, 3rd paragraph, Bylaws)

***NCCR RULES, RULE VIII, SEC. 3 Remanding cases to appropriate church bodies.** If the conflict or dispute basically involves questions of church policy, the same shall immediately be remanded to the appropriate policy making body or bodies of the Church. If the Conflict or dispute essentially relates to the faith and doctrine of the Church, the same shall immediately be remanded to the Council of Bishops. (Art. VI, Sec. 5, Constitution)*

Section 6. Advisory Opinions and Decisions in Justiciable Cases. Where the advisory opinion of the National Commission on Conflict Resolution is requested by the General Assembly, the National Council, the Council of Bishops, or the Conferences, it shall be the duty of the Commission to render such opinion, after consultation and thorough deliberation.

In cases involving conflict or disputes between and among church members and those involving the members and the Church itself or its constituencies, and there is a probability that the same may ripen into litigation, the local units of the NCCR or the NCCR itself may assume jurisdiction to decide such cases where the parties are unable to settle their disputes through the use of good offices, mediations and conciliation and decide not to submit their case to arbitration. The procedural rules of this purpose shall be issued by the NCCR as provided in Section 11 thereof.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 8. BYLAWS. ADVISORY OPINIONS. Where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the correct interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, Bylaws, or statutes of the Church, there being no disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, an appropriate request for advisory opinion by the NCCR may

be made by such officials, members, bodies or agencies in accordance with the Rules of Procedure which shall be promulgated by the NCCR in accordance with Article VIII, Section 11, of the UCCP Constitution.

Where there is a disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, the NCCR shall authorize the establishment of units at various levels of the Church to hear and decide the conflict, with provision for appeal to the higher bodies, including the NCCR itself, in accordance with its Rules of Procedures.

It shall be the duty of the NCCR to render its Advisory Opinion, after due consultation and through deliberation, within the period of thirty (30) days, counted from the date the case is duly submitted by all the parties for opinion. As the conflict involves only the interpretation of ecclesiastical laws, there shall be no appeal from said Advisory Opinions to the courts, commissions or boards established by the State.

NCCR RULES, RULE IX, SEC. 2 Subsequent proceedings if Intrachurch Remedies fail. When efforts at Intrachurch Remedies fails, a formal written complaint shall be filed with the appropriate Commission, and attaching therein the written statement/s or witnesses and all supporting documents together with the corresponding certification that the processes of Good Offices, Mediation, Conciliation, and if applicable, Arbitration relative to the case had been exhausted. Said certification shall be issued by the Pastor in cases cognizable by the LCCR, by the Conference Minister in those by the CCCR, and by the General Secretary in those by the NCCR. Upon termination of the proceedings under the Traditional Method of Adjudication, the Chairman of the commission concerned shall issue the corresponding certification, if at all any further action before the civil authorities. Is instituted.

NCCR RULES, RULE IX, SEC. 3 Respondent/s to file Answer. A copy of Complaint, together with the attachments, shall be furnished to the Respondent(s). The Respondents(s) shall have a period of fifteen (15) days to file his Answer in writing, attaching thereto all written statements of witnesses, as well as all relevant supporting documents, furnishing the Complainant with a copy of the same.

NCCR RULES, RULE IX, SEC. 4 Pleadings and statements to be under solemn affirmations. Both the Complaint and the Answer, as well as the written statements of witnesses, shall be under solemn affirmation. All pleadings forwarded, filed or appealed to the NCCR will be in nine (9) copies plus as many as Respondents as there are.

NCCR RULES, RULE IX, SEC. 5 Cases may be resolved on the basis of the pleadings. The appropriate Commission may, at its discretion, resolve the case on the basis of the pleadings filed by the parties.

NCCR RULES, RULE X, SEC. 1 *Setting case for reception of evidence.* Unless the case is in the meantime already resolved, the hearing Commission shall set for the reception of evidence.

NCCR RULES, RULE X, SEC. 2 *Notice to parties and others.* Notices of the same shall be served on the parties concerned, including the Conference Minister of the Conference and the Bishop of the Jurisdiction Area.

NCCR RULES, RULE IX, SEC. 3 *Amicus Curiae.* The hearing commission may co-opt ministers or lawyers who are members of the church in good standing and not service in any of the judicial bodies of the church and may invite other parties as amicus curiae.

NCCR RULES, RULE X, SEC. 4 *Re cases of considerable sensitivity.* In cases of considerable sensitivity, only the members and staff of the commission, parties concerned and their witness, including the local pastor, Conferences Minister of the Conference and the Bishop of the Jurisdictional Area, as the case may be, shall be allowed to be present in the trial.

NCCR RULES, RULE X, SEC. 5 *Written statement to constitute direct testimony.* The written statement of the parties and their respective witness under solemn affirmation shall constitute their respective direct testimony. At its discretion, the Commission may allow parties to be assisted by counsel.

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 1 *Rendition of Decision* Within thirty (30) days from the time the case is submitted for resolution the Commission shall render its decision.

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 2 *When Case Deemed Submitted for Resolution.* The case is deemed to be submitted for resolution when all the required pleadings have been submitted, and the necessary deliberation on the cases shall have been concluded. Insofar as the NCCR is concerned, the cases shall be deemed submitted for resolution after the Commission shall have completed its deliberations on the recommendation or evaluation made by the ponente of the case.

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC.3 *Dissenting Opinion.* A member of the NCCR may file a separate dissenting opinion which shall form part of the case records. However, its non-filing shall not delay the finality of the majority decision.

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 4 *When Decision becomes final and executory.* A decision becomes final and executory upon the lapse of the period of appeal if one is warranted by the rules, and upon its promulgation in which the parties concerned are duly notified.

NCCR RULES, RULE X, SEC. 5 Number of votes required. *Where the penalty of expulsion is imposed, a two-third (2/3) vote of all Members of the Commission shall be required; otherwise, the majority vote of the Commission members shall be required in all other cases.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 6 Re Motion for Reconsideration. *No motion for reconsideration shall be entertained, nor shall any be required before appeal, in appropriate cases, can be taken.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 7 Copies of final orders, decisions, resolutions. *Copies of the final orders, decisions, and/or resolutions of the appropriate commission shall be furnished the parties and judicatories concerned*

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 8 Remanding Records to Commission of Origin. *The original records of appealed cases that are finally disposed of shall be remanded to the Commission of origin.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XI, SEC. 9 Compilation and Publication of Decisions/Resolutions. *All decisions and resolutions of the NCCR shall be compiled and those of significant import in the life of the church may be published in the United Church Letter.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XII, SEC. 1 to 5 Appeal Procedure. *In appropriate cases, appeal may be instituted within fifteen (15) days from receipt by Appellant of a copy of the decision subject of the appeal.*

The appellant shall furnish a Notice of Appeal to the Commission of origin and to the adverse party, together with a Position Paper setting forth the facts of the case, the factual and legal errors sought to be reviewed, and the arguments in support of the Appellant's position. The Position Paper shall likewise state the date of receipt of the decision.

Immediately, the Commission of origin shall transmit the case records together with the Notice and Appellant's Position Paper to the appellate Commission. The appellate Commission shall inform the parties and the commission of origin of its receipt of the case records, and further advising them that henceforth all motions or manifestations concerning the case shall be filed with the appellate Commission.

Upon receipt thereof, the chairman of the appellate Commission shall determine whether to give due course to the Appeal or not. If denied due course, the appeal shall be dismissed. An appeal may be denied due course, being pro forma, a dilatory and that the case was satisfactorily resolved in accordance with the rules, practice and tradition of the church. The denial order, upon petition by the party concerned within ten (10) days from receipt of the order, may be reviewed by the Commission en banc.

If the appeal is given due course, the appellate Commission shall furnish the adverse party with a copy of the Appellant's position paper, directing the latter to file Appellee's position paper within fifteen (15) days from receipt.

NCCR RULES, RULE XII, SEC. 6 Oral arguments/additional evidence on appeal.
The parties may apply for, and the chairman of the Commission may allow, oral arguments on appeal. Only in very exceptional and clearly meritorious cases shall the appellate Commission allow the presentation of additional evidence, whether newly discovered or not.

NCCR RULES, RULE XIII, SEC. 1 Designation of Ponente. *When the commission en banc shall have arrived at a decision, the same shall be assigned to a member of the commission for it to be written. The written decision shall then be reviewed, approved and signed by the members of the commission. Dissenting members may submit their written dissent.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XIII, SEC. 2 Period to resolve appeals. *All appealed cases shall be resolved by the appellate commission within thirty (30) days from the time it is given due course.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XIII, SEC. 3 Number of votes required. *To sustain a penalty of expulsion a two-third (2/3) vote of all participating members of the appellate Commission shall be required; otherwise, the majority vote of the commission members shall be required in all other cases.*

NCCR RULES, RULE XIV, SEC. 1 Procedure in electoral matters/decisions. *of the electoral committee may be appealed to the judicatory in session. Decisions of the said judicatory shall be final and unappealable.*

However, where the decision of the judicatory was alleged to have been arrived at arbitrarily or grossly inconsistent with the rules and practice of the church, the same may be submitted for review with the CCCR, in case of local church elections, and with the NCCR in case of Conference and General Assembly elections.

In any case, notwithstanding the pendency of a review proceedings, the proclamation, confirmation and assumption of office of the winning candidate shall proceed but his/her term shall be subject to the result of the case under review.

The party who shall be directly and adversely affected by the nullification of the ruling of the judicatory shall be required to comment and explain why the ruling should be sustained.

The decision of the appellate Commissions in these cases shall be final and executory upon promulgation.

Section 7. Composition and Election. The National Commission on Conflict Resolution shall be composed of seven (7) members, with all the jurisdictional areas represented. At least one (1) shall be a member of the Philippine Bar and another who shall be at least thirty (30) years old at the time of election. All members shall be nominated by the Conferences, screened by the National Council, and elected by the General Assembly.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 9. BYLAWS. ELECTION OF NCCR MEMBERS.
NCCR members shall be elected by the General Assembly from among the nominees of the Conference only. No nomination from the floor during the General Assembly in session shall be allowed, save in exceptional cases.

Section 8. Qualifications. With the exception of the youth representative in the National Commission on Conflict Resolution, the rest shall not be less than thirty-five (35) years of age. They shall all be members of the Church in good standing, of unquestionable integrity, probity, competence, and independence of mind.

Section 9. Term of Office; Vacancy. With the exception of the youth representative who shall serve for only four (4) years, all members of the National Commission on Conflict Resolution shall server for a term of eight (8) years, with no re-election. To provide for continuity, the three (3) nominees who shall obtain the highest number of votes in the first election after this Constitution takes effect, shall serve for a term of eight (8) years and the rest for four (4) years. Any vacancy shall be filled by the National Council, and the person so elected or appointed shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 10. FILLING OF VACANCY. In case of vacancy in the NCCR, by reason of resignation, death, incapacity and other causes, the same may be filled by appointment of the National Council or the General Assembly if in session. The one appointed by the National Council or General Assembly shall serve only the unexpired term of the member he/she is filling.

Section 10. Limitation. No member of the National Commission on Conflict Resolution shall be elected or appointed to any other office in the Church during his or her term. All members shall avoid any conflict of interest.

BYLAWS, ART. VI, SEC. 11. DISQUALIFICATIONS. In case of resignation of any member of the NCCR, he/she shall be disqualified from holding any elective or appointive office in the National Church for the remaining period of his/her term. The disqualification shall continue in spite of his/her resignation.

Section 11. Creation of Other Units; Rules of Procedure. In the context of the foregoing provisions, the National Commission on Conflict Resolution may, whenever necessary, set up units at various levels of the Church. It shall also formulate and adopt Rules of Procedure to govern the interpretation of laws and settlement of conflicts and disputes in the Church.

Section 12. Together with the specific rules of law, the rules of evidence and procedures shall be taken into account by the arbitration bodies of the NCCR.

Section 13. Enforcement of Decisions. It shall be the duty of appropriate officers to enforce and the members at all levels of the Church to respect all final and executory decisions and orders of the arbitrators and of the NCCR.

***NCCR RULES, RULE XV, SEC. 1 to 4 Execution and Implementation of Decisions.** All final decisions of the appropriate commissions are to be enforced, and the officers and members at all levels of the Church are to abide by and respect all final and executory decisions and orders under the System.*

All final decisions of the LCCR shall be executed and enforced by the Pastor and all officers of the local church.

All final decisions of the CCCR shall be executed and enforced by the Conference Minister and all officers of the Conference and of its subordinate judicatories.

All final decisions of the NCCR shall be executed and enforced by the General Secretary, the Council of Bishops, and all officers of the national offices and subordinate judicatories.

ARTICLE IX

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. All real properties may be held by the Local Church, or church bodies and church-owned institutions in trust for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

BYLAWS, ART. VIII, SEC. 1. BYLAWS. PROPERTY OWNERSHIP. Upon effectivity of the Constitution, in all cases of ownership of real properties, the phrase “held in trust for the UCCP” shall always be annotated in the document of title with the conformity of the Local Church or the Conference as the case may be.

With respect to real properties already held and owned by incorporated local churches, Conferences, and Church-owned institutions at the time of the effectivity of the Constitution, these entities shall be persuaded to comply with Article IX, Sec. 1, of the Constitution.

Section 2. The ecclesiastical year of the Church shall be from June 1 to May 31 of the following year.

Section 3. The church shall have a logo, the design and color of which shall be decided upon by the General Assembly or its National Council.

Section 4. The official text of this Constitution and Bylaws shall be in English and Filipino; however, in case of conflict in interpretation, every effort shall be exerted to harmonize and reconcile the English and Filipino versions. Translation into the various Philippine languages is encouraged, but the text must first be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

Section 5. No Local Church, Conference and other Church bodies may incorporate without the prior approval of the General Assembly or its National Council.

Section 6. Rules and regulations to implement, supplement or carry out the provisions of this Constitution shall be set forth in the Bylaws and statutes of the Church.

ARTICLE X

AMENDMENTS AND RATIFICATION

Section 1. Amendments to this Constitution may be made through any of the following procedures:

- a) A Conference may propose an amendment to the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourth (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.
- b) An amendment may be proposed on the floor of the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourth (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.
- c) Where a Constitutional Convention is called by the General Assembly, the proposed Constitutional amendments shall be transmitted to the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective immediately upon ratification by three-fourth (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.

BYLAWS, ART. X, SEC. 1. AMENDMENT. These Bylaws may be amended by majority vote of the General Assembly or by three-fourths (3/4) vote of the National Council, subject to the approval by the majority votes of all the Conferences.

Section 2. This Constitution shall not be amended in any manner within seven (7) years from the date of its effectivity.

ARTICLE XI

TRANSITORY PROVISIONS

Section 1. The provisions of this Constitution, upon its effectivity as provided in Article XII, shall immediately bind all local churches, Conferences and other high bodies of the Church. All other policies, actions and procedures of the Church inconsistent with this Constitution shall be deemed rescinded, repealed and superseded.

Section 2. All elected officials of the Church prior to the effectivity of this Constitution shall remain in office until their successors shall have been elected under this Constitution. The

General Assembly or the Executive Committee shall determine the date and shall conduct the election for this purpose.

Section 3. In the first election under this Constitution, incumbent Bishops adversely affected by the provision of age requirements, as set forth in Article VII, Section 8, may be allowed to run for re-election, if otherwise qualified.

Section 4. Cases pending in civil courts or administrative board or commissions, as well as cases pending in the National Judiciary Commission (NJC) at the time of the effectivity of this Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable means set forth in Article VIII. Church officials and members shall encourage them to do so.

BYLAWS, ART. IX, TRANSITORY PROVISIONS.

SEC. 1. Upon the proclamation of the new Constitution, the present Executive shall set the date for the convening of the first General Assembly under the new Constitution and these Bylaws. The present Executive Committee shall act as the Nominating Committee for the purpose of electing the officers of the General Assembly.

Sec. 2. All Bishops elected prior to the effectivity of the new Constitution and these Bylaws shall serve until the new Bishops shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these Bylaws.

Sec. 3. The present national officers of the Church shall serve in “hold-over” capacity until the new additional officers shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these By-laws.

Sec. 4. The first set of national officers elected under the new Constitution and these Bylaws shall serve starting the month of June immediately following their election.

Sec. 5. The Conference Areas existing prior to the ratification of the new Constitution and these Bylaws shall continue to exist until such time that the General Assembly shall exercise its prerogative under Article VII, Section 3(h), of the new Constitution.

ARTICLE XII **EFFECTIVITY**

Section 1. This Constitution shall take effect upon the ratification of three-fourth (3/4) vote of all the Conferences, upon proclamation by the General Assembly and upon its registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

BYLAWS, ART. VIII, SEC. 2. EFFECTIVITY. These Bylaws shall be effective upon ratification and proclamation in the same manner as provided in Article XII, Section 1, of the Constitution.