

III. MINISTERIAL OPERATIONS

The ministry of The Church of God operates under the order of the Melchisedec priesthood. This New Testament order of ministry provides for various levels of priestly function beginning with the High Priest Jesus Christ and flowing to the priesthood of all believers. Each level of this priesthood serves to fulfill works of ministry to God and to the people.

The concept of priesthood or ministry is well stated in Hebrews 5:1-6: "*For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way...And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God...*"

Throughout the Old Testament, priesthood passed through many transitions from the patriarchal priesthood in which the father assumed the role of priest for his family, to the Melchisedec priesthood to whom Abraham turned for blessing and sacrifice, to the Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood that Moses established among the children of Israel. In each of these orders of priesthood, those who were taken from among men and ordained as priests had the responsibility of offering gifts and sacrifices to God and for conveying the understanding of God's commandments and will to the people.

The primary change in the function of priesthood ministry from the Old Testament to the New Testament was the fact that priests of the Old Testament had the responsibility of offering the sacrifices of the people to God to atone for their sins, while the ministers of the New Testament offer God's one sacrifice for sin-the Gospel of God in the person of Jesus Christ-to men that their sins may be forgiven through their faith in Him. New Testament ministers do not function as mediators between God and man and have no power to forgive sins. In this way the priestly access of all believers to God through the mediation of Jesus Christ is established and preserved.

In addition to the work of representing the Gospel of Christ and the Word of God to the people, ministers are ordained in the New Testament church for the purpose of leading the people of God in acts of worship and service to God. In both the offering of the Gospel to the people and in leading the people in worship and service, the ministry of The Church of God fulfill the true purpose of priesthood ministry after the order of Melchisedec. While it is not the practice of The Church of God to use the title *priest* in referring to its ministry, the term is rightly applied in its New Testament sense.

Through the procedures set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders, both recommendation of the people and responsibility to hierarchal government are required for licensing, ordination, and continuation in the ministry. In this way the duty of the minister to be a representative both of the people and of the government of God through His appointed system is preserved.

The offices of priestly responsibility operating in the church, together with the callings which they parallel in the Old Testament economy, are as follows: (1) Jesus Christ-the High Priest and Mediator between God and man; (2) the Chief Bishop and bishopric of both judicial and executive authorities-chief priests; (3) ordained ministers-priests; (4) licensed ministers-priests in preparation and/or Levites; (5) lay ministers-Levites; (6) all believers-all who have access to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

A. PRESBYTERIES

The Church of God assigns oversight of its ministerial operations to the scriptural office of a General Presbytery. Territorial Presbyteries are also established to act in behalf of the General Presbytery in areas that are delegated to them. The examination, licensing, ordination, appointment, and discipline of ministers are carried out under the oversight of the General Presbytery.

The term *presbytery* in the original Greek text means simply *the body of elders of the church* (1 Timothy 4: 14). A presbytery, then, may be composed of any bishops of the church who may be chosen to serve in this capacity. The purpose of the presbytery is to commit the work of honoring and/or judging ministers into the hands of a multitude of councilors, just as the doctrine and polity of the church are committed into the hands of the multitude of councilors of the Council of Apostles and Elders.

1. General Presbytery

The General Presbytery is appointed by the Chief Bishop from the number of bishops in General Headquarters. The Presbytery is a standing committee of the Council of Apostles and Elders that is appointed to consider applications for ministerial licensing, ordination, and appointments and to handle matters of discipline. The Chief Bishop presides as chairman of the General Presbytery and is its final authority.

The General Presbytery may be expanded at any time at the discretion of the Chief Bishop to handle any matter that he deems appropriate. It may include all of the Twelve Apostles, all of the members of the judicial governmental pattern, or even all of the bishops of the church.

2. Territorial Presbyteries

Territorial Presbyteries are appointed by Territorial Bishops to have oversight of the ministerial operations of the church committed to territorial level. The Territorial Presbytery is composed of three or more members, preferably bishops, with the recommendation of the Council of Apostles and Elders that at least some of its members be pastors within that territory.

B. LICENSING

The practice of issuing certificates of recognition for the purpose of licensing ministers in The Church of God is based on the need for order and discipline in this important part of the church. In this way only men and women who have been judged by the administration of the church to be competent and worthy of this honor and responsibility are recognized and given the rights of ministry.

The early church employed similar procedures when it sent ministers forth to represent its administration to the church and to the world. Ministers were regularly given letters of commendation (Acts 15:23-27). The Apostle Paul observed this practice as is noted in the case of his recommendation of Phoebe to the Roman church (Romans 16:1) and of Epaphroditus to the Philippian church (Philippians 2:25,29,30). The formal recognition of ministry took another manifestation in the case of Paul and Barnabas who were given the right hand of fellowship by Peter, James, and John (Galatians 2:2,29) when they were appointed with the ministry to the Gentiles.

Whether by letters, formal certificates, or license, the principle of extending credentials of commendation and authorization to ministers, recognizing their responsibilities and authority, is well established. In this way the people and the church are

protected from excesses and abuses of those who are not qualified for whatever reason for ministerial recognition. Conversely, those who have been licensed by the church can be recognized throughout the movement as competent, qualified individuals, worthy of honor and respect.

1. Requirements for Licensing

The Church of God makes a number of requirements for the licensing of ministers into the Melchisedec order of priesthood. It does not make any difference in the requirements for male or female ministers either as licensed or ordained ministers.

a. Personal

A person who desires to be recognized by The Church of God as a minister must fulfill certain personal requirements. First he (or she) must have the testimony that he is called of God into the ministry. The call must be a call to preach (a pulpit ministry). Those who manifest one of the nine spiritual gifts and who have no ability to preach should not seek to become licensed ministers. Evidence of the call of God into the ministry must also be recognized by the local church of which the candidate is a member and by the administration of the church.

A candidate for ministry must be of the highest character, and the integrity of his Christian life must be above question. He must be a person of financial responsibility both to the church and to the public at large. He must be an example of sincerity and of dedication to God and to the activities of the church. He must have served the church faithfully in whatever areas of responsibility that may have been assigned to him as a member of the church.

Each ministerial candidate must be loyal to the church. He must be submissive and cooperative with executive government in the church, and he must be in subjection to the discipline of the doctrine and polity of the church set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders. He must also demonstrate his availability for appointment to whatever ministerial responsibilities may be required of him.

In short a candidate for ministry in The Church of God must be an example to the believers in his (or her) righteous manner of living, dedication, spirituality, and dependability.

b. Educational

Before an individual may be licensed as a minister in The Church of God, he must be thoroughly versed in the knowledge of the Bible and in the teachings of the church. The level of his accomplishments in this area is reviewed by the Presbytery.

Each ministerial candidate must satisfactorily complete the prescribed course of study as set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders. He must also fulfill additional reading requirements for independent study that may be established by the General Presbytery. Candidates must also agree to fulfill whatever requirements for continuing education that may be established by the Council of Apostles and Elders.

2. Procedures for Licensing

a. The Ministers License

A program for ministers has been established by the Council of Apostles and Elders that brings a candidate from the point of feeling the call of God on his life to the point of becoming a licensed minister in The Church of God. The procedure is as follows:

(1) The candidate must acquire an application from General Headquarters for licensing as a minister.

(2) The candidate must obtain the recommendation of the local church of which he (or she) is a member. Great care should be exercised by the local church in issuing this recommendation, for the person whom the local church recommends for ministry reflects the judgment and character of that congregation. The local church should look for the calling of God, potential ministerial ability, integrity, dedication to the cause of Christ and the church, and leadership qualities. After the recommendation of the local church has been given in the local church business conference, it is noted on the candidate's application for license.

(3) The candidate must appear before a Territorial Presbytery for evaluation of his ministerial potential. The Presbytery interviews the candidate to evaluate the following: character and reputation for personal integrity; commitment to The Church of God, its government, doctrine, and practice; financial responsibility to the church and the world at large; educational background, both secular and religious; evidence of the call of God in his life, and potential preaching ability.

(4) The Presbytery recommends to General Headquarters that a minister's license be issued to the candidate. This recommendation is made on the candidate's application for license.

(5) The candidate's application is considered by the Presiding Bishop and the General Presbytery; which can either approve the application or schedule a further review.

(6) With the approval of the Presiding Bishop and the General Presbytery, the candidate is issued a license by the office of the Presiding Bishop that confers the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the licensed ministry of The Church of God upon the candidate.

(7) The ministerial license is then sent to the candidate's pastor. The pastor is to a formal at the local church when presenting the license to the new minister.

b. Optional Procedure for Experienced Ministers

When a minister with experience in another organization wishes to become a licensed minister in The Church of God, he may follow this procedure:

(1) The candidate must acquire an application from General Headquarters for consideration of his qualifications to become a licensed minister.

(2) The candidate must receive the recommendation of two local church members of which he is a member. The requirements for recommendation are the same for all ministers.

(3) The candidate must appear before the Territorial Presbytery for evaluation of his experience, training, and general qualification for the ministry of The Church of God. The Presbytery may recommend whatever training that it may deem appropriate within the guidelines established by the Council of Apostles and Elders. The successful recommendation of the Territorial Presbytery that a candidate become a licensed minister is noted on the candidate's application, which is forward to General Headquarters.

(4) The candidate's application and recommendation of the Territorial Presbytery are considered by the Presiding Bishop and the General Presbytery which can either approve the application or schedule a further review.

(5) With the approval of the Presiding Bishop and the General Presbytery, the candidate is issued a license by the office of the Presiding Bishop conferring the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the licensed ministry of The Church of God upon the candidate.

(6) The ministerial license is then sent to the candidate's pastor. The pastor is to conduct a formal ceremony at the local church when presenting the license to the new

minister.

3. Optional Procedure for Ministerial Leaders

At its discretion the General Presbytery may waive any of the procedures for licensing, ordaining, and recognizing ministers as bishops outlined in this manual in cases where ministers who are leaders or bishops in other organizations or fellowships wish to become a part of the ministry of The Church of God. In these cases the decisions of the Presbytery with the Presiding Bishop as the chairman are final.

4. The License

The licensing of ministers includes both a certificate suitable for framing and a wallet identification card, both of which state the formal authorization of the minister to preach, publish, and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to administer the sacraments of the church, and to carry out whatever business and ministerial duties may be delegated to him by his superiors. The license includes the name, license number, and gift (if any) of the minister, along with the expiration date. (All licenses are renewable every four years in The Church of God.) The license is signed by the Presiding Bishop and the Territorial Bishop of the area in which the minister resides at the time of licensing.

C. ORDINATIONS

Ordination is the formal ceremony in which the Presbytery of the church imparts the authority of church ministry with all its rights, privileges, and responsibilities upon a minister who has been judged by the administration of the church to be worthy of such honor.

The process of ordination of ministers is a part of one of the fundamental teachings of the church, the doctrine of laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:1, 2). The process involves an election or choosing by stretching forth of hands as the word translated *ordain* in Titus 1:5 is rendered literally from the Greek.

Throughout Bible history there are many examples of the conferring of authority and offices through the laying on of hands, particularly of the right hand. There is a definite imparting of authority and even of gifts through this process in the New Testament ministry according to I Timothy 4: 14. Ministerial and administrative authority are also conferred by the laying on of hands (Acts 6:3, 6).

The ordained ministry of The Church of God is made up of those men and women who have been officially set forth by the laying on of hands of the Presbytery and the accompanying declaration that they are representatives of the Melchisedec priesthood of the New Testament.

1. The Ordained Minister

After a candidate has been issued a minister's license he (or she) is then eligible to be ordained. After a period of proving and training, the minister can then be set forth and ordained with one of the five gifts of the ministry being identified in his ministry. It should be noted that ordination into one of the five gifts of the ministry is not an ordination into the degree of deacon or bishop. The procedure for ordination is as follows:

(1) The candidate must complete any and all of the on-the-job training as prescribed by his pastor or appointed overseer. This includes, but is not limited to hospital visitations, home visitations, pulpit ministry, and assisting in business meetings and ceremonial duties of the ministry.

(2) The candidate must secure an application for ordained ministers from General Headquarters.

(3) The application must be completed, with the recommendation of a bishop in the church noted on the application. The application is then forwarded to the Territorial

Presbytery.

(4) The candidate must appear before the Territorial Presbytery and complete the EXAM FOR ORDAINED MINISTERS. This is open-book exam designed to identify any weak areas in the candidate's understanding and knowledge of the Bible and the doctrines and practices of The Church of God. If an area of need is found, the candidate is then shown the correct response and how the answer was determined. The Presbytery will also interview the candidate to determine which one of the five gifts of the ministry is operating in his ministry.

(5) When the Territorial Presbytery is satisfied that the minister is qualified and worthy of ordination into the ministry, and one of the five gifts of the ministry is identified, its approval is noted on the candidate's application, which is forwarded to General Headquarters with the recommendation that the candidate be ordained.

(6) When the candidate's application and examination are judged complete and satisfactory by the Presiding Bishop and the General Presbytery, the candidate is issued a certificate of ordination with one of the five gifts of the ministry noted on the certificate.

(7) The certificate of ordination is then sent to the candidate's pastor. The pastor is to conduct a formal ceremony at the local church when presenting the certificate to the newly ordained minister.

2. The Deacon

The office of a deacon is a degree of the ordained ministry. It is the second highest ministerial office that may be held in The Church of God. Paul declared that "they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree" (1 Timothy 3:13). Ordained ministers are among the most vital elements in the success of the church and therefore are chosen carefully. Recognition of worthiness to be ordained into the ministry is a great honor both from God and from the church (1 Timothy 1:12).

a. Qualifications

The scriptural qualifications of a deacon are enumerated in several passages of New Testament scripture. Most notable among those is I Timothy 3:8-13. The first requirement for ordination as a deacon is that a man must be proved. According to Paul's instructions a man may use the office of a deacon after he has been found to be blameless. He must have been found to be above reproach both without and within the church.

Paul's list of qualifications includes the following: *"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience...Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well"* (I Timothy 3:8, 9, 11, 12). Paul gave further qualifications in II Corinthians 6:4-7: *"But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."*

b. Procedures for Ordination as a Deacon

A minister must be appointed to the office of a deacon. This appointment is made when the minister is appointed to a position of oversight within the church. The deacon is appointed by his senior bishops. The minister being considered for the office of a deacon will be evaluated on the following criteria:

(1) A review of the minister's history with respect to the Biblical requirements for a deacon (I Timothy 3: 1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

- (2) The approval of the minister's superiors regarding the minister's lifestyle.
- (3) The approval of the minister's superiors regarding the minister's qualifications for the position of oversight.
- (4) A review of the minister's spouse and family as to whether they are in conjunction with his ministry, and to whether their lives are in order.

c. Ceremony for Ordaining Deacons

A CONSECRATION LITURGY FOR THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS (DEACONESSES) INTO THE MELCHISEDEC PRIESTHOOD OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

The consecration and ordination of ministers into the Ministry of The Church of God after the order of Melchisedec and the accompanying conferment of the degree of Deacon or Deaconess is made in the following ceremony (A presiding bishop, assisted by two other bishops, officiates in this ceremony):

Prelude

Processional (Optional)

The Announcement:

The presiding bishop says:

We are assembled here in the presence of Yahweh, the Almighty God, and these witnesses to consecrate and ordain ministers into the Melchisedec Priesthood of The Church of God.

The Call:

The first associate bishop says:

Let those who are called unto this ordination come forward and present themselves before the Lord.

Scripture Reading:

The second associate bishop says:

"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way...And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ, glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood... what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah...We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle...But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry..." (Hebrews 5:1-6; 7:11-14; 8:1, 2, 6).

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:18-20).

The Invocation:

Prayer given by the first associate bishop.

Scripture Reading:

The second associate bishop reads the following:

"Deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 3:8-13) (Note: 'When ordaining deaconesses, Romans 16:1 may be used.)

The Attestation of Qualifications:

The presiding bishop says:

(Candidate's Name) has presented himself (herself) through the proper channels for ordination into the ministry of The Church of God.

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:1, 2). Has this person been found faithful?

The first associate bishop says:

According to the testimony of his (her) associates and superiors, the Presbytery believes this man (woman) to be faithful.

The presiding bishop says:

The Scriptures require that a man (woman) who desires to become a minister study to show himself (herself) approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, a vessel of honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work (II Timothy 2:15,20,21). It is this person qualified by ability and learning for the awesome responsibilities of this ministry?

The second associate bishop says:

The Presbytery has evaluated this man's (woman's) training and has found him (her) to be qualified to assume this responsibility.

The presiding bishop says:

"Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (II Corinthians 4: 1,2).

To become a part of this ministry, a man (woman) must be filled with integrity and honor. Have you found this man (woman) to be a man (woman) of integrity?

The first associate bishop says:

According to the testimony of all who know him (her), we judge this man (woman) to be an honorable man (woman).

The presiding bishop addresses the collective ordained ministry present:

Brethren, do you judge this man (woman) as faithful, qualified, and honorable and as such worthy to be ordained into this priesthood?

They say:

"We do."

The first associate bishop addresses the assembly:

(Candidate's Name) has been judged by his (her) Chief Bishop, the Presbytery, and

fellow ministers in The Church of God to be a man (woman) of faithfulness, ability, and integrity worthy to be ordained into this ministry. Does anyone in this assembly know any just cause why this man (woman), (Candidate's Name), should not be ordained into the ministry of The Church of God. If so, speak, if not, now and forever hold your peace.

The Commitment:

To the candidate, the presiding bishop says:

(Candidate's Name), do you desire to be ordained into the ministry of The Church of God?

The candidate says:

"I do."

The Vow:

The presiding bishop says to the candidate:

Repeat after me this holy vow: I, (Candidate's Name), in the presence of Yahweh, the Almighty God, and this company of witnesses, do hereby solemnly promise and pledge my sacred honor to be a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to exercise all diligence in the performance of the duties of the priestly office which I am about to assume, to sacrifice the Gospel of God to and for the people, to minister unto both believer and unbeliever the things pertaining to the kingdom of God without fear or favor, to stand for a defense of the Word of God when it is challenged, to support and confirm the doctrines and practices of The Church of God as set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders, to honor and support my fellow ministers, to submit myself in reverence and honor to my superiors in theocratic government, to maintain in the strictest of confidence those personal matters committed to my priestly keeping, and to be a faithful steward of those sacred things committed to my trust as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. With this holy covenant, I pledge myself both now and forever. Amen.

The Charge:

The presiding bishop says:

(Candidate's Name), I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, that you observe those things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. O man (woman) of God, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickened all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ordination:

Anointing the forehead of the candidate with oil, the presiding bishop says:

(Candidate's Name), with this oil, I anoint you and consecrate you this day unto the ministry of The Church of God. With the authority invested in me, I now ordain you, (Candidate's Name), a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec and confer upon you the ministerial degree of deacon (deaconess).

Prayer:

Presiding and associate bishops lay hands on the newly-ordained minister and pray for his guidance.

The Investiture:

The presiding bishop takes a simple vestment from one of the associate bishops and

places it over the shoulders of the ordained minister, saying,

"Receive this priestly vestment, which signifies the easy yoke and the light burden of Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Benediction:

The presiding bishop says:

"And now may the grace of Messiah Yahshua, the love of Yahweh, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you, (Candidate's Name) , both now and forever. The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen."

The Proclamation:

To the congregation the presiding bishop says:

Fellow believers in Christ and fellow members of The Church of God, we commend to you (Deacon's Name), our colleague in the ordained ministry of The Church of God. Receive him (or her) as you would receive us. Amen.

Recessional (optional)

Postlude

3. The Bishop (Overseer)

The office of bishop is the highest degree of the ordained ministry of The Church of God. The term *bishop* comes from the Greek word which means *overseer or one who has oversight*. A bishop, then, is a man who is qualified to fulfill an office of authority over other ministers and laymen in the church. The offices of the judicial government of the church must be held by men who are ordained bishops. As a general rule, the offices of executive government involving ministry in the church are held by men who are ordained bishops. By virtue of their responsibilities for oversight of the affairs of the church, bishops represent the most important ministerial officers in the church. It is for this reason that those who aspire to be bishops are carefully examined before this high degree of the ministry is conferred upon them and are required to maintain the highest standards of conduct, commitment, and capability. There is no provision for ordination of female ministers as bishops either in judicial or executive government in the church.

a. Qualifications

Paul declared that *"if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* He continued to give a listing of qualifications for those who aspire to oversight: *"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"* (I Timothy 3:2-7).

In Titus 1:6-9 Paul further described the qualifications of a bishop: *"If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."*

b. Procedure for Ordination as a Bishop

A minister must be appointed to the office of a bishop. This appointment is made

when the minister is appointed to a position of oversight within the church. The bishop is appointed by his senior bishops. The minister being considered for the office of a bishop will be evaluated on the following criteria:

(1) A review of the minister's history with respect to the Biblical requirements for a bishop (I Timothy 3:8-13; Titus 1:5-9).

(2) The approval of the minister's superiors regarding the minister's lifestyle.

(3) The approval of the minister's superiors regarding the minister's qualifications for the position of oversight including successful completion of the EXAM FOR ORDAINED MINISTERS.

(4) A review of the minister's spouse and family as to whether they are in conjunction with his ministry, and to whether their lives are in order.

(5) A review of the minister's moral and spiritual worthiness; fiscal responsibility; availability for ministerial appointment and service; and ability to teach and defend the doctrine and polity of The Church of God.

(6) The minister is ordained as a bishop in the Melchisedec priesthood of The Church of God.

(7) The newly-ordained bishop is given a certificate of ordination that states the rights, privileges and responsibilities of this office.

c. Ceremony for Ordaining Bishops

A CONSECRATION LITURGY FOR THE ORDINATION OF BISHOPS IN THE MELCHISEDEC PRIESTHOOD OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

The consecration and ordination of bishops in the ministry of The Church of God after the order of Melchisedec is made in the following ceremony: (The Chief Bishop of The Church of Gods assisted by his two witnesses officiates in this ceremony.)

Prelude

Processional (Optional)

The Announcement:

The Chief Bishop says:

We are assembled here in the presence of Yahweh, the Almighty God, and these witnesses to consecrate and ordain bishops in the Melchisedec Priesthood of The Church of God.

The Call:

The right-hand witness says:

Let those who are called unto this ordination come forward and present themselves before the Lord.

Scripture Reading:

The left-hand witness says:

"For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way...And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec...If therefore perfection were by Levitical priesthood...what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change

also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah...We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle...but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry..." (Hebrews 5:1 -6; 7:11-14; 8:1, 2, 6).

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are the ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:18-20).

The Invocation:

A prayer is given by the right-hand witness.

Scripture Reading:

The left-hand witness says:

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil...A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9).

The Attestation of Qualifications:

The Chief Bishop says:

(Candidate's Name) has presented himself through the proper channels for ordination as a bishop in the ministry of The Church of God. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). Has this man been found faithful?

The right-hand witness says:

According to the testimony of his associates and superiors, the Presbytery believes this man to be faithful.

The Chief Bishop says:

The Scriptures require that a man who desires to become a bishop must be qualified to teach and exhort with sound doctrine (Titus 3:7). In order to do this he must have studied to show himself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, a vessel of honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work (II Timothy 2:15,20,21). Is this man qualified by ability and learning for the awesome responsibilities of the bishopric of The Church of God?

The left-hand witness says:

The Presbytery has evaluated this man's training and has found him to be qualified to assume this responsibility.

The Chief Bishop says:

A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without. Has this man been found to be blameless, a man of

integrity and of good report both within and without the church?

The right-hand witness says:

According to the testimony of all who know him, we judge this man to be an honorable man.

The Chief Bishop addresses the assembled bishops of the church:

Brethren, do you judge this man as faithful, qualified, and honorable and as such worthy to be ordained as a bishop in The Church of God?

They say: "We do."

The right-hand witness addresses the assembly:

(Candidate's Name) has been judged by the Chief Bishop, by the General Presbytery, and by his fellow ministers in The Church of God to be a man of faithfulness, ability, and integrity worthy to be ordained into the ministry. Does anyone in this assembly know of any just cause why this man, (Candidate's Name), should not now be ordained as a bishop in The Church of God? If so, speak. If not, now and forever hold your peace.

The Commitment:

To the candidate the Chief Bishop says:

(Candidate's Name), do you desire to be ordained as a bishop in the ministry of The Church of God?

The applicant says: "I do."

The Vow:

The Chief Bishop says to the applicant:

Repeat after me this holy vow: I, (Candidate's Name), in the presence of Yahweh, the Almighty God, and this company of witnesses, do hereby solemnly promise and pledge my sacred honor to be a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to exercise all diligence in the performance of the duties of the priestly office of oversight that I am about to assume, to sacrifice the Gospel of God to and for the people, to minister unto both believer and unbeliever the things pertaining to the kingdom of God without fear or favor, to stand for a defense of the Word of God when it is challenged, to support and confirm the doctrines and practices of The Church of God as set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders, to honor and support my fellow ministers in the brotherhood of this ministry and bishopric, to submit myself in reverence and honor to my superiors in theocratic government, to maintain in the strictest of confidence those personal matters committed to my priestly keeping, to protect and honor those members and ministers of The Church of God who are committed to my oversight, to exercise the authority of the bishopric of the church with all forbearance, longsuffering, and patience, and to be a faithful steward of those sacred things committed to my trust as an ambassador of my High Priest, Jesus Christ. With this holy covenant, I pledge myself both now and forever. Amen.

The Charge:

The Chief Bishop says:

(Candidate's Name), I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. O man of God, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you art also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Be gentle unto all men,

apt to teach, patient, I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickens all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ordination:

Anointing the forehead of the candidate with oil, the Chief Bishop says:

(Candidate's name), with this oil, I anoint you and consecrate you this day and confer upon you the degree of bishop in the ministry of The Church of God.

Prayer:

The Chief Bishop and his two witnesses lay hands on the newly-ordained bishop and offer prayer for his guidance.

The Investiture:

The Chief Bishop takes a vestment symbolic of the bishopric of the church and gives it to the newly ordained bishop, saying:

Receive this priestly vestment which signifies your bishopric and the easy yoke and light burden of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Benediction:

The Chief Bishop says:

And now the grace of Messiah Yahshua, the love of Yahweh, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you, (Candidate's Name) , both now and forever. The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His face shine upon thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. Amen.

The Proclamation:

The Chief Bishop says:

Fellow believers in Christ and fellow members of The Church of God, we commend to you Bishop (Bishop's Name), our colleague in the bishopric of the ordained ministry of The Church of God. Receive him as you would receive us. Amen.

Recessional (Optional)

Postlude

D. FEMALE MINISTERS

The Church of God believes that women share equally with men in the ministry of the Gospel and may perform any duty that New Testament ministry might require of them including the administering of the sacraments. The only area of ministry that is reserved by the Scriptures to the male ministry is the degree of bishop in both judicial and executive government.

The Church of God makes no distinction in the requirements for and rights, privileges, and responsibilities of male and female ministers, in licensed ministers, and in ordained ministers. Women who are ordained into the ministry are called deaconesses (the office parallel with that of deacon).

1. Ministers

Throughout the scriptures there are examples of women who were called of God and endowed with a message for His people. In some instances those women were called prophetesses, a term which in the Greek text means "a divinely-gifted female teacher." The calling of a prophetess, then, is parallel with that of a prophet, a preacher of the Word.

A woman who is called of God to preach the Gospel may follow the procedures outlined in this manual to become a licensed minister or, if applicable, through the optional

program for experienced ministers. Women who manifest one of the nine spiritual gifts and have no ability to preach should not seek to become licensed ministers.

2. The Ordained Minister

A woman who has received her minister's license is then eligible to be ordained. She should follow the procedures outlined in this manual to become an ordained minister.

3. Deaconesses

Women who have become licensed ministers in the church may become ordained ministers (deaconesses). This appointment is made when the minister is appointed to a position of oversight within the church. The deaconess is appointed by her senior bishops. The criteria for evaluation are the same as for a deacon.

4. Chief Women

The Chief Bishop may appoint women of outstanding ministerial ability and administrative talent as chief women in the church. Chief women may hold leadership offices in which the Chief Bishop chooses to make them representatives of General Headquarters. In these capacities, they function with delegated authority and may carry out whatever responsibilities may be assigned to them.

E. MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS

1. Executive Appointments

The Chief Bishop is responsible for making executive appointments to administrative posts in the church. He is advised in these appointments by the General Presbytery, of which he is the chairman and final authority.

Executive appointments include the two witnesses of the Chief Bishop, general field representatives, territorial bishops, and any other offices which are necessary for the orderly administration of the affairs of the church.

2. Pastors

The Territorial Bishop, with the advice of the Chief Bishop and local church, makes appointments of pastors to the local churches of The Church of God. These appointments may be received by the local church, or the local church may unanimously request a different appointment.

Whenever a new pastor is appointed to a church a pastor installation ceremony is conducted by the Territorial Bishop. The following ceremony is recommended.

PASTOR INSTALLATION CEREMONY

Prelude

Processional

The Announcement:

The presiding bishop says:

We are gathered in the presence of God and this company to install (Pastor's Name) as pastor of The Church of God at (Name of Local Church).

The Invocation:

Prayer by someone chosen.

Scripture Reading:

The presiding bishop or someone chosen may read: *"I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding"*

(Jeremiah 3:15); "And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11- 13).

The Sermon:

A sermon by the presiding bishop is optional.

The Presentation:

The presiding bishop introduces the pastor to the congregation, saying: By executive appointment (Pastor's Name) has been designated pastor of The Church of God at (Name of Local church).

The Charge to the Pastor:

The presiding bishop says:

I charge you, (Pastor's Name) to take heed unto yourself and to all the flock, over they which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Charge to the Congregation:

The presiding bishop says to the congregation:

I charge you in the sight of God and before Christ Jesus that you remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.

The Covenant:

The presiding bishop says to the pastor:

Do you, (Pastor's Name); accept the responsibility of the care of the souls in this congregation? Will you feed them with the Word of God, and will you watch for their welfare, helping them to develop toward maturity in the knowledge of God? Will you be their pastor?

The pastor answers: I will.

The presiding bishop says to the congregation:

Will you accept this man as your pastor, follow him as he follows Christ, and support him in word and deed?

The congregation answers: We will.

The Induction:

A member of the congregation presents a Bible to the pastor, saying:

(Pastor's Name), accept this Bible, and be among us as one who proclaims the Word of God.

A member of the congregation presents a stole or other symbol of the ministry to the

pastor, saying:

(Pastor's Name), receive this stole and be among us a pastor and a priest.

A member of the congregation presents olive oil to the pastor, saying:

(Pastor's Name), receive this oil, and be among us a healer and reconciler.

A member of the congregation presents keys of the church to the pastor, saying:

(Pastor's Name), receive these keys, and let the doors of this place be open to all people.

The Proclamation:

The presiding bishop says:

With the authority invested in me, I do declare that you, (Pastor's Name), are now the pastor of the congregation of The Church of God at (Name of Local church).

Prayer:

The presiding bishop prays for the success of the pastor and the congregation.

The Benediction:

The presiding bishop blesses both the pastor and the people.

The Announcement:

The presiding bishop says:

I present to you, the congregation of The Church of God at (Name of Local Church) your pastor, (Pastor's Name). Receive him in the Name of Christ as you would receive us.

Recessional

Postlude

F. RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MINISTERS

In the ministry of The Church of God, licensed ministers, ordained ministers, deacons, and bishops have graduated degrees of rights, privileges, and responsibilities that accompany their level of attainment in the ministry.

1. Licensed Ministers and Ordained Ministers

a. Rights and Privileges

(1) To preach, publish, and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach the doctrines of The Church of God.

(2) To administer the church sacraments, including communion and water baptism.

(3) To administer covenant of church membership.

(4) To dedicate children.

(5) To dedicate homes.

(6) To solemnize the rights of matrimony within the guidelines established by the Council of Apostles and Elders and the laws of the state in which they are ministering.

(7) To attend sessions of the Council of Apostles and Elders and to participate in the debate. (Licensed and ordained ministers (ordained without a degree) may not introduce motions or vote on resolutions without the consent of the Presiding Bishop.)

b. Responsibilities

(1) To report monthly to General and Territorial Headquarters.

(2) To maintain financial obligations to the church, including tithing and giving. Income from the ministry is tithed to General Headquarters, and income from secular employment is tithed to the local church of which the minister is a member.

(3) To be faithful in church attendance.

(4) To attend the Council of Apostles and Elders and the festivals of the church.

(5) To be available for assignment by the church administration to posts of ministry.

2. Deacons and Deaconesses

a. Rights and Privileges

(1) To preach, publish, and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach the doctrines of The Church of God.

(2) To administer the church sacraments, including communion and water baptism.

(3) To administer the covenant of church membership.

(4) To dedicate children.

(5) To dedicate homes.

(6) To solemnize the rights of matrimony within the guidelines established by the Council of Apostles and Elders and the laws of the state in which they are ministering.

(7) To attend the sessions of the Council of Apostles and Elders, to introduce subjects, to participate in the debate, to make motions, and to vote on resolutions.

(8) To recommend ministers for licensing.

(9) To function by delegated authority in administrative offices normally reserved to bishops (including serving on presbyteries).

b. Responsibilities

(1) To report monthly to General and Territorial Headquarters.

(2) To maintain financial obligations to the church, including tithing and giving. Income from ministry is tithed to General Headquarters, and income from secular employment is tithed to the local church of which the minister is a member.

(3) To be faithful in church attendance.

(4) To attend the Council of Apostles and Elders and the festivals of the church.

(5) To be available for assignment by the church administration to posts of ministry.

3. Bishops

a. Rights and Privileges

(1) To preach, publish, and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to teach the doctrines of The Church of God.

(2) To administer the church sacraments, including communion and water baptism.

(3) To administer the covenant of church membership.

(4) To establish missions for The Church of God.

(5) To set local churches in order within the oversight of the territorial bishops.

(6) To dedicate children.

(7) To dedicate homes.

(8) To dedicate church buildings and properties.

(9) To solemnize the rights of matrimony within the guidelines established by the Council of Apostles and Elders and the laws of the state in which they are ministering.

(10) To recommend ministers for licensing and/or ordination.

(11) To participate in the ordination ceremony for ministers and deacons by delegation from the Chief Bishop or territorial bishops.

(12) To serve on presbyteries.

(13) To receive appointments to any judicial or executive office in the church.

(14) To attend the sessions of the Council of Apostles and Elders, to introduce subjects for debate, to participate in the debate, to make motions, and to vote on resolutions.

b. Responsibilities

(1) To report monthly to General and Territorial Headquarters.

(2) To maintain financial obligations to the church including tithing and giving. Income from ministry is tithed to General Headquarters, and income from secular employment is tithed to the local church of which the minister is a member.

(3) To be faithful in church attendance.

(4) To attend the Council of Apostles and Elders and the festivals of the church.

(5) To be available for assignment by the church administration to posts of ministry.

(6) To be the highest examples in the church in fulfilling all of these responsibilities.

G. PREACHING THE WORD

While all aspects of church life and worship are important for the minister, there is one act that is at the heart of every successful ministry, an event around which every other work or ministry of the church revolves and with which they interact. Preaching is the heartbeat of a successful ministry and the church. A new church usually starts with a preaching service, and when a local assembly dies, a preaching service is the last thing that is given up. While there are continually new horizons of activity and ministry opening to the church and its ministry, it is scripturally safe to say that everything else will become obsolete before preaching does.

Herman Melville said, "The pulpit is ever this earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world...Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out...and the pulpit is its prow." And so it is. The power that can be marshaled through the effective preaching of the Word of God is well documented in human history. Indeed the course of history has often been changed when men of God preached the Word with conviction and soul-gripping power.

In this sense the work of a preacher is the most influential position in the world. Abraham Lincoln said, "With public sentiment nothing can fall; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public opinion goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions." Playing on Archimedes scientific statement, "Give me a lever long enough, and I will move the world," Joseph Conrad said that words "have set whole nations in motion and upheaved the dry, hard ground on which rests our social fabric...give me the right word and the right accent, and I will move the world."

Is it any wonder then that Paul declared that *"it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (I Corinthians 1:21) or that his foremost instruction to Timothy was to *"preach the Word"*? Paul emotionally declared, *"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."* Gregory the Great around 1070 declared that a minister who avoids preaching is as guilty of fratricide as a physician is if he fails to treat a wounded man, thereby causing his death.

But, is preaching simply a talent which we can learn? Is it just the art of public speaking? Is it a rule of thumb that the more eloquent the speaker, the more successful the ministry? The answer to each of these questions is, No! Effective preaching must come from a heart that is called and commissioned of God. Preaching is not just public speaking; it is one element, though the key element, of a worship service. And the seemingly more eloquent speaker is not always the most successful.

William Arthur said over a hundred years ago, "If the preaching of the Gospel is to exercise a great power over mankind, it must be either by enlisting extraordinary men or by the endowing of ordinary men with extraordinary power." This is where the true success of effective preaching has its origin. It is the power that the Holy Spirit imparts through the preaching of the Word of God, working both through the preacher and through the hearer to bring about the results that God desires.

It is the Word of God that makes the word of the preacher efficacious. John Calvin said, "Without the Word the Sacrament is but a dumb show; the Word must go before." A minister who preaches the Bible has an incredible power in his hands, The Gospel of Jesus Christ, not the words of a preacher, is the power of God unto salvation. When there is no Bible in the pulpit, there will be no people in the pews. Two of the words most prominently translated *preach* or *preaching* in the New Testament are *evangelizo* and *kerygma*. The first is the Greek word from which we get *evangelize*. The second simply means *a cry* or *a proclamation*. Both of these words indicate that there is a great deal of emotion displayed in the preaching of the Word of God.

In the secular world, this is called *oratory*, and it is generally found to be displayed when there are causes to be supported that stir the emotions. While oratory is not always manifested with the degree of volume or demonstrativeness of the speaker, it is always demonstrated with fervor and intensity. Effective preaching will come from a heart that is on fire with a message from God of which he is thoroughly convinced and which he cannot help but share with others.

Another Greek word that is characteristic of a preacher is the word *didaskalia*, which is most

commonly translated *teacher* or *teaching*. It is the responsibility of the preacher to be as the priests of the Old Testament who instructed the people on the law of God daily. In this kind of ministry a didactic style is much more effective; however, it is a part of the preaching of the Word, nevertheless.

Thomas Aquinas emphasized these aspects of preaching when he declared that preaching has three functions: (1) to instruct the intelligence; (2) to kindle the emotions; and (3) to form the will. It is through teaching and emotion-stirring proclamation of the Gospel that people are brought to the decision of changing their will to conform to the will of God.

Aristotle said that there were three key elements in effective communication, the *ethos*, the *pathos*, and the *logia*. The *ethos*, or moral character, is something that we spend our lifetimes preparing for, for in continually living a life of honor, faithfulness, and charity, we build the foremost foundation for effective preaching, the trust of the heart.

The second element is *pathos*, or concern for others. It is something that we prepare for daily in our prayer life. We secure divine help to impress upon us the needs of others and the responsibility that we have of meeting those needs through Jesus Christ. Indeed, if there were any one definition of ministry that is a clear overview it is the work of standing in the place of Jesus Christ in the earth to meet the needs of humanity through His power and grace.

The third element of effective communication is the *logia*, the word or message. Obviously, we must have the quality of character that people will trust and listen to us, and we must have the concern for them that they will feel that we want to help them, and finally we must have a message from God that will fulfill their expectations. What an awesome responsibility!

George E. Sweazey says that an effective "sermon is to bring to people what their souls need most: (1) The Bible; (2) God's Saving Acts; (3) An encounter with Christ; (4) Teaching; (5) Sustaining; (6) Emotions; (7) Judgment; (8) Decisions; and (9) Actions." In order to accomplish all of these things, a preacher must be a "general practitioner," a work that is impossible without the manifestation of God's power through His ministry.

How may we enlist this extraordinary power to become more effective preachers? First, we must have humility. If a minister has such intelligence and ability that he thinks he is competent to preach of himself, he will not acquire the power of God to make his words effective. When a preacher thinks, "I am going to ring the bell today," that is the day when no bells ring. The second condition for securing God's power in preaching is hard work. The old saying that goes, "Inspiration is nine-tenths perspiration," is true. The third requirement for securing divine supplement is to believe in and ask for it. God's help in preaching never comes automatically, simply because we stand in the pulpit. It is only when we are in a prayerful state to receive, that God's help will be given to us.

When we have the humility to recognize the tremendous weight of responsibility that rests on our shoulders in our calling to speak on behalf of God to His people, and when we value our calling so much that we are willing to spend endless hours in study and preparation to take on that role, and when we spend time in prayer before God seeking his endowment with the supernatural power of the Spirit, we will find ourselves as ordinary men being used by an extraordinary God to bring about the results of growth in God's kingdom, maturity in His church, and ministry to the needs of His people.

H. MINISTERIAL GIFTS

The Church of God believes in the full restoration of the five gifts of the ministry--namely, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. These gifts of God are received by individual ministers and are recognized by the church from the characteristics which are displayed in their ministries.

The specific purpose for which the gifts of the ministry were given to the early church by Jesus Christ, Himself, and for which they are restored in the last days' church is for the equipping of the saints of God to accomplish works of ministry and for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. This is according to the literal rendering of Ephesians 4:12 from the original Greek text.

The fact that the five gifts of the ministry are a necessity in the church today is revealed by Paul's statement that they were given by our Lord until "*we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13). In order for a perfect church to be prepared for presentation to Christ as a wife that has "*made herself ready*" (Revelation 19:7), the church must have the restored perfect ministry possessing the five gifts.

The gift which a minister possesses is recognized by the church and duly noted on his minister's license on the basis of the manifestation of the characteristics of that gift in his ministry. It is not so recognized solely on the basis of his claim. Provision is made on applications for minister's license and for ordination as deacons and bishops for the applicant to note the ministerial gift which he claims. The evaluation of this claim is a part of the total evaluation process of the Territorial Presbytery, the General Presbytery, and the Chief Bishop.

1. The Gift of Apostle

The gift of apostle endows man with a revelation of the Word of God which enables him to understand the fulfillment of prophecy and to know the "*present truth*" which the church needs for stability and development. Ephesians 3:3,5 declares: "*How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*" The foremost sign of a gifted apostle is this spiritual revelation of the mysteries of the Word of God that have not been made known in other ages.

The gift of apostle equips a man with a God-given ability to influence people who have never heard the revelation of Jesus Christ to become established in the prophetic vision of The Church of God. By this gift an apostle is capable of going into a completely new territory and establishing a church in the doctrine and revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul professed this ability to establish others in the truth to be a preeminent sign of his apostleship: "*If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 9:2). An apostle, then, is a church planter, one who is able to pioneer the message of the last days' church in virgin territory.

The ability of an apostle to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit and other gifts by the laying on of hands is another sign of apostleship. In Acts 8:16, 17 it was noted that Philip, who had the gift of evangelist (Acts 21:8), did not manifest this ability; however, Peter and John, both of whom were gifted apostles, "*laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 8:17). An apostle may also impart spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands unto those who are worthy and qualified to receive them (I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6).

Another prominent sign of a gifted apostle is his willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the overspread of the prophetic Word of God (I Corinthians 4:9- 12). He is able to endure the reproach that his pioneering ministry of revelation frequently brings upon him. An apostle is patient (II Corinthians 6:4; 12:12) and able to be cheerful in adversity.

A gifted apostle finds his ministry witnessed with "*signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*" (II Corinthians 12: 12). The apostle is an example of the ministry of faith and power with God.

2. The Gift of Prophet

The gift of prophet enables a man to be a preacher of the revelation of the Word of God that the church needs in order to continue on the prophetic path of perfection. The nature of this gift in the New Testament ministry represents a change from its manifestation in the Old Testament. No longer is it necessary for a prophet to foretell the future, for the "*prophets and the law prophesied unto John*" (Matthew 11:13) and "*since that time the kingdom of God is preached*" (Luke 16:16). The New Testament ministry of the gifted prophet then is to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God (Acts 13:1, 2).

The gifted prophet, like the apostle, must have a divinely-appointed revelation of the program of God for this day (Ephesians 3:5). The work of the gifted prophet is to confirm the revelation brought forth from the Word of God by the apostolic ministry. He may also foretell future events as in the case of Agabus (Acts 21:10, 11); however, this is not a prerequisite sign of New

Testament prophetic ministry.

The confirming nature of the ministry of the gifted prophet may also be manifested in the adding of strength to the church. This was the case with Judas and Silas, "*chief men among the brethren*" (Acts 15:22), who were "*prophets also themselves*" and "*exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them*" (Acts 15:32).

3. The Gift of Evangelist

The gift of evangelist endows a man with the ability to stir both saint and sinner with the Gospel message. A gifted evangelist has a driving ambition and burden for the salvation of lost souls. He also has the ability to revive and inspire the saints of God through the preaching of the Word.

A gifted evangelist has the ability to instruct the church in matters of doctrine and revelation as was the case with Timothy (I Timothy 5:1-20; II Timothy 4:2), who was instructed by Paul to do the work of an evangelist (II Timothy 4:5). An evangelist is to "*preach the word; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine*" (II Timothy 4:2). It is in this way that the gift of evangelist is given for the perfecting of the saints as well as for ministering to sinners.

A gifted evangelist has the ability to conduct a stirring revival as Philip, the evangelist, did in Acts 8. It is this gift that fulfills the need for stirring up the church's "*pure minds by way of remembrance*" that they "*may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of...the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*" (II Peter 3:1, 2).

4. The Gift of Pastor

The gift of pastor endows a man with the ability to provide spiritual oversight and nurture for the believers entrusted to his care. The word pastor means shepherd, a fact from which much understanding of the nature of this gift can be learned.

A gifted pastor acts as a guardian or shepherd of his flock and will not flee from the enemy of their souls as an hireling (John 10: 11-14). A gifted pastor feeds his flock with the Word of God and establishes them in the Apostles' Doctrine for their own stability (Isaiah 33:6).

The greatest single characteristic of a gifted pastor is his patience, the ability to reflect a victorious attitude even in times of trouble and defeat. He is always careful not to wound or destroy the sheep of God for whom he is appointed to care. He has the ability and determination to defend and encourage his flock rather than seeking out their faults. He is never of the nature of those evil men on whom God pronounced the woe: "*Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves...Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool...but ye feed not the flock...and they were scattered*" (Ezekiel 34:2, 3, 5). He is rather of the nature of those of whom God prophesied in Jeremiah 3:15: "*And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.*"

5. The Gift of Teacher

The gift of teacher endows a minister with the ability to inspire others and to transfer his knowledge of the Word of God to them in a manner which will cause them to retain that knowledge (Acts 13:1-4). The gifted teacher has considerable knowledge in the Holy Scriptures and the ability to simplify that knowledge to explain the doctrine and teachings of The Church of God.

The gifted teacher finds inventive ways to make lasting impressions on the minds of those whom he is teaching. He is adept at using the things that are made to reveal the invisible things of God (Romans 1:20). By his gift he knows how to approach the inculcation of knowledge in a systematic way.

The gift of teaching is that ministry which by repetition implants indelible truths in the minds of the members of the church. Its function is to give detailed understanding of the Apostles' Doctrine so that the church may be established more thoroughly in the "present truth." This detailed knowledge of the truth equips the saints to discern truth and error for themselves and thereby contributes to the building up of the church in its quest for Bible maturity or perfection.

I. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY

The membership of The Church of God is charged with the responsibility of the financial support of the ministry whom God has appointed over them. *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel...if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"* (I Corinthians 9: 14, 11). The only scriptural promise of an abundance of blessing upon God's people that cannot be contained is the result of the people's support of the ministry with their tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10).

Pastors of local churches are supported by a percentage of the tithes which the members of the church pay into the local treasury. They are also supported by offerings contributed by the local church. Local Church Perfection Auxiliary leaders, together with local presbyteries, are responsible for seeing that the pastor's needs are met.

Evangelists generally are supported by offerings contributed during revivals. Pastors and local Church Evangelistic Auxiliary leaders are responsible for promoting offerings that both cover expenses and provide salary compensation for the evangelist.

Territorial Bishops are supported by a percentage of the tithes paid in local churches under their oversight. They are also supported by offerings received in local churches where they minister.

General Headquarters officials are supported from a percentage of the tithes paid in local churches and from the tithes of ministers' income.

The percentages of tithes allocated to General Headquarters, Territorial Headquarters, and the local churches are established by the Council of Apostles and Elders. Maximum salaries of ministers at each of these levels of church government are also established by the Council of Apostles and Elders.

J. MINISTERIAL ETHICS

Suggestions for ministerial ethics are set forth by the Council of Apostles and Elders. These are in keeping with the high standards for ministerial conduct required in the Scriptures. *"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing"* (I Peter 3:8, 9).

1. The Minister and His Calling

The ministry is the highest calling in the world. The minister represents Christ to the world and should reflect His image. No other profession or vocation is accompanied by more responsibility. Whether good or bad, the minister has a great influence upon the believers to whom he ministers and upon the community at large. By his actions, he renders either honor or dishonor to the Gospel as long as he is recognized as a minister.

A minister who is called of God must have a burden or compassion for the souls of men. One who has no such burden is not a God-called minister. A true calling is one of humility and dedication, for an arrogant spirit can never reach the souls of men. This is the advice of Paul to Timothy: *"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"* (II Timothy 2:24-26). The God-called minister, in this sense, is a savior of the people (Obadiah 21).

If one can adopt any other profession besides being a preacher and be happy, he is not a God-called minister. A man who is truly called of God will feel as Paul: *"Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel."* A sense of responsibility to God, coupled with a compassion for the souls of men, is imperative if one is to be a successful minister.

It is always important for ministers to bear in mind that their sufficiency is not of themselves but of God who has made them able ministers of the New Testament (II Corinthians 3:5, 6). In so doing, they will be grateful to God for what they are and will give Him the credit for their

accomplishments. This is best stated in the words of Paul to Timothy: *"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry"* (I Timothy 1: 12). The very fact that God has chosen a person as a minister is a vote of confidence in his favor. God has considered him a faithful subject to represent Him to all humanity, to be His ambassador to invite the world in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20,21).

2. The Minister's Conversation

Words are creative, either for good or for evil. It is for this reason that the minister must be especially careful of his conversation. *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"* (Colossians 4:6).

Ministers should never be given to jesting and questionable conversation. This is one of the most detrimental blows that can be inflicted upon a successful ministry. A minister should take note of the effect of his words upon others. He should develop that sensitivity and discretion of learning what should be said in public and what should be said in private. Solomon stated this principal aptly: *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver"* (Proverbs 25:11).

Becoming a skillful minister in terms of conduct, both physical and verbal, does not come automatically. It must be developed through training, experience, and exercise. One must be observant of his own conduct in order to learn what is best to bring about the desired reaction from those to whom he ministers.

A minister's character should be above reproach, and his calling should never be desecrated by unseemly words. The minister is the mouthpiece of God, and his lips must speak forth those things that come from God. The minister's conversation should always be as described in Titus 2:7: *"In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity."* It is imperative that the minister travail before God until his lips are purged with the purity of the anointing of God that Isaiah experienced (Isaiah 6:6, 7). Only then can he observe the admonition of Peter and *"speak as the oracles of God"* (I Peter 4:11).

3. Dress and Grooming

Next in line of importance to what the minister is and what he says is his appearance. A minister should always be properly dressed and groomed in a manner acceptable in the society in which he is called to minister.

Cleanliness and proper grooming have always been required of the ministry of God. God's will was simply stated to the household of Jacob in Genesis 35:2: *"Be clean, and change your garments."* The ministry must be an example of purity in every way, both morally and physically. Since the nature of ministerial obligations brings the minister in close physical proximity with humanity, it is important that he observe high standards for personal hygiene. Even in adverse economic circumstances this rule can never be compromised.

Ministers in The Church of God are expected to maintain dignity and self-respect at all times. Dignity is not pride, nor is self-respect conceit. Being properly attired and carrying oneself with proper posture are important steps in gaining and maintaining the respect of the church and of the world. This is not to say that the minister must always wear clerical garments or business suits. The sensitive and successful minister will learn to dress in proper attire for the various occasions and situations that are a part of his life. When appearing in public, representing the church and its ministry, the minister will dress in formal or semi-formal attire. When participating in relaxed situations, he will know that casual attire is acceptable and expected.

The Church of God establishes no guidelines for styles of clothing for its ministers (either male or female), except that their clothing is modest and that ornamentation not be excessive. The church encourages the wearing of clerical garments for special occasions of ceremonial ministry and the wearing of standard military-style garments for certain of its outreach ministries.

The church also establishes no guidelines for grooming and hairstyles either for men or women except that they should be neat and acceptable in the society in which the minister serves. The church encourages its ministers to appear before men with modesty and that which becomes godliness.

A minister who is dedicated to his calling will always seek to obtain both the favor of God

and the favor of man (Luke 2:52); therefore, he will be properly dressed and well groomed.

4. The Minister's Finances

The manner in which a minister handles his personal finances can be both a blessing and help or it can be a reproach and hindrance to his ministry. A God-called minister must be an example to the believers in all things, including his personal finances.

According to the Scriptures, a minister is entitled to a livelihood from the work of his ministry. Jesus said, "*The laborer is worthy of his hire*" (Luke 10:7). The minister must not, however, make merchandise of the Gospel. Ministers are not required of the Scriptures to be poor, nor are they expected to be rich. The success of a minister isn't measured by his possessions or income or by the lack thereof. Barnabas apparently was wealthy by the standards of his day; however, Peter and John had the testimony, "*Silver and gold have I none*" (Acts 3:6.).

A minister should be careful to live within the means of that with which God has blessed him. He should have the reputation of fiscal responsibility, of paying his debts, and meeting his obligations to society and to church. A minister who does not fulfill these requirements violates the Scriptures which he represents and brings reproach upon the entire ministry of the Gospel.

A God-called minister should never shackle himself with financial obligations to the extent that he cannot fulfill the duties and responsibilities of his ministry. The excessive pursuit of material pleasures and comforts can hinder the work of the minister and the success of the church. A conscientious minister will be careful of the obligations that he undertakes, evaluating their potential impact upon the success of his foremost calling, the ministry of the Gospel.

A minister may become involved in various kinds of secular employment and business ventures when income from his ministry is insufficient to provide for himself and his family. The Church of God places no restrictions on the type of income-producing secular activity that the minister may choose to adopt, provided that the activity is not in conflict with fundamental righteousness and the teachings of the church or that the activity is not such that would bring reproach or question to his ministry and commitment to the church. Ministers should be careful that whatever secular employment or business enterprise they choose does not demand so much of their time that they are unable to fulfill their ministerial responsibilities.

A minister should exercise caution in becoming involved in business enterprises with church members, especially when he is their pastor. Such arrangements frequently result in misunderstanding and become obstacles to unity in the church.

The minister should always remember that he represents God to the people and the world; therefore, he must be an example in conducting his business affairs and meeting his financial obligations in proper and systematic ways. His moral rectitude in financial matters will bring him respect from the community and honor from the saints of God.

5. The Ministry-- a Cooperative Effort

Ministers are required to be "workers together" for God (II Corinthians 6:1). The ministry is a cooperative effort of all those whom God has chosen. No single minister is self-sufficient with no need of support and cooperation of other ministers.

Too many ministers attempt to build something for themselves by discrediting the work of others, particularly their predecessors in the ministerial post which they occupy. A minister cannot build on the ruin that he makes of others. The harvesting of souls and the work of the church are processes of planting, watering, and reaping. Paul planted and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase (I Corinthians 3:6). The favor of God is all that is needed in the ministry to bring about success.

A minister must accept the fact that some church members will never honor him in the same way that they did his predecessor. This is especially true of new converts who have a special place of love and respect in their hearts for the minister who won them to Christ. A minister must be content, therefore, with the spiritual contribution that he can make in the lives of those to whom he ministers. Jealousy of a predecessor or some other minister is readily detected by the congregation and produces a negative impact upon his success. By honoring the good works of other ministers, a minister can expect to receive honor. In the final analysis, all ministers should be working for the

common cause of Christ and not for personal recognition.

A minister should be careful to respect the relationship that a pastor has with his congregation. This is true of a minister who has previously pastored a church as well as of evangelists and others. While he may minister to the needs of the people in a local church within the parameters of his ministerial and governmental responsibilities, a minister should not attempt to pastor a church by remote control, advising members and spending his opinions on local church policy and projecting himself to be a savior of the people from the failures of their pastor. Visits and communication with local church members should always be with the knowledge and consent of the pastor.

In situations where members wish to call on former pastors or other ministers to perform weddings or funerals, it is advisable for the membership to make these invitations through their pastor. In this way everyone involved receives due consideration.

Aside from his relationship with other ministers and pastors in the church, a minister of The Church of God must remember that the entire Christian ministry is a cooperative effort. In this regard it is proper for church ministers to support and cooperate with ministers of other organizations in every way possible for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God. Again, the rule applies that a minister cannot build upon the ruin brought about by his criticizing and tearing down the work of another church or ministry. Care should be exercised when pointing out doctrinal differences of other organizations that personal invective does not enter in. Jesus wisely advised His disciples that those who can do a miracle in the name of Christ can also speak evil against Him and the church.

6. Cooperation with Executive Government

A minister in The Church of God is expected to cooperate fully with the executive governmental structure of the church which has granted him a license to represent the church as its minister. A license is not granted for a man to be a free-lance preacher. It is given by the General Headquarters of the church through territorial headquarters for the purpose of authorizing the minister to represent The Church of God and to support both its General Headquarters and its territorial headquarters.

The hierarchy of the church should be held in the highest esteem and respect with the honor that dignitaries of such offices are accorded by the Scriptures. Only when a minister is in proper subjection to his superiors in the government of the church can he expect to be properly respected by those of whom he has oversight.

It is unethical for a minister to indicate publicly that he is in conflict with the hierarchy of the church in any matter of doctrine, polity, or ministerial appointment. It is also unacceptable for a minister to make a public statement of his disagreement with the Apostles' Doctrine, which by definition is the doctrine which has been established by the Council of Apostles and Elders. Actions and statements which indicate conflict with church government and doctrine can be classified as insubordination. Seeking the support of laymen or other ministers in these matters can be classified as sedition. Both of these conditions are grounds for discipline; therefore, they should be carefully avoided.

At all times ministers of The Church of God must represent the doctrine and polity of the church. At no time should a minister take occasion to present his own opinions in contradiction to the established doctrine or polity of the church. The proper procedure for dealing with differences of opinion on matters such as these is to bring them before the Council of Apostles and Elders.

A minister should never attempt to sway or influence a congregation away from cooperation with the programs introduced by the General or Territorial Headquarters of the church. Often a minister reports that his congregation is uncooperative in some matter when in fact it is the minister who is uncooperative and has influenced his people to be likewise. This situation is unfair to the hierarchy of the church and to the congregation as well. Church ministers should have undying loyalty to their leadership and respect them enough that even if they do not understand or agree with a particular program or approach to church ministry, they are tolerant and charitable until a proper forum for reconciling differences of opinion or technique can be realized.

When there are transitions in pastorates or other offices in the church, the negotiations and discussions between the minister and his superiors should be confidential. In some situations ministers who have requested reassignment have not wanted to take responsibility before the congregation for their action. For this reason many congregations have not had respect for church officials. Occasionally new appointments have experienced the lack of cooperation of those in their charge simply because they were in sympathy with the previous appointee who failed to present the matter of transition properly to his people.

In transitions in administrative assignments, a minister must become an assistant to his successor in bringing about a smooth transition. The best attitude for the minister to follow is that encouraged by Paul: *"Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation"* (Philippians 2:29). Every effort should be made to build up one's successor in the eyes of the people. They should be encouraged to welcome and support him with appropriate gestures. A minister should inform his successor of official facts of the pastorate or other office which he has held. This should not include his own personal evaluations of the people in his charge. Financial and organizational records should be reviewed.

The maxim, "Like priest, like people" is true. If a congregation recognizes that a minister is supportive of the church, that congregation will be supportive of the church also. If the congregation senses that a minister is against the governmental system and organizational policy, they will soon acquire that same spirit. The offices of those who are in positions of leadership should be respected. The minister is not required to agree with every decision or action of his superiors; however, he is expected to respect those positions and the administrators of authority in the church and to encourage the same respect in those to whom they minister.

It should be remembered by all ministers that they reap what they sow. If they sow respect and honor for their superiors and their peers, they will reap that same respect and honor from those in their charge and from their peers.

7. A Gracious Host

One of the characteristics of God-called ministers is their hospitality. A minister should receive guests with dignity and honor. He should see that their needs are met with the best that he has to offer.

Care should be exercised that respect of persons is not shown in making provision for guests. A minister's actions toward and consideration for the least among the ministry and people reflects his esteem for Christ and his true motives. If one does not guard himself, he may be tempted to show favoritism. Jesus said, *"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* When favoritism is shown for personal benefit, a minister is transgressing the Scriptures by *"having men's persons in admiration because of advantage"* (Jude 16).

A conscientious minister will be careful not to embarrass his guests by openly reflecting on their weaknesses, manner of dress, or peculiarities. One should consider himself lest he be found in similar circumstances.

A pastor should exercise both natural and spiritual hospitality toward a guest speaker. He should welcome that speaker to the church and present him to the congregation in such a way that they will be attentive. A guest speaker should be introduced with honor and respect with the pastor citing some extraordinary attribute he has or some notable achievement or sacrifice that he has made. These things command respect from the people and lend importance to the visiting minister. A pastor should also take care that there is true honor in the honorarium that is received for the speaker.

All ministers, especially those who have positions of responsibility, must be gracious hosts, opening their homes with genuine hospitality and love for those who are their guests.

8. Confidentially

A minister who is called of God is given a priestly office of representing the Gospel of Christ to the believer and the world; it is the nature of this priestly office to give counsel to those who seek it and to hear the outpouring of their needs. The minister must maintain in the strictest of confidence

those things that are committed to his priestly keeping by those who seek his counsel.

One of the surest ways for a minister to lose the personal contact with the people that gives them the confidence to open their hearts to him, express their spiritual needs, and seek his advice and counsel is for the minister to betray that confidence and reveal to others those things that were committed to his trust.

In many cases the personal advice and counsel that a minister can give to those who are in need are more effective than the preaching he does in the pulpit. It is for this reason that he must be careful to preserve his right to hear the needs of the people by protecting their confidence.

9. Integrity and Honesty

The work of the ministry is a sacred trust in which those who are called to its service must always strive to be sincere and honest. True integrity is the transparency of motive that insures the people that what they are seeing in the ministry is genuine. The ministry is not an adventure in acting in which the minister plays the roles that are expected of him. It is a life of faithful dedication to the cause of Christ and the work of sharing Him and His truth with the people. A minister must be careful that he does not slip into a manner of going through the motions of those things that are required of him. He must genuinely enjoy ministering to the people, teaching the Word of God, counseling with those who have needs, praying with those who need a touch of the Master's hand. In this way he is honest with himself and is not just playing the part of the minister.

A minister should not attempt to be that he is not or to act in ways that are not his calling. Only when one is doing what God has called him to do in the way in which God has called him to do it is he comfortable with God and with himself. When this is the case, the minister is really what he seems to be, and there is true integrity.

K. MINISTERS' COMPANIONS

The degree to which a minister's partner in marriage cooperates with and supports his (or her) ministry has a great impact upon the success of that ministry.

The qualities that are expected of an ordained minister's wife are outlined in I Timothy 3:11: *"Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."* Sincerity and sobriety are important in the wives of ministers, as is faithfulness in all things to the minister, to the Lord, and to the church. An ordained minister's wife should seek to be an example to the believers in her godly life, her loyalty to her husband's ministry and to her family, and her dedication to the cause of Christ and the church. The same can be said of the husband of a woman who is an ordained deaconess.

It should be noted that being the companion of a minister, a pastor, or an official of the church does not confer with it an administrative office. A minister's companion is not an assistant minister, an assistant pastor, or assistant overseer. There are no requirements that a minister's companion be a singer, musician, moderator, teacher, preacher, or any other officer of the church. No business or other work of the church is automatically conferred upon a minister's companion. Any and all of these duties and works may be assumed by ministers' companions according to their abilities or inspirations; however, they cannot be expected or demanded.

Ministers' companions should be examples to the believers; however, they should not be dumping grounds for the duties and responsibilities of the church which no one else can be encouraged to assume. When treated fairly and with respect, a minister's companion who is conscientious will be a great blessing to the church and to the minister's work for God.

L. GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH DISLOYAL MINISTERS

The Council of Apostles and Elders has adopted the following set of guidelines for discipline of ministers who are disloyal to the church, with various options for degrees of punishment:

1. Official Reprimand

An official reprimand may be given to any minister by the Chief Bishop or a territorial bishop. (If an official reprimand is given by a territorial bishop, report of the action must be made to the office of the Chief Bishop to be entered into the minister's official file.)

Grounds for official reprimand include the following:

- a. Failure to conform to ministerial responsibilities
- b. Sowing discord
- c. Minor sexual misconduct (confessed and not involving adultery)
- d. Misrepresenting the truth
- e. Any other minor offense

2. Suspension

Depending upon the severity of the offense, a minister's license may be suspended for 3, 6, 9, or 12 months. Suspension of license excludes the minister from functioning in any official capacity or carrying out any ministerial role that his license permits. A minister's license may be suspended by a territorial presbytery, with the territorial bishop as chairman, or by the General Presbytery, with the Chief Bishop as chairman. The disloyal minister should be present for the proceedings against him. (If a territorial presbytery suspends the license of a minister, notification of the nature of the offense and of the action taken must be reported to the office of the Chief Bishop to be entered into the minister's official file.)

Grounds for suspension include the following, with the length of the suspension determined by circumstances and attitudes:

- a. Failure to respond to official reprimand
- b. Promotion of heresy
- c. Misappropriation of funds
- d. Lying
- e. Adultery (first offense, confessed)
- f. More serious sexual misconduct not involving adultery
- g. Any other more serious offense

3. Revocation

Revocation of a minister's license may be carried out only by the General Presbytery with the Chief Bishop as chairman. A territorial presbytery with the territorial bishop as chairman may recommend to the General Presbytery that a minister's license be revoked. The minister should be present at the proceedings against him on a territorial level, and he has the right to appear before the General Presbytery at the time when revocation proceedings are taking place.

Grounds for revocation of a minister's license include the following:

- a. Failure to respond to suspension
- b. Sexual misconduct not including adultery (repeated)
- c. Adultery (first offense that brings a reproach upon the church)
- d. Having an unrepentant attitude about any offense

M. GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH DISLOYAL BISHOPS

The guidelines for dealing with disloyal bishops in the church are essentially the same as those for dealing with disloyal ministers. They differ only in the following ways:

1. All actions taken against disloyal bishops, including official reprimand, suspension, and revocation must be carried out by the General Presbytery with the Chief Bishop as chairman.
2. In judgment for less serious misconduct by a bishop, the Presbytery may consider suspension of his bishopric with retention of his ordained minister's license along with official reprimand.
3. In judgment for more serious misconduct by a bishop, the Presbytery may consider revocation of his bishopric and the retention of his ordained minister's license along with official reprimand or suspension.

N. PROCESS OF APPEAL

1. Licensed and Ordained Ministers

Licensed and ordained ministers who are judged for misconduct by territorial presbyteries have the right to appeal their judgment to the General Presbytery in cases of reprimand and

suspension. In cases of revocation the action of the General Presbytery is final and may not be appealed.

2. Bishops and Governmental Pattern Members

Bishops or members of the governmental pattern of the church have the right to appeal their judgment to the Twelve Apostles or to the governmental pattern members of the Council of Apostles and Elders in cases of suspension and revocation.

O. PROCEDURES FOR RESTORATION OF MINISTERS JUDGED DISLOYAL

The Church of God believes in and promotes the restoration of errant ministers to the grace and mercies of God, to the fellowship of the church, and to the ministry. Procedures for completing restoration are outlined as follows:

1. After Official Reprimand

A minister who responds to official reprimand with repentance and restitution is immediately restored to full fellowship of the ministry. This action may be taken through communication with the Chief Bishop or territorial bishop and the action reported to the territorial and General Presbyteries.

2. After Suspension

A minister who responds to suspension of his license with repentance and restitution may have all the rights of his ministry restored at the end of the prescribed period of suspension. This action may be taken by the territorial or General Presbytery with approval of the Chief Bishop and the General Presbytery.

3. After Revocation

A minister who responds to revocation of his license with repentance and restitution may have all or part of the rights of his ministry restored after a period of one year. At that time he may appear before the General Presbytery to seek reinstatement into the ministry. The Presbytery may restore licensed ministry, ordained ministry, and bishoprics according to its discretion. (For example, a bishop whose license has been revoked may be restored to ordained ministry without being restored to bishopric, or an ordained minister whose license has been revoked may be restored to the licensed ministry without being restored to the ordained ministry.)

P. MINISTERIAL EVALUATIONS

There is a continuing need in any profession for evaluation of a person's performance both by his superiors and by those who function under his auspices. This is true of the ministry of The Church of God also. To provide for this important service, the Council of Apostles and Elders has adopted a program of periodic evaluation of pastors, territorial bishops, and General headquarters' officials by those whom they serve. It has also provided for evaluation of these officers by those who are over them in the Lord.

It is through this form of positive feedback that church ministers are able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses as seen through the eyes of their superiors, their peers, and those whom they serve. The process is helpful for expression of desires and frustrations of the people and as such is a good communications tool. It is also a good indicator for church administrators of the quality of performance of those ministers who are under their jurisdiction.

Forms and procedures for ministerial evaluations may change from time to time as informational and communications needs arise. They continue to be administered within the guidelines of the Council of Apostles and Elders.

Q. CEREMONIES IN WHICH THE MINISTER OFFICIATES

One of the important functions of the ministry is the work of officiating in scriptural ceremonies. These are sacerdotal functions, those in which the minister fulfills his calling as a priest to lead the people in acts of worship and service. These are the acts which the believer does not perform by and for himself to be in obedience to the commandments of Christ and the Word of God.

A minister must be careful that he carries out all of his ceremonial duties with the greatest reverence and honor. He must be proficient in both the spiritual and the physical aspects of these

duties. To this end, practice and coordination of personnel involved in each ceremony are essential. Planning and preparation should be made by the minister and those who assist him so that each ceremony will be meaningful and memorable to those who participate in it.

It is also important that those who participate in the ceremony understand both the importance and the nature of the ceremony in which they are involved. Only when the communicants understand the actions that are being made by them or by the minister on their behalf will they comprehend the gravity and the worshipful nature of their experience.

The Church of God encourages its ministers to wear appropriate clerical attire in the exercise of their priestly functions as officiating in scriptural ceremonies. It also recommends that appropriate liturgies or orders of worship be prepared that will lead the communicants into worship and make the ceremonies meaningful to them.

The ceremonies in which ministers officiate include Communion, Water Baptism, Feet Washing, Covenant of Church Membership, Marriage, Dedication of Children, Dedication of Homes, Dedication of Church Buildings, Funeral Services, and Breadbreaking.

1. Communion (The Lord's Supper)

The purpose of the communion service is to "show the Lord's death till he come." It is the ceremony which Jesus commanded His disciples to observe in remembrance of Him. In the communion service believers are caused to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for the atonement of their sins. It is a ceremony in which by the authority of the Word of God they receive the body and blood of Christ in the form of the bread and wine that are served to them.

The primary observance of communion in The Church of God is at the time of Passover. This is in fulfillment of the church's observance of the Feasts of Yahweh in their New Testament Judaism order. Ministers may, however, observe the ceremony of communion at any time and in any situation where they feel it needful.

a. Preparation

The communion service should be carefully planned and practiced so that all those who help officiate in the ceremony are sure of their actions. If a unique approach is to be taken to the celebration of the communion, the minister should thoroughly educate the congregation and answer any questions that they may have so that the celebration may be made with the conviction and reverence of understanding.

The elements of the communion are unleavened bread and wine. When these are not available or the minister feels it advisable, leavened bread and grape juice may be used. Those communicants who conscientiously object to the use of wine should be served the communion with grape juice. The minister should be sure that adequate preparation has been made for sufficient amounts of these elements for the service of the people. He should also plan and practice in advance with those who will assist him for the manner in which the elements will be presented at the altar and the manner in which they will be served to the people.

b. Methods of Celebration

There are many options for the manner in which the communion may be observed. The minister may choose to use one cup, or he may use a communion service with individual cups for each communicant. The minister may choose to serve the communicants in groups of twelve seated at a table in front of the congregation, or he may choose to serve them as they kneel or stand at the altar or as they are seated in their pews. The minister may choose to officiate in the ceremony alone, or he may choose to share the celebration with another minister and/or the serving of the elements to the congregation with lay ministers. Each communicant may be directed to eat the bread and drink the wine immediately upon being served, or all communicants may be instructed to partake of the elements at the same time as the minister himself does.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

There are many options for carrying out the ceremony of the communion; however, they all should include the following:

(1) An explanation to the communicants of the nature of the ceremony and its purpose.

(2) Instruction to the communicants that they should be worthy to receive the communion. (This reminder should be presented in such a way as not to deter their participation in communion. They should be encouraged to confess their sins and shortcomings to God and receive His forgiveness and then to receive the communion.)

(3) The breaking of and prayer of blessing upon the bread.

(4) The sharing of the bread with the communicants with the injunction, "Take, eat; this is the body of Christ which was broken for you," or some similar statement.

(5) A prayer of blessing upon the cup (wine).

(6) The sharing of the cup (wine) with the communicants with the injunction, "This is the blood of Christ which was shed for the remission of sin; drink ye all of it," or some similar statement.

(7) The benediction upon the communicants.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

A variety of scripture references may be employed in the communion service. These include the following: *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:26-28).

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:23-25).

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

"Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I win him" (John 6:53-56).

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:7,8).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Corinthians 10:16).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Corinthians 12:12,13,27).

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing...Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:1,4,5,8).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is a liturgy for the celebration of communion at the time of Passover. The minister may use any or all of it, making such modifications as he deems appropriate to his

circumstances.

A LITURGY FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT PASSOVER

The Prelude

The Processional

The Greeting:

Minister: *The Lord be with you.*

People: *And also with you.*

The Call to Worship:

Minister: *Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ is coming again.*

People: *Therefore, let us keep the feast.*

The Collect:

Minister: *Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy Name, through Yahshua our Lord. Amen.*

The Act of Praise:

Congregation Standing

(Two or more appropriate choruses of praise may be used.)

(A hymn that testifies of the believer's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ may be used. "My Hope Is Built" is recommended.)

The Examination:

Minister: *As we prepare to partake of this Feast of the Lord, we are admonished in the Holy Scriptures, "Let a man examine himself...for if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged."*

Silence

The Confession:

Minister: *Most holy and merciful Fathers we confess to You and to one another that we have sinned against You by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart and mind and strength, and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves; therefore, we have not had the mind of Christ, and we have grieved You by not using Your gifts, by wandering from Your ways, and by forgetting Your love. Forgive us, we pray, most merciful Father, as we tarry before You and one another. Renew in us the grace and strength of Your Holy Spirit and help us to be perfect in Your sight, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.*

Minister: *My little children, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Let us, therefore, pray:*

Minister and People: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

The Declaration of Pardon:

Minister: *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

The Doxology:

Singing of the Doxology.
Congregation Seated.

The Sermon:

Appropriate sermon.

The Affirmation of Faith:

Congregation Standing:

Minister: *Hear, O church, Yahweh, our God is one Lord: and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*

Minister and People: *I believe with perfect faith in one God, Yahweh, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.*

I believe with perfect faith in Yahshua, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, begotten of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man; who was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; who suffered and was buried and the third day rose again according to the Scriptures; who ascended into heaven and now sits on the right hand of the Father; and who will come again in power and great glory to judge both the living and the dead in His everlasting kingdom.

I believe with perfect faith in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets; and who indwells the hearts of the believers, imparting His gifts and graces. I believe with perfect faith in the forgiveness of sins, in the one universal and apostolic church, in the resurrection of the body, and in eternal life in the world to come.

Hymn of Worship:

(An appropriate hymn of worship to God should be used. "Holy, Holy, Holy" is suggested.)
Congregation seated.

The Offertory:

Minister: *Beloved in Christ, the Holy Scriptures tell us that when Christ arose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples and was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Come then to the joyful feast of the Lord. Let us prepare His table with the offerings of our life and labor.*

The Anthem:

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" (Neander) is recommended for the organist.

(As the offering is received from the congregation, the elders of the congregation will bring to the table before the altar the gifts of bread and wine, followed by the offerings that are received from the people.)

The Offertory Prayer:

Minister: *Heavenly Father, receive, we pray you, these offerings of our labor. May Yahshua, our great High Priest, be present with us as He was among His disciples, and may we discern His body in the breaking of the bread and His blood in the sharing of the cup. To you be praise and glory with your Son, our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

The Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving:

Minister: *We are told in the Holy Scriptures that we are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Let us, therefore, offer a sacrifice of praise unto God.*

Yahweh, our holy Father, almighty and eternal God, we give You thanks always and everywhere, through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord. We bless You for Your continual love and care for every creature.

We praise You for forming us in Your image, and calling us to be Your people. Though we rebelled against Your love, You did not abandon us in our sin, but sent to us prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation and to teach us to remember Your wondrous works through days and feasts of memorial.

Above all, we thank You that in the fulness of time, You gave us the gift of Your only begotten Son, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

We thank You that He took upon Himself our nature, and by His miraculous birth, His sinless life, His atoning death, and His glorious resurrection, He became our Passover to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death into the hope of everlasting life. We praise You that He now reigns with You in glory and ever lives to intercede for us.

We thank You for the Holy Spirit who leads us into truth, defends us in adversity, and unites us out of every people into one holy and universal church.

Therefore, with the whole company of saints here assembled we worship and glorify You, Yahweh most holy, and we say with joy:

Minister and People: *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. His death we proclaim. His resurrection we declare. His coming we await.*

The Blessing of the Bread:

Minister: *Blessed are you, O Yahweh God, King of the universe, who does bring forth bread from the earth to nourish our bodies, and who did bring forth the true bread from heaven to cleanse and establish our souls. We thank You that in the hour when You had no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, You did prepare a body of flesh for Your only begotten Son and did make Him a little lower than the angels that He might taste death for all men.*

We thank You that He was tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin, that the captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, and that once in the end of the world, He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Now, we remember the New Testament Passover as we break this bread in which, by the authority of the Word of God, we discern the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was broken for us. Bless this bread that they who receive it may be strengthened in their communion with one another and with our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread:

Minister: *The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

People: *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body in Christ; for we all partake of that one spiritual bread.*

The Blessing of the Cup:

Minister: *Blessed are You, O Yahweh God, King of the universe, who does bring forth wine from the earth to strengthen our bodies, and who did bring forth the true wine from heaven to indwell our hearts and comfort our spirits. We thank You that when the blood of bulls and of goats could not make the worshippers perfect, our Savior entered in once into the holy place by His own blood and obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Now according to His commandment, we remember the New Testament Passover as we share this cup in which, by the authority of the Word of God, we discern the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for the remission of our sins.

Bless this cup that they who receive it may be strengthened through the fellowship of the

Spirit in the union of the body of Christ and the risen Lord. Amen.

The Recognition of the Cup:

Minister: *The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?*

People: *The cup which we drink, it is the New Testament in the blood of Christ.*

The Prayer for Communicants:

Minister: *Heavenly Father, we pray now that all those who partake of this Passover may be one in communion with Christ and one in communion with each other. Grant that they remain faithful in love and hope until that perfect feast with our Lord in the joy of His eternal kingdom. Amen.*

The Communion:

(The minister distributes the bread and the cup to twelve people who symbolize the twelve apostles who received the first New Testament Passover administered by our Lord, Himself. Subsequently, those who wish to partake of the Passover may stand or kneel at the altar to receive the elements.)

Hymn of Confirmation:

(An appropriate hymn confirming the efficacy of the blood of Christ to atone for sin may be sung.)

The Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Congregation Standing.

Minister and People: *Almighty and everlasting God, we give you thanks for receiving our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.*

Strengthen us ever with your Holy Spirit, that we may serve you in faith and love, by word and deed, until we come to the joy of your eternal kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the same Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Hymns of Fellowship:

(Hymns or choruses that stress the unity and fellowship of the body of Christ may be sung, and appropriate gestures of fellowship may be exchanged among the communicants.)

Hymn of Expectation:

(A hymn concerning the return of Jesus Christ may be sung. "How Great Thou Art" is suggested.)

The Benediction:

Minister: *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Dismissal:

Minister: *Go out into the world in peace. Be strong and of good courage. Hold fast what is good. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The Recessional

The Postlude

2. Water Baptism

The Church of God teaches that every believer should be baptized in water as soon after their conversion as possible, at least within thirty days. This is in obedience to the New Testament

ordinance set forth by Jesus, Himself, in Mark 16: 15,16: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

Water baptism is one of the sacraments of the church because it is an outward sign of an inward grace. It demonstrates to the world and to the believer himself that through the baptism of repentance he has been brought forth to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Water baptism is essential to salvation in the sense that deliberate violation or willful neglect of a commandment of Christ results in judgment. It is for this reason that the church promotes water baptism as soon after conversion as possible.

The Church of God recommends that baptism be made by immersion. In cases where immersion is not practically possible or in cases where individuals are convicted otherwise, the church permits water baptism by sprinkling or infusion.

The church recommends the use of the baptismal formula, *"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* In cases where individuals are convicted otherwise, the church permits water baptism in the name of Jesus, Yahweh, Yashua, or any other name or title that applies to Deity. The church does not require those who have been baptized in a formula other than the one it recommends to be re-baptized.

a. Preparation

A service of water baptism should be carefully planned and practiced so that all who help officiate in the ceremony are sure of their actions. The minister who officiates in water baptism is responsible for preparation of the environment in which the baptismal ceremony is to take place; he must see that proper precautions are taken to insure the safety and confidence of those who are to be baptized. If the service is to be held in a baptistery, those who are appointed to assist the minister should make proper preparations of the baptistery. If the ceremony is to be conducted in a lake or river, the minister and his assistants should familiarize themselves with the water to be sure that all aspects of the service will be safe.

It is important that the candidates for water baptism are properly instructed beforehand in the procedure which the minister will employ in carrying out the ceremony. When they know exactly what to anticipate, they will be more likely to be relaxed, and the experience will be a sacred and memorable one.

b. Methods of Baptism

There are many different ways in which baptism may be performed. Traditionally baptism by immersion is performed in the following manner: The candidate stands before the minister with his hands clasped across his chest. The minister places his left hand behind the candidate's back, raises his right hand, and repeats the formula which he chooses. After the formula is pronounced, the minister places his right hand on the candidate's folded hands, gently lowers him backward into the water, and carefully lifts him out of the water. The minister should be sure that assistants are on hand to help in case of an accident.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

While there are many options for carrying out the ceremony of water baptism, they all should include some form of the following:

- (1) An explanation to the candidates of the nature of the ceremony and its spiritual meaning to them.
- (2) Instruction to the candidates that only those who have experienced the rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ should seek to be baptized in water.
- (3) The immersion of each candidate in water with the accompanying declaration that this act of baptism is observed in obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ and upon the candidate's confession of faith in Him as Lord and Savior.
- (4) A prayer of blessing upon those who have fulfilled the commandment of Christ to be baptized in water.
- (5) A benediction upon all those present for the ceremony.
- (6) The minister may furnish a certificate of baptism to the initiates.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:1, 2, 5, 6).

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17).

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28: 18-20).

"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:22, 23).

"And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said; I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-39).

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison: which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (I Peter 3:18-22).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is a liturgy for the rite of water baptism. The minister may use any or all of it, making such modifications as he deems appropriate to his circumstances.

A LITURGY FOR THE RITE OF WATER BAPTISM

Prelude

Processional:

(Minister, assistants, and candidates enter the sanctuary.)

Call to Worship:

Minister: The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Invocation:

(An appropriate prayer by the minister or someone chosen.)

The Act of Praise:

(Two or more hymns or choruses of praise.)

The Scripture Reading:

(Appropriate scriptures read by the minister or someone chosen.)

The Sermon:

(A short sermon or exhortation on the importance and meaning of water baptism.)

The Announcement:

Minister: We are gathered here in the presence of God and this company to baptize believers in water as an outward sign of their inward experience of rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ. Let those who desire to be baptized come and stand before the altar.

The Confession of Faith:

Minister to the candidates who are standing before him at the altar: Do you proclaim your faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died to atone for our sins, was resurrected the third day, and ascended to heaven to sit on the right hand of God to make intercession for us?

The Candidates: I do.

The Invitation:

Minister: Let those who have purposed in their hearts to fulfill the commandment of our Lord to be baptized in water now come with me and enter the water.

(The minister enters the water, followed by those assisting him and the candidates for baptism.)

The Rite of Baptism:

The Minister repeats over each candidate the following declaration: "(Candidate's Name), in obedience to the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon your confession of faith in Him as your Lord and Savior, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

(As the declaration is ended, the minister gently lowers the candidate into the water and carefully raises him again.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing:

(The minister offers thanks to God for the obedience of the candidates and prays the blessing of God upon them.)

Hymns of Fellowship:

(Appropriate songs that worship the Lord and emphasize the love and fellowship of the believers for one another are sung.)

The Benediction:

Minister: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

Postlude**3. Feet Washing**

The Church of God maintains the practice of feet washing as an ordinance of the church in obedience to the commandment of Jesus Christ: *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have*

washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet...If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13: 14, 17). All members of the church are encouraged to participate in the ceremony of feet washing as an outward sign of their inward love and service one to another. A foot washing is not limited to the ceremony that is carried out in a worship service. Individuals may wash one another's feet at any time that they feel that this act of humility is meaningful.

a. Preparation

A feet washing service should be carefully planned. Sufficient basins and towels should be prepared so that the ceremony may proceed orderly and efficiently. Water should be heated for the comfort of the participants. Those who are to participate should be instructed in advance of the manner in which the ceremony will be carried out.

b. Methods and Times of Feet Washing

Feet washing may be employed as a part of any liturgy of the church, with the minister washing the feet of representatives of the congregation. Feet washing is generally done with the entire congregation participating.

Feet washing may be observed in conjunction with the Passover celebration at the conclusion of the communion service. It may also be observed at any time when a minister feels that it would be helpful and meaningful to the congregation.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

(1) An explanation to the participants of the nature of the ceremony and its spiritual value to them.

(2) Instruction to the participants that the ceremony must be an outward expression of their inward love for one another and their desire to serve them in the Lord.

(3) The feet washing ceremony, with each participant washing the feet of one or more individuals.

(4) A prayer of blessing upon those who have fulfilled the commandment of Christ to wash one another's feet.

(5) A benediction upon all those present for the ceremony.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet...Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me...If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:4, 5, 6, 8, 14-17).

"Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 Timothy 5:9,10).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is an outline for the ceremony of feet washing. The minister may use any or all of it, making such modifications as he deems appropriate to his circumstances.

CEREMONY FOR THE RITE OF FEET WASHING

Prelude

Call to Worship:

Minister: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that liveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

Invocation:

(An appropriate prayer is given by the minister or someone chosen.)

The Act of Praise:

(Two or more hymns or choruses of praise are sung.)

The Scripture Reading:

(Appropriate scriptures read by the minister or someone chosen.)

The Sermon:

(A short sermon or exhortation on the importance and meaning of feet washing is given.)

The Announcement:

Minister: We are gathered here in the presence of God to fulfill the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ that we wash one another's feet. Let us express our love and service to one another through this sacrament.

The Ceremony of Feet Washing:

(The participants follow the procedure outlined for washing one another's feet.)

Hymns of Fellowship:

(Appropriate songs that worship the Lord and emphasize the love and fellowship of believers for each other are sung.)

The Benediction:

Minister: Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Postlude**4. The Covenant of Church Membership**

The Church of God believes that membership in the church is attained through the administration of the covenant of membership to the candidate by a minister of the church. Since the only scriptural way in which two or more people may be joined into one body for a particular purpose is by the making of a covenant, the many-membered body of the church is constituted by the making of a covenant by all those who are a part of it. The covenant of church membership espouses the believer to Christ by commitment to the Word of God, and it joins the believer to all others who have received that covenant by commitment to one another.

The covenant of membership in the church must be administered by a licensed or ordained minister of the church and should be administered in the presence of witnesses. The only requirements for membership in The Church of God are that a person be born again and that he agrees to walk in the light of the Word of God as it is revealed to him.

a. Preparation

When individuals express a desire to become covenant members of The Church of God, they should be instructed by the minister in the teachings of the church and in the requirements of members. If the minister so desires, this may be accomplished through a catechism class using the Introduction to Apostles' Doctrine, the official catechism of The Church of God.

b. Methods and Times for Administering the Covenant

The covenant of membership in the church may be administered in a variety of ways and at different times. A special service may be scheduled for the administering of the covenant to candidates for membership, or the administration of the covenant may be a part of any worship service. Members may also receive the covenant at times other than in worship services. The ceremony may be formal or informal, according to the discretion of the minister and the candidates.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

(1) An explanation to the candidates of the nature of the covenant and its spiritual value to them.

(2) Instruction to the candidates that the covenant is a spiritual agreement that unites them with the church, joining them in commitment with the other members of the church

(3) A verbal commitment that the candidates recognize The Church of God to be the church of the Bible and that they wish to join it with a covenant.

(4) A verbal commitment that the candidates agree to carry out the doctrine and practice of The Church of God and to fulfill their spiritual and financial obligations to the church.

(5) Administration of the covenant.

(6) Prayer for blessing of the new members.

(7) The right hand of fellowship from all members given to the new members.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Corinthians 11:2).

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31, 32).

"For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5).

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:5).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is a ceremony for administering the covenant of membership into The Church of God. The only parts of the ceremony which may not be modified are the commitment and the covenant.

**CEREMONY FOR ADMINISTERING THE COVENANT
OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF GOD**

Prelude

The Announcement:

We are assembled in the presence of God and this company to join members to The Church of God through the administration of the covenant of espousal to Jesus Christ.

The Call:

Let those who wish to join themselves in a covenant to The Church of God come and present themselves at the altar.

The Scripture Reading:

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Corinthians 11:2); "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31, 32);

"For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isaiah 62:5).

The Examination of Qualifications:

The minister asks the candidate(s) the following questions and receives an affirmative answer:

(1) Are you born again?

(2) Are you committed to accepting the doctrines and practices of The Church of God?

- (3) Are you prepared to fulfill your financial obligations to The Church of God?
 (4) Are you prepared to submit yourself to church government within the guidelines of the Scriptures?

The minister addresses the congregation:

"Does anyone know any just cause why (Candidate's Name) may not be joined by a covenant as a member of The Church of God? If so, speak. If not, now and forever hold your peace."

The Commitment:

The minister asks the candidate(s) and receives an affirmative answer:

"Do you believe this movement to be the Church of God of the Bible, and do you wish to become a member of it by joining yourself in covenant relationship with the other members of this one body?"

The Covenant:

The candidate(s) places his hand on the Bible which the minister holds, and the minister administers the covenant to the candidate(s) as follows:

"Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses that you will accept the Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, the New Testament being witnessed by the law and prophets, as your rule of faith, government, and discipline, and walk in the light of it to the best of your knowledge and ability?"

The candidate(s) answers: "I will."

The Declaration:

The minister gives the right hand of fellowship to the new member and says:

"With the authority vested in me as a minister of The Church of God, I now pronounce you a member of The Church of God."

The Charge:

The minister says:

"Now are ye the body of Christ, and members in particular. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

"I charge you in the stead of Christ that you follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life whereunto you are called. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God."

The Prayer:

(The minister prays for the preservation and guidance of the new members and their placement in the church as it pleases God.)

The Benediction:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

The Call to Fellowship:

(The minister invites the members of the church to give their right hand of fellowship and other expressions of welcome and love to their new fellow members of The Church of God.)

5. Marriage

The Church of God believes that marriage is an honorable estate instituted by God, Himself, to provide for companionship, for a legitimate means of procreation, for a stable, secure environment for rearing children, and for the perpetuation of the knowledge of God and righteous

living in society. A marriage is constituted by a covenant between a man and a woman and is consummated in sexual intercourse. All marriages that are legally and rightfully constituted are recognized of God as binding contracts upon those who are joined together, whether they are saint or sinner.

The role of the minister in performing ceremonies is an important priestly function that helps establish the fundamental building block of a stable society. Next to conversion and their relationship with God, marriage is the single most important experience in the lives of those who enter this estate; therefore, it should never be entered without sobriety and sincerity. By virtue of his calling, the minister is responsible for seeing to the best of his knowledge and ability that the marriages that he performs are contracted legally, scripturally, soberly, and sincerely in such a way that they will bring glory to God.

a. Preparation

(1) The Law

The minister should be knowledgeable concerning the civil laws that govern marriages in the area in which he ministers. The proper legal authorities of the city, county, state, or nation can advise the minister on the legal information pertaining to marriage in that jurisdiction.

(2) Officiants

Only ministers who are specifically authorized by their license are permitted to perform wedding ceremonies. In The Church of God these are licensed ministers, ordained ministers, and bishops.

(3) Licenses

Those who are to be married should contact the proper governmental authorities to secure complete information on the requirements for securing a marriage license. The couple then should see that all these requirements are met in advance of the proposed wedding date. The minister should insist that the license be in his possession before the ceremony is performed, and he should be certain that all legal requirements have been met. After the ceremony he should complete the license with his signature and those of witnesses as required and then see that the license reaches the proper issuing office immediately. Where appropriate or desired, the minister may also furnish a certificate of marriage to the couple with his signature, that of witnesses, and other pertinent information.

(4) Those That May Be Rightly Married

The Church of God believes that monogamous marriages may be contracted only between heterosexual individuals who have the scriptural right to marry. These include the following:

- (a) Those who have never been married before.
- (b) Those that have divorced their companions upon the grounds of fornication (the innocent party.)
- (c) Those that were divorced for whatever reason while in sin and who have become believers while not in a married state.
- (d) Those that have been deserted by their companions.

The church does not permit its ministers to perform marriages between homosexuals, between believers who have been divorced upon the grounds of fornication (the guilty party), between unbelievers who have not been divorced upon scriptural grounds, and between individuals who would subsequently be polygamists. Since the church recognizes marriage as constituted by a covenant, it does not recognize common law marriages.

(5) Counseling

Due to increased secularization of society, most of those who desire to enter the state of matrimony need spiritual advice from a God-called minister. Counseling sessions should be scheduled by the minister for the purpose of advising those who are to be married of the nature of marriage and their commitment to one another and of securing the proper information that the minister needs to sanction and perform the marriage.

During the counseling sessions, the minister should ask the following questions: (a) has either of you been married before? (b) If so, what were the conditions of the divorce? (c) Do both of you know the requirements for marriage in this jurisdiction? (d) Do you know the procedure for securing the license? The minister should seek to ascertain the sincerity and sobriety of the couple. Those who are not mature enough to recognize the responsibility of marriage should be dissuaded from being married if possible.

The minister should ask whether either of the couple is a believer. If only one is, efforts should be made to lead the other to Christ, or the couple should be advised of the potential pitfalls of marriage between believers and unbelievers.

The minister should use the Bible to show the couple the importance of marriage, Scriptures should include I Corinthians 7, which discusses the purity of sex (verses 1-9), the holiness of the believer (verses 10-24), the privilege of marriage (verses 25-28), putting Christ first (verses 29-31), service to the Lord (verses 32-35), and the soberness of marriage (verses 36-39). Other passages of scripture which may be used are Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:18, 24; John 2:1, 2; and Ephesians 5:22, 23. The minister may also lend books from his (or the church) library that will instruct the couple in the various aspects of marriage. These may include practical instructions in the sexual aspects of marriage.

As time for the marriage ceremony draws nearer, a second session may be scheduled to review the advice of the previous session and to ascertain the proper preparation for the ceremony itself. At this time, the ceremony may be selected and reviewed, and various aspects of the preparation for the sanctuary and the reception may be discussed.

(6) The Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal usually takes place on the evening prior to the wedding. All members of the wedding party must be present so that all may know when to enter, where to stand, what to do, and when to leave. Usually an hour is adequate time for rehearsal; however, enough time should be taken so that everyone in the wedding party is sure of himself and his role in making the wedding meaningful.

b. Methods of Performing Marriages

Marriages maybe performed by the minister in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. The ceremony to be used may be one of many standard forms or it may be original. The ceremony may be performed in the sanctuary of the church, in a home, out of doors, or in any other suitable environment. The taste of the couple, together with the decorum of the minister, should be the guiding factor in determining the method and place of the ceremony.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

Most weddings have three essential parts: the processional, the ceremony, and the recessional. The traditional wedding proceeds in the following order:

- (1) Prelude music, which begins at least fifteen minutes before the wedding.
- (2) Seating of the guests
- (3) Lighting of candles
- (4) Seating of groom's parents
- (5) Seating of bride's parents
- (6) Vocal music
- (7) Processional
- (8) Ceremony
- (9) Recessional
- (10) Parents of bride ushered out
- (11) Parents of groom ushered out
- (12) Congregation dismissed

The essential elements of the ceremony itself include the following:

- (1) The agreement of the groom to take the bride as his lawful wedded wife as long as they both shall live.
- (2) The agreement of the bride to take the groom as her lawful wedded husband as

long as they both shall live.

- (3) The giving of the bride in marriage.
- (4) The repeating of the marriage vows by the groom.
- (5) The repeating of the marriage vows by the bride.
- (6) The exchange of rings.
- (7) The pronouncement of the minister that the couple is husband and wife.
- (8) The prayer of the minister upon the newly-married couple.
- (9) The benediction.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26, 27).

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18).

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22).

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage" (John 2:1, 2).

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:1-3).

"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife" (I Corinthians 7:3, 4).

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:22-33).

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is an outline of a ceremony for marriage. The minister may use any or all of it. He may also use other ceremonies according to his discretion and the wishes of the couple.

CEREMONY FOR MARRIAGE

The minister, groom, and the best man enter through a door to the left of the pulpit as one faces the congregation. The remainder of the wedding party enters from the front foyer of the church. The minister stands before the altar facing the congregation. The groom and the best man stand facing the minister on his left hand.

The Processional:

(The bride is escorted to the altar by her father who stands with her on her right side facing the minister on his right hand.)

The Announcement:

The Minister says: Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in matrimony, which is commended of Paul to be honorable among all men. Marriage is not to be entered into by any unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If anyone can show any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak or now and forever hold his peace.

The Charge:

The Minister says to the persons who are to be married: I require and charge you both as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you knows any reason why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it; for you may be sure if any persons are joined together otherwise than as God's Word permits, their marriage is not lawful.

The Commitment:

The Minister says to the groom: (Groom's Name), will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together according to God's commandments in the estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor her, and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, will you be faithful only unto her, as long as you both shall live?

The groom answers: I will.

The Minister says to the bride: (Bride's Name) will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together according to God's commandments in the estate of matrimony? Will you love him, honor him, and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, will you be faithful only unto him, as long as you both shall live?

The bride answers: I will.

The Giving of the Bride in Marriage:

The Minister says: Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

The bride's father or one chosen by her says: I do.

(The minister receives the bride's right hand from her father or her friend and places her hand in the right hand of the groom.)

The Covenant:

The groom repeats the following covenant after the minister: I, (Groom's Name), take you (Bride's Name), to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

(The groom and bride loose their hands, and the bride takes the right hand of the groom in her right hand.)

The bride repeats the following covenant after the minister: I, (Bride's Name), take you, (Groom's Name), to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part,

according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

The Exchange of Rings:

The Minister says: Do you wish to give a ring as a symbol of this marriage?

The Minister takes the ring for the bride and says: Bless, O Lord, this ring that he who gives it and she who wears it may dwell in your peace.

The groom takes the ring from the minister, places it on the third finger of the bride's left hand, and repeats after the minister: In token of our constant faith and abiding love, with this ring, I do you wed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Minister takes the ring for the groom and says: Bless, O Lord, this ring that she who gives it and he who wears it may dwell in your grace.

The bride takes the ring from the minister, places it on the third finger of the groom's left hand, and repeats after the minister: In token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love, with this ring, I do you wed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Prayer:

The minister prays for the couple.

The Declaration:

The minister joins the right hands of the groom and bride together and says: Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Forasmuch as (Groom's Name) and (Bride's Name) have consented together in wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company. and thereto have covenanted and pledged their faith, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a ring and by joining their hands; with the authority that is invested in me as a minister of Jesus Christ and The Church of God, I now pronounce that they're husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

The Introduction:

The Minister addresses the congregation: It is my privilege to present to you Mr. & Mrs. (Last Name).

The Recessional

6. Dedication of Children

The Church of God believes that children should be dedicated to the Lord as soon after birth as is considered appropriate by the minister and the parents. There is ample scriptural precedent for this ceremony of dedication and the involvement of the minister in a priestly role of officiating in the ceremony.

Every Christian parent should desire that his child be dedicated to God and His work. It should be noted that the ceremony of child dedication is in no way to be confused with the practice of infant baptism and that the act of dedication itself in no way brings any measure of salvation to the child. The act of dedication of a child to the Lord is a gesture on the part of the parents of their will that the child be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that he may be gently wooed of the Holy Spirit until that time in his life when he is accountable for his actions and makes the conscious decision to repent of his sin, to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and thereby to be born again.

a. Preparation

The minister should instruct the parents on the nature of the ceremony for child dedication, of how they will be expected to participate in the ceremony and of the results of their actions upon themselves and the child. Proper planning makes the ceremony a memorable one that makes a considerable spiritual impact both upon the parents and on the entire congregation.

b. Methods and Times for Child Dedication

Ceremonies for dedication of children may be carried out at any time that the minister feels appropriate. Generally speaking, they are performed during a worship service, usually before the time of the sermon. Child dedications may be performed in homes when desired.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

(1) An explanation to the participants and to the congregation of the nature of and reasons for the ceremony of dedication of children.

(2) Appropriate scripture readings.

(3) Instruction to the parents (who stand before the minister at the altar of the church) that they have been given their child as a gift from God and as such they are responsible for its care and instruction.

(4) The covenant of the parents to rear the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

(5) The covenant of the congregation to support the parents by their prayers and other works in their effort to train up the child in the way that he should go.

(6) The anointing of the child and a prayer for divine protection and guidance upon the child until the time when he would be drawn of the Holy Spirit to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

(7) The charge to the parents that they fulfill their covenant and properly train and care for the child that God has entrusted to them.

(8) The benediction upon the parents and the child.

(9) The minister may furnish the parents with a certificate of dedication.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"They brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10: 13-16).

"And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Genesis 18:17, 19).

"Hannah...bare a son, and called his name Samuel...and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh...to Eli...And she said...For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth...And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 1:20,24-28) 3:19).

"Train up a child in way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

"These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).

"When the eight days were accomplished...his name was called JESUS...and they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...and the child grew, and waxed strong in the spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke 2:21,22,40).

e. Suggested Ceremony

The following is an outline for the ceremony of dedication of children. The minister may use any or all of it, making such modifications as he deems appropriate to his circumstances.

CEREMONY FOR THE DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

The Announcement:

Minister: We are gathered here in the presence of God and this company to dedicate children to the Lord.

Scripture Reading:

(Appropriate scripture passages may be read by the minister or by someone chosen.)

The Call:

Minister: Let those who wish to dedicate their children to the Lord now present themselves and their children before His altar.

(Parents shall leave their seats at the front of the congregation and bring their child (ren) to the altar, facing the minister. Grandparents may join the parents at the altar if they so desire. Where desired, godparents may join the parents at the altar.)

The Covenant:

Minister to Parents: The family is a divine institution created by God so that the children that He gives to parents may have care, protection, and training. Parents have a solemn obligation both to God and to their children to nurture them and to train them in the things of God. The scriptural ceremony of child dedication is an important time for you to recognize this obligation and to take it solemnly upon you. Do you (Parents' Names) wish to dedicate your child (Child's Name) to the Lord?

Parents: We do.

Minister: As parents you are responsible to provide a Christian home and a godly environment for (Child's Name) and see that he (she) is taught from early in life the principles of the Word and will of God. You must see that you train him (her) to give reverent attendance to the worship of God and the teachings of the Bible. In every way, by precept and example, you must seek to lead him (her) into the love of God and to the point of receiving Jesus Christ as his (her) Savior when he (she) becomes accountable for his (her) actions. Now, in the presence of God and these witnesses do you sincerely promise that you will bring up (Child's Name) in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Parents: We do.

Minister: Do you promise to endeavor to lead him (her) early in life to accept Jesus Christ as his (her) personal Savior?

Parents: We do.

Minister: Do you dedicate your home to the Lord as a place of Christian environment in which (Child's Name) may grow and mature both naturally and spiritually?

Parents: We do.

Minister to the Congregation: Do you members of the church receive this child in the name of the Lord Jesus and promise to assist these parents in bringing him (her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and in the fellowship of the church?

Congregation: We do.

Covenant of Godparents (Optional):

Minister: Will you, (Godparents' Name) accept the responsibility of assisting these parents in rearing this child? In the unfortunate event of their untimely death, will you see that this child's

spiritual and physical needs are provided for until such a time as it comes of age?

Godparents: We will.

The Presentation:

Minister to Parents: Do you now present your child to the Lord?

Parents (presenting the child to the minister): We do.

The Dedication:

Minister (taking oil upon his fingers from an appropriate vessel and anointing the forehead of the child): Forasmuch as (Parents Names) have presented you to the Lord and have promised to rear you in His nurture and admonition, I hereby anoint and dedicate you, (Child's Name), in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit to God and to His holy service.

The Charge:

Minister to Parents: (Parents' Names) , I charge you in the sight of God and His holy angels that you be faithful to keep the covenant that you have made with the Lord this day that you will provide care, protection, and guidance to (Child's Name) . In the name of Jesus Christ I charge you that you teach him (her) by precept and by example in the ways of righteousness and that you lead him (her) into the love of God and the service of our Lord so that he (she) may early come to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Minister to Congregation: I charge you, church of God, that you support (Parents' Names) in their responsibility to give care, protection, and guidance to (Child's Name). I charge you that you give unto them the strength and fellowship of the church, being father, mother, sister, and brother to them and to their child.

Prayer:

(The minister prays for the guidance of the parents and child.)

Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

7. Dedication of Homes

When members of the church move to a new home, they often desire to have that home dedicated to the Lord with the expectation that He will bless the home and those who dwell in it, that the righteous precepts of God will be taught and manifested in that home, and that it may be a secure environment for the stability of the family.

The minister fulfills a priestly role in dedicating the home on behalf of the family to the service of God and praying God's blessing upon the home and those who in it receive food, shelter, clothing and godly instruction.

a. Preparation

The minister should advise the family of the nature of and procedure for the dedication of their home. A time should be set for the occasion so that the family may invite those whom they wish to join with them in this time of joy.

b. Methods of Dedication

There are many different approaches that may be used in the dedication of homes. The minister may wish to emphasize the setting apart of those buildings which we inhabit as places of safety where the peace of God may abide and righteous instruction may take place. He may choose to minimize the importance of the dwelling place and emphasize the importance of having the family rededicated to God and His service as a unit and as individuals.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

- (1) An explanation to the participants of the nature of the ceremony and its value to them.
- (2) Instruction to the family members that they must make their home a place for the safety and instruction of all the members of the family.
- (3) The prayer of blessing upon the home.
- (4) The charge to the family members that they love one another, support one another, share the teachings of Christ with one another, and live the life of the Spirit in harmony with one another.
- (5) The benediction.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"And when ye come into a house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it" (Matthew 10:12, 13).

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain...Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth" (Psalm 127: 1, 2, 4).

"Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches" (Proverbs 24:3, 4).

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

e. Suggested Ceremony

CEREMONY FOR DEDICATION OF A HOME

Invocation:

The minister invokes the blessings of God upon the ceremony.

The Act of Praise:

Minister: May this home be a house of praise to God for His mighty acts.
(The minister leads the family and guests in song and other acts of praise.)

The Scripture Reading:

Minister: May this home be a place for the reading and instruction of the Word of God.
(Appropriate passages of scripture are read by the minister or family members.)

The Father or Head of the House should read the following: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Prayer:

Minister: May this house be a place for prayer to God.
(The minister leads the family in prayer.)

The Covenant:

Minister: Do you sincerely promise in the presence of God that you will set apart your house as a place of safety from the pressures of the world, as a place of instruction in the ways of the Lord, as a place where praise can be offered to God, as a place where prayers may be made, and as a place where God may be blessed through the increase that He gives you?
Family members: We do.

The Prayer of Dedication:

Minister: Eternal Father in whose name we understand the importance of family and by whose grace we are provided the bountiful blessing of food, clothing, and shelter, we thank you for this family and for their desire to commit all that they do into your hand. Now, on their behalf, we dedicate this home and pronounce the benediction of your peace upon it. May all who enter its doors enjoy the peace and joy that abides here in and through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Charge:

Minister to Family Members: I charge you before Jesus Christ our Lord that you abide in the peace of God, that you join in the instruction of His Word, that you rejoice in the presence of His Spirit, and that you share the hospitality of your home with others. Let the love of God be rich in your hearts one toward another. Amen.

The Benediction:

The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

8. Dedication of Church Buildings

The Church of God believes that all buildings that are to be used in the service of the Lord should be sanctified (set apart) and consecrated to Him through the act of dedication. Since the Scriptures contain many references to the times when God's people dedicated various structures to Him, we can be sure that He is pleased with this act.

Believers should be aware that God does not dwell today in structures made by men (as He did in Old Testament times). He chooses rather to indwell the hearts of those who believe in Him in the person of the Holy Spirit. This truth does not, however, obviate the need for physical structures in which to perform the worship and service of God or the need for those structures to be dedicated to His service.

When the church at any level of its operation purchases or builds a building, a dedicatory service should be conducted. Additional services should be held in conjunction with the new building when a groundbreaking ceremony is held and when a mortgage burning ceremony is held.

a. Preparation

Proper planning and preparation should be made by the minister and his staff to see that the service of dedication is meaningful to the congregation. Care should be exercised in inviting the presence and participation of dignitaries from the community, from the Christian community, from the local church, and from the church in general.

Those who participate in the dedicatory service may include the minister, the lay ministers of the church, civic officials, and members of the congregation. It should be noted that the act of dedication is reserved to bishops in The Church of God; therefore, a regional bishop, a territorial bishop, or the Chief Bishop must be scheduled to participate in the dedicatory service.

b. Methods and Times for Dedications

There are many orders in which the dedicatory service may be carried out; therefore, the minister should plan a dedicatory service that will be most meaningful to the congregation. The time for a dedication is usually a morning worship service or during an afternoon when the public may view the new structure at their leisure.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

(1) An explanation to the participants of the nature of the ceremony and its spiritual value to them.

(2) Recognition of guests.

(3) Presentation of keys to the pastor (by chairman of building committee).

(4) The Act of Dedication (by presiding bishop).

(5) Benediction

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Psalm 84).

"And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: and he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who deepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou sparest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou sparest unto thy servant David my Father. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of the servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee today: that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive" (I Kings 8:22-30).

e. Suggested Ceremony

CEREMONY FOR THE DEDICATION OF A SANCTUARY

Prelude

Processional

Call to Worship:

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty...The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Invocation:

(Prayer is offered by the minister or guest.)

The Act of Praise:

(Two appropriate hymns may be sung.)

The Scripture Reading:

(Appropriate scriptures are read by the minister or someone chosen.)

Recognition of Guests:

(City and church officials are recognized.)

Presentation of Keys:

Chairman of Building Committee (or Finance Council): Acting in behalf of the church we have prepared this structure to accommodate the worship and praise of God, the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, and the administration of the sacraments. As chairman of the building committee it is my honor to present to you the keys to this edifice.

Minister: On behalf of the congregation I commend you and the building committee for a work of Christian service well done. I accept these keys on behalf of the congregation with the promise that together we will always strive to make this building a place where we may carry out the worship and service of God.

Offertory

Sermon: (The dedicatory sermon is delivered by the Territorial Bishop or a General Headquarters official.)

The Act of Dedication:

Minister (Pastor): Throughout the ages, Yahweh the Almighty God has moved upon His people to build houses of prayer and worship and to set apart places for the ministry of His Word and sacraments. It is with gratitude to Him that we, The Church of God in (Name of Local Church), are now gathered to dedicate and consecrate this building in His name. Let us pray:

Almighty God, we thank you that in all things you are our source and that you provide bountifully for us. We thank you that you have made possible the construction of this sanctuary. Accept us now as we come before your presence to dedicate this building as a place to which we may come to praise your name, to ask your forgiveness, to know your healing power, to hear your Word, and to be led by your Spirit. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

The Bishop says: To the glory of God the Father, who called us by His grace; to the honor of God the Son who loved us and gave Himself for us; and to the praise of God the Holy Spirit, who enlightens us and leads us into His truth, we dedicate this house.

For the worship of God in prayer and praise; for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; for the observance of the sacraments of the church; for the dedication of children and their nurture and instruction in the Lord; for the salvation by grace through faith of those who come in repentance before the Lord; for the comfort of those who mourn, for the guidance of those who seek the Lord; for the building of Christian homes; for the promotion of personal and social righteousness in this community; for the extension of the kingdom of God; and for the upbuilding of the Church of God, we dedicate this house.

In remembrance of the noble efforts of all those living and dead who have labored faithfully in the years past for the growth and development of this church; in honor of those who have ministered the Word and sacraments of God to this congregation; and in thanks to all those who have shared their resources to make this sanctuary possible, we dedicate this house.

The Bishop (assisted by the minister) lays hands on and anoints with oil the pulpit and says the following: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, in every age you have spoken through the voices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Purify the lives and lips of those who speak from this pulpit that only your Word may be proclaimed and only your Word may be heard in this place:

"We dedicate this pulpit in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Bishop (assisted by the Minister) lays hands upon and anoints with oil the altar and communion table and says the following: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we praise you that for us and for our salvation you sent your only begotten Son Jesus Christ to be born among us, to die for our sins,

and to be resurrected for our justification, that we might become your sons and daughters through Him. We praise you for calling us to your altar that we may receive from you the imparting of your gifts and graces. May this altar be a place where both saint and sinner may obtain favor in your sight through repentance and the offering of prayers. May it be a place where they may draw close to you in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

"We dedicate this altar in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The Bishop (assisted by the Minister) lays hands upon and anoints with oil the doors of the sanctuary and says the following: "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we thank you that the door of heaven has been opened to us through the offering of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that these doors may always be open to those who would come into your presence to receive of your grace.

"We dedicate the doors of this sanctuary and declare them open to your presence and to the entry of all your children in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Returning to the Altar, the Bishop says: With the authority vested in me as a Bishop of The Church of God, I declare this sanctuary to be dedicated to the service of Almighty God in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction:

Minister: Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you what which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Recessional

Postlude

9. Funeral Service

One of the responsibilities of the Christian ministry is to comfort those who mourn and to give them assurance of the all-transcending power of God. At the time of the death of a loved one, the bereaved family is in need of the ministry of comfort and the proclamation in private words and in public statement that there is hope in Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

By virtue of his priestly office the minister is the one visible source to whom the bereaved can turn in their time of sorrow for comfort and assurance: For this reason he should make his services available to the family from the time that he learns of the death until well after the time of the funeral.

As soon as the minister receives word of the death of one of his parishioners, he should go at once to the home of the deceased to offer words of comfort to the bereaved. From that time until after the funeral service he should work closely with the family, spending all the time necessary to minister to them in their time of sorrow.

a. Preparation for the Service

Funeral customs vary greatly in different localities. The minister should learn the procedures and practices that are customary for the area in which he ministers. He may work with the next of kin or family members to arrange a funeral service that fulfills their wishes.

He may also advise the family of the range of services offered by funeral directors and recommend their prudent selection of those services which they can best afford. In cases where cremation is desired, the minister should seek to fulfill the wishes of the family and/or the deceased. The church approves any method of disposition of human remains that are acceptable in society.

The minister should work with the family to schedule a time for receiving friends either in the

home or in the funeral director's facilities. He should also work with the family to schedule the time of the funeral that may be coordinated with the funeral director. During this time the church may assist the minister in providing food and accommodations for family members as the need arises.

The funeral service should be planned in advance with an outline of the service printed and given to those who participate in the funeral service. The minister should work with the family to arrange the participation of those whom they desire to take part in the service. These include the musicians, singers, eulogist, and preacher.

Outlines for services for different situations, including military funerals, are available in various ministers' manuals.

b. Times and Places for Funerals

The funeral may be conducted in a chapel of the funeral director's facilities, or it may be conducted in the sanctuary of the church. In some situations the family may wish only to have a grave-site service. The minister should seek to fulfill the wishes of the family if at all possible. Times for funerals vary widely in different localities. The minister should work with the family and with the funeral director in establishing an appropriate time for the service.

c. Appropriate Parts of the Service

Funerals should not be lengthy. Twenty to thirty minutes is usually adequate for the entire service. A full sermon should not be preached at a funeral. A brief address by the minister, together with comments on comforting scriptural references, is adequate. A brief tactful appeal to unbelievers to accept Christ as their Savior is also appropriate.

The service may include any or all of the following:

- (1) Organ prelude
- (2) Scripture reading and prayer
- (3) Vocal music
- (4) Reading the obituary
- (5) Eulogy
- (6) Sermon
- (7) Prayer for comfort of the bereaved
- (8) Benediction
- (9) Postlude

After the benediction, the minister usually stands at the head of the casket and precedes it from the church. He stands at the hearse until the casket is placed inside and the door is closed. He may then ride with the funeral director or drive his own vehicle to the gravesite. At the cemetery the minister usually walks in front of the casket to the grave where he stands at the head of the grave. The committal service is always brief, consisting of the reading of appropriate scripture and the benediction.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27).

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-19). "

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20, 21).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:25-29).

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:51-58).

e. Suggested Service

OUTLINE FOR FUNERAL SERVICE

Prelude

Scripture Reading and Prayer

(The minister or associate minister reads appropriate portions of scripture and prays.)

Music

(Either instrumental or vocal)

Obituary and/or Eulogy

Music

(Either instrumental or vocal)

Sermon

(The Minister may give a short exhortation on the hope of the resurrection and the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.)

Prayer

Benediction

Postlude

THE COMMITTAL SERVICE

Scripture Reading

Standing at the head of the casket, the minister may read the following:

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Committal

Minister: We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we carry nothing out. The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Forasmuch as it has pleased our heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved (Deceased's Name), we therefore commend his (her) spirit into His loving care, and we commit his (her) body to the earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Prayer by the Minister

(The Minister prays for the comfort of the family).

Benediction:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

10. Breadbreaking

The Church of God has restored the New Testament practice of breadbreaking as a part of its fellowship and worship. In this ceremony a loaf of bread is broken and shared by the congregation to symbolize the oneness of the church as one loaf. It is a time of fellowship and expression of love and appreciation.

a. Preparation

The minister who will officiate in a breadbreaking ceremony should see that a sufficient amount of bread is prepared to accommodate the congregation. Those who will assist him in distributing the bread to the people and organizing their sharing one with another should be advised of the nature of their involvement in the ceremony.

b. Methods and Times for Observance

Breadbreaking may be observed in the church at any time that the minister feels it would promote unity and fellowship. It may be observed during worship service, during a fellowship meeting, or in individual homes.

c. Essential Parts of the Ceremony

- (1) An explanation to the participants of the nature of the ceremony and its spiritual value to them.
- (2) The breaking of the loaf (loaves of bread).
- (3) Distribution of the bread to the people by their leaders.
- (4) Breaking and sharing of bread among the members with appropriate expressions of love and appreciation.
- (5) Benediction.

d. Suggested Scripture Readings

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:42, 46).

"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (I Corinthians 10:17).

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

e. Suggested Ceremony

CEREMONY FOR BREAD BREAKING

Invocation:

Prayer by minister or someone chosen.

Scripture Reading

Scripture may be read by the minister.

Exhortation to Unity

The minister may emphasize the oneness of the body of Christ.

Prayer of Blessing upon the Bread

The minister prays a prayer of blessing on the bread.

Breaking of the Bread

The minister breaks the bread and gives it to representatives of the congregation.

Sharing of the Bread

The members of the congregation share the bread with one another.

Songs of Fellowship

Choruses emphasizing the love and fellowship of the church are sung.

Benediction

The minister says: Now may the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit keep you in the bond of peace and in the oneness and fellowship of the body of Christ. Amen.