



Report of the
QUESTIONS
&
SUBJECTS
COMMITTEE
to the
117th General Assembly
of
The Church of God
August 7 – August 12, 2023

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GOD
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Introduction:

We, your Questions and Subjects Committee, bring greetings to the delegates of this 117th Annual worldwide Assembly of The Church of God.

This Committee would also like to express our love and appreciation for the leadership of our General Overseer, Bishop Pimentel, and for his wife, Sister Pimentel.

We would also like to express our appreciation to all those who have prayed for this Committee, for without God's direction we could not adequately fulfill the responsibility placed on us to serve The Church of God. We would like to encourage every member that may have a concern regarding the Q&S report, to please send the concern in as soon as possible. We take each submission seriously, and as a committee, we seek God for wisdom before responding to each question or subject submitted to us.

SECTION 1: THE OFFICIAL CHURCH PAPER

Rationale

In 1978, the following was recommended:

“To alleviate the increasing deficit borne by the Church's general fund, we seem to have two options: First, a substantial increase in the subscription rates; Second, making The White Wing Messenger a bi-weekly edition publication with a smaller increase in the subscription rate. This bi-weekly edition would contain more pages than the present sixteen-page issue; yet, there would be some postage savings because of postal schedules now in effect.

Several years ago, when we reverted back to a weekly publication from a bi-weekly, a major reason seems to have been that we would be able to include more local news than a bi-week-

ly issue would allow. With the growth of the Church in the meantime, in order to follow a policy of being impartial to all local churches, it has become necessary to limit the local news mainly to that of an unusual nature or rare happenings such as groundbreakings, dedication of new buildings, etc. Suggestions have been made that most local news be submitted to the state or national papers.

The feeling has been expressed that a little larger bi-weekly *White Wing Messenger* might be more attractive and have wider reader appeal than the present weekly edition. We therefore recommend that *The White Wing Messenger* become a bi-weekly publication” (73rd AM, 1978, pp131-132, Sec. 3, QSC).

The above recommendation was dealing with a specific set of circumstances. Furthermore, we no longer have the *White Wing Messenger* and our current publication, *The Evening Light*, is done on a monthly basis, we therefore make the following recommendation:

Recommendation

We recommend that this ruling be rescinded.

Section 2: HAPPY HARVESTER

Rationale

In 1967, the Q&S Committee made the following recommendation regarding the Happy Harvester:

“Since our publication, the Happy Harvester, is considered a published message we suggest that the printing and publishing of it continue to be financed by the Free Literature Department. We recommend that the method of distribution of the Happy Harvester be left in the hands of the Publishing Committee” (62nd AM, 1967, p150, Sec. 6, QSC).

Since we no longer have the Happy Harvester, we make the following recommendation:

Recommendation

We recommend that this ruling be rescinded.

SECTION 3: INFORMATIONAL REPORT - TITHING AND GIVING

The Q&S Committee would like to encourage the membership to continue to be faithful in our giving to the Lord.

Sadly, many of our members are missing out on their blessings because they are unfaithful in paying their tithes and offerings.

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:8-11).

Our former General Overseer Bishop Robert Pruitt once stated in his annual address to the Assembly:

“If all of our people paid all their tithes and gave offerings according to how God has blessed them, we would never have to say anything about funds to carry on our work throughout the world” (93rd AM, 1998, G.O. Address).

“The ministry must lead the way by example” (93rd AM, 1998, Q&S, Sec. 2).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:13,14).

Section 4: EATING OF BLOOD

Rationale

Over the years the question regarding the eating of animal blood e.g. in sausages and other products by members of the Church has been raised.

The Bible's first prohibition against consuming blood comes in Genesis 9:2-4, where God tells Noah, ³ *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.* ⁴ *But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.*" (Genesis 9:3, 4)

Later, the prohibition of Genesis 9:4 is reiterated in the Law of Moses. Leviticus 17:14 gives the reason behind the command:

"For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off." (Leviticus 17:14)

As New Testament believers in Christ we have freedom from the Law, and we are to *"stand fast"* in that liberty (Galatians 5:1). We are not under the Law but under grace. *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:"* (Colossians 2:16). So, eating a rare steak, blood sausage, blood pancakes, blood soup etc. may not be palatable to all Christians, but it is allowable.

In Acts 15, a question arose in the early church concerning what was necessary for salvation. Specifically, did a Gentile need to be circumcised in order to be saved? The issue came up in the Church in Syrian Antioch, which had a mixture of Jewish and Gentile converts.

To address this important issue, the leaders of the church met in Jerusalem for the very first Church Council. They concluded that, no Gentiles needed to follow the Mosaic Law. Circumcision is not part of salvation (verse 19). However, in verse 29, the Jerusalem Council composed a letter with these instructions for the Gentiles in Antioch: ¹⁹ *Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:* ²⁰ *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.* ²¹ *For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*" (Acts 15:19-21)

At this point, we must keep the context foremost in our minds. These four commands from Jerusalem to Antioch all dealt with pagan practices associated with idolatry. Most, if not all, of the Gentile converts in Antioch were saved out of paganism. The Church leaders were exhorting the new Gentile believers not to offend potential Jewish converts and their Jewish brothers and sisters in the church who were hearing the laws of Moses preached every Sabbath day. The instructions concerning meats and drinks were not intended to guarantee salvation but to avoid offences and promote peace within the early Church. Please note that this Assembly ruling and the letter written was addressed to the Gentiles only, which would be another indicator that this issue was not a universal, doctrinal issue addressing inherently sinful practices, but one addressing offences that could discourage people from coming to Christ and serving Him.

Later, Paul dealt with the same issue when writing about meat offered to idols, he says, *“I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”* (Romans 14:14). But if eating that meat causes a brother in Christ to violate his conscience, Paul states, *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”* (1 Corinthians 8:13). This was the same concern the Jerusalem leaders had in Acts 15.

Recommendation

We recommend the church goes on record with the following guidance on the matter.

As New Testament believers in Christ we live under grace and have freedom from the Law, so we are to *“stand fast”* in that liberty (Galatians 5:1). We are not under the Law but under grace. *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:”* [Colossians 2:16].

Others may have different convictions about food and drink, and in that case we may voluntarily limit our freedom in order

to better serve them and God. Whether one orders their meat rare or well done is a matter of conscience and of taste. So, eating a rare steak, blood sausage, blood pancakes, blood soup etc. may not be palatable to all Christians, but it is allowable.

What enters the mouth does not make us unclean (Matthew 15:17-18). Eating blood in various forms may not appeal to everyone, but it is not a sin.

This guidance is in accord with our Prominent Teaching on Meats and Drinks. *“The New Testament makes no rigid rule concerning what the Christian shall eat or drink (with the exception of strong drink).” We have no right to judge what our brother eats or what he drinks. Read in Romans 14:2-3, 17; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.*

Section 5: CHANGE OF LICENSE STATUS

Rationale

On occasions, there may arise a desire to change ministerial status such as a deacon becoming a bishop or evangelist to deacon etc. Currently there is no consistency as to the correct procedure in the ministerial status change.

Presently the State/Regional/National Overseer will make a recommendation to the local church so the individual can be set forth at the desired ministerial status.

In some instances, the State/Regional/National Overseer will allow the process to go through the local church conference. The local church would have a good knowledge of the minister’s faithfulness, spiritual status and maturity.

However, in other instances, the State/Regional/National Overseer will simply fill out a ministerial change form and send it to General Headquarters without the local churches involvement.

The minister whose status is being changed would need to fill out the application for a minister’s license form. Since the license application consists of certain questions that will only pertain to the bishop or deacon, the minister moving to the office of a deacon or bishop will need to answer these rele-

vant questions. Therefore, it is not sufficient for the Overseer to simply fill out the application and send it to General Headquarters.

Bearing in mind all that has been stated above, we therefore make the following recommendation.

Recommendation

We recommend that whenever a change of a ministerial status is to take place, the process should be brought to the local church conference and the individual is to complete the relevant application of ministerial license form. The moderator and clerk should sign and date the form and forward it to the State/Regional/National Overseer. The State/Regional/National Overseer should then complete the Ministerial Credential Status Change form and send both to General Headquarters.

The only instances of a ministerial status change where the State/Regional/National Overseer would not need to go through the local church conference are as follows:

- a. "...When the wife of a bishop or a preaching deacon falls into sin, and there is no charge against the minister himself; the presbytery shall change the status of his ministry to that of a licensed minister. He shall be informed of the change. When non-preaching deacon's wife falls into sin, his deaconship shall be recorded as lapsed. A widowed bishop or deacon who marries a wife who does not meet the criteria for the wife of a bishop or a deacon shall have the status of his ministry changed according to that of a licensed minister..." (99th AM, 2004, p.48, QSC, Sec. 4:F)
- b. Resignation
- c. Death
- d. Revocation
- e. Lapsed
- f. Suspension

Section 6: THE CHURCH OF GOD PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT

Rationale

Recently, The Publishing Committee introduced a new logo to be used on our publications. This logo will help serve as a unique identifier of our publications by the Church.

The logo represented the shepherd's staff at the entrance of the sheepfold.

The use of this logo was later extended to our bookstore, as it is the official outlet for purchasing all of the Church's publications. The name of our bookstore was subsequently changed to One Fold Bookstore.

Recommendation

Following the changes that have been implemented by the Publishing Department, we recommend that the name: "The Church of God Publishing Department" be changed to "One Fold Publishing." We further recommend that our publications make it clear that "One Fold Publishing" is a department of The Church of God.

Section 7: DEACONESSES

Rationale

After looking through our past Assembly Minutes, the Church in 1909 did recognize deaconesses.

"Female ministers - Deaconesses and Evangelists.

This subject was discussed and decided that female ministers had their place in the Lord's vineyard in the days of the Apostles and must be recognized in these days, but for lack of precept or example in the New Testament for ordination the assembly advises for the present, that the wives of the deacons be considered and appointed deaconesses by virtue of the position and ordination of their husbands. The assembly advises further that the women who engage in the ministry of the Word be acknowledged by the church and supplied with a certificate or license showing date of appointment and by what church. Also, that above certificate or license be conferred to unordained male ministers" (4th AM, 1909, p40).

The rationale to the above seems to point to the fact that the position of a deaconess is solely attributed to one that is a wife of a deacon. Also, from above, we have no records that the certification process was practiced. Since the Church does not give the wives of any ministers, such as evangelists, teachers, or bishops, an appointment “by virtue of the position and ordination of their husband,” it seems that we would not do so with the wives of deacons.

The Bible is our rule of faith, practice, government and discipline and is the final authority in all matters.

In the 1909 Spanish Reina Valera Antigua Version of the Holy Bible, we read in Romans 16:1 that Phebe was called a “diaconisa,” or deaconess, of The Church of God at Cencrea. In the English King James Version of the Bible, she is called a “servant”. The Greek work used for “servant” in English and “diaconisa” in Spanish is “diakonos” and it appears in the New Testament about thirty other times. In the English, it is translated “minister/s” twenty times, “servant/s” eight times and “deacons” three times.

The words used for “servants” at the marriage feast in John 2:5,9, the “ministers” (Paul and Apollos) of 1 Corinthians 3:5, the “minister” (Tychicus) of Ephesians 6:21 and (Epaphras) of Colossians 1:7, the “minister” (Timotheus) of 1 Thessalonians 3:2, the “minister” (civil rulers) of Romans 13:4, the “ministers” (false apostles) of 2 Corinthians 11:15 and the “minister” (Jesus Christ) of Romans 15:8 are translations of the Greek word “diakonos.”

It is obvious, by the context, that none of these translations of the Greek word “diakonos” indicate a female “deacon” in the sense of a “deacon” as used in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Philippians 1:1. It simply indicates a servant or helper.

Additionally, there are no specific qualifications given for deaconesses in the New Testament. There is no mention of “deaconesses” as a group, although “the bishops and deacons” are mentioned in Philippians 1:1.

In 2004, the General Assembly addressed the licensing procedure for all positions of the ministry.

Deaconesses were not addressed as a part of this recommendation. This report stated that it superseded all previous Assembly recommendations.

Although the subject of deaconesses was passed in 1909, it lacks precept or example in the New Testament and has not been a continued practice of the Church, neither was this subject mentioned in the 2004 Minutes.

Therefore, in order to be in line with the scriptures and our current Assembly rulings, we make the following recommendation:

Recommendation

We recommend that the 1909 ruling concerning deaconesses be rescinded and all previous rulings concerning deaconesses.

The Church of God recognizes female evangelists and teachers, and this ruling does not affect women called into the ministry.

Section 8: SALE OF GENERAL HEADQUARTERS PROPERTY

Rationale

During our General Assembly last year, the Tabernacle Committee presented various scenarios relating to The Church of God acquiring its own General Assembly tabernacle property.

In the event of us acquiring a General property which may also house our future General Headquarter complex, it would be prudent to put steps in place for the possible disposal of our current General Headquarters complex at 197 Tillie Road.

Looking back into our archives:

“The following resolution was read, accepted and adopted by the Assembly.

Harriman, Tenn, Nov. 6, 1917.

General Assembly of the Churches of God:

“Be it resolved by the Churches of God constituting this

General Assembly, that from and after this date, the General Overseer and the Board of Trustees of the General Assembly of the Church of God, be, and they are hereby given fully power and authority to sell, transfer and convey, any and all property belonging to the General Assembly, both real and personal, when in their judgment the sale of same will promote the best interests of the cause of God and this General Assembly. Provided further that the General Overseer shall join the Board of Trustees in all deeds conveying real property, and their deed so executed shall convey unto the purchaser all the right, title and interest of this General Assembly in and to said property.

Passed by the General Assembly this 6th day of Nov. 1917.

Attest: E.J. Boehmer, clerk. A.J. Tomlinson, General Overseer.”

During their report in 1997, the Questions and Subjects Committee wrote:

Section 10.

“Be it further resolved that the duties of all trustees shall be to hold, protect and defend title to any and all real properties and personal property assets which are specifically held in their names for the use and benefit of the local church business conference, national, state or regional convention, or general assembly The trustees shall be deemed to be agents of the particular local church business conference, convention or the general assembly. They shall not make decisions independent of the duties and responsibilities and guidelines laid down by the business sessions of the above bodies. The trustees shall in time of emergency such as fire, tornado, flood or other natural disasters, vandalism or theft, work in conjunction with the pastor/overseer and the clerk/treasurer of the governing church body for the best resolution of the problem facing the congregation until such time as the proper business meeting may be called to resolve the issue.”

Section 12

“Section 12. “Be it further resolved that no proceeds from

any church property shall inure to the personal financial benefit of any church officer or trustee or member in the event of the sale of a church owned property, disbanding of a local church, or any other reason for which the church property is no longer needed.” (90th AM, Q & S, 1995, pgs. 41-42).

From the above it can be seen that the General Trustees together with the General Overseer already have the authority to buy and sell general property on the behalf of the general church.

Recommendation

If in the process of acquiring a future General Assembly tabernacle property, it becomes feasible to sell our current General Headquarters property for the benefit of The Church of God, we recommend the following: The General Trustees along with the General Overseer, after consultation with the Ways and Means Committee, to proceed according to the authority which has been previously vested in them by past General Assembly recommendations.

Section 9: PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL MINISTERS

Rationale

Currently the application process for all lay ministers states:

“... We further recommend that, the applicant, in preparation for the regular minister’s license, successfully complete The Church - “Who Is She?”, Volume 1- **History of The Church of God**, Volume 2- **The Church’s Unfinished Mission**, Volume 3- **The Church the Fulness of Christ**, and Volume 4- **Prominent Teachings of The Church of God**, prior to being set forth for a regular license. These may be obtained through the General Headquarters Bible Training Institute Department.

State/Regional/National Overseers may make exceptions to these requirements when it is obvious that the financial status of the candidate would not permit compliance, or when the required material is not available in the language of the candidate, or when the candidate is not literate enough to meet the

requirements. However, caution should be exercised in allowing for exceptions to the fundamental requirements, since it is clear that if one is to teach, he first must be taught” (104th AM, 2009, p108, Sec.4, QSC).

The current ruling for certified teachers is slightly different from above.

“...we recommend that those desiring to be certified as teachers be required to complete the following BTI courses: **The History of The Church of God, The Church the Fulness of Christ, and The Prominent Teachings of The Church of God.** State/National Overseers may make exceptions to these requirements when it is obvious that the financial status of the candidate would not permit compliance, or when the required material is not available in the language of the candidate. Only faithful members of the Church who are filled with the Holy Ghost should be issued a certificate. This recommendation takes precedence over all other Assembly recommendations regarding teacher certificates...” (92nd AM, 1997, p41, Part VI, QSC).

Observation from the field highlights the difficulty where Overseers, especially in nations outside of the U.S., try to go through the four correspondence books during their scheduled BTI courses. This is due to the fact that currently all members aspiring to become ministers have to complete these books.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

Recommendation

We recommend that the individual, prior to receiving a regular ministerial or teacher’s license, needs to complete either the three terms of BTI (since the reorganization) or the four correspondence books: **The Church – “Who is She?”**, Volume 1 – **History of The Church of God**, Volume 2 – **The Church’s Unfinished Mission**, Volume 3 – **The Church the Fulness of Christ**, and Volume 4 – **Prominent Teachings of The Church of God**. We would highly encourage the person seeking a license to complete both BTI and the correspondence books, if at all possible.

State/Regional/National Overseers may make exceptions to these requirements when it is obvious that the financial status of the candidate would not permit compliance, or when the required material is not available in the language of the candidate, or when the candidate is not literate enough to meet the requirements. However, caution should be exercised in allowing for exceptions to the fundamental requirements, since it is clear that if one is to teach, he first must be taught.

This will supersede the previous recommendations: (104th AM, 2009, p108, Sec. 4, QSC) and (92nd AM, 1997, p41, Part VI, QSC).

SECTION 10: DISBANDING OF LOCAL CHURCHES

Rationale

Although no official recommendation has been passed by the General Assembly concerning the disbanding of local churches, we have made reference over the years to what was stated in the General Overseer's address in 1947, which was never adopted as a recommendation. We therefore recommend the following, bearing in mind changes that have been made concerning the transfer of individual members to a local church where they feel most comfortable.

RECOMMENDATION

It is not the business of the Presbytery to disband any work that is properly organized and functioning according to General Assembly rulings. It is necessary to disband a church when the members move away or become scattered and there are not enough to carry on services or a local church becomes unfaithful to the doctrine and/or government of The Church of God. No church should be disbanded by anyone other than the State/Regional/National Overseer in conjunction with the General Overseer.

Prior to the church being disbanded, the members should be transferred to the church where they are most comfortable and where they can best serve the Lord and the Church, keeping in mind that their membership should be at a local church near enough to their residence that they can attend regularly.

Before disbanding the church special care should be given to members, and they should be notified that they can contact the Counselling Committee at any time during the process. They should be contacted to find out how they feel and if/where they want their membership transferred. Before the church is disbanded or all members transferred out, a decision should be made regarding the disposition of all existing property and funds as recommended in: (94th AM, 1999, pp. 38-39 QSC. Sec. 2) and in line with the local Church's Dissolution Resolution plan, where such is in place.

If there are members who are disloyal, they are to be notified in writing, if possible, that the church is being disbanded. The letter should outline what actions will be taken if a response is not received. Special attention should be given to disloyal members. If it is possible, try to pray them through before the final notice is given. However, if disloyal members refuse to be reconciled and come under the government of the Church [*Obey them that have the rule over you...* Hebrews 13:17] then their church memberships will come to an end in effect, by the disbanding of the local church. A disloyal member would be any one who is unfaithful in church attendance over a period of time; joined another congregation; propagating false doctrine or unfaithful to the government of the church etc....

An accurate record should be kept by all involved throughout the process including the Counselling Committee. In the interest of transparency, members of the Counselling Committee should recuse themselves if related to the State/Regional/National Overseer or member of the local church being disbanded.

If members feel that due process has not been followed, then they do have the avenue of appealing to the Counselling Committee if they have not already done so.

If a church has been incorporated, there must be an authorized representative present to act on behalf of the incorporated body before it is disbanded. If an authorized representative should be unavailable then the Presbytery would seek for legal counsel.

THE QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (2022-2023)

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