

Abundant Harvest Church



General Handbook

Po Box 155 Duncannon, Pa. 17020
Located at: 510 New Bloomfield Rd
717-834-5444 www.aharvest.org
Pastor Matthew Zang

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Hello! Welcome to Abundant Harvest Church. Thank you for your interest in this ministry. The following guidelines and policies have been written to help you understand the structure of our church and how it functions.

Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Abundant Harvest Church is to replace the traditions of religion with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is our desire to inspire believers to have an unquenchable fire and ceaseless desire for the Word, for worship, and for evangelism.

Core Values:

Core values are fundamental criteria upon which programs and ministries within this church will use to operate and conduct the ministry and business of and for the church.

We will walk in and demonstrate Christian **love** for one another. We value **relationships** and will not willingly allow another believer to compromise or sacrifice their personal relationship with God, with family, with friends, or with neighbors. We value **integrity** and are committed with undivided loyalty to a strict moral and ethical code that is rooted in the Holy Bible. We value **commitment** and recognize that it is a promise to follow a certain course of action. Our first commitment is to God. Secondly, we are committed to our families. Our third commitment is to the Body of Christ. Lastly, we value **sharing** Jesus with everyone we minister to.

We hope that the information contained in this booklet will help you understand our church structure and its operations. We look forward to worshipping and ministering together with you soon.

Labors Together With Him,

Matthew Zang, Senior Pastor

Leadership Structure

Abundant Harvest Church '09

1. **Inner Circle** - All Pastors
2. **Core** - Elders/Pastor Wives/Corporate Board
3. **Outer Core** - Coordinators - Leader of Any Ministry
4. **Committed** – Teachers/Worship Team Members/Ushers
5. **Community** – Doers

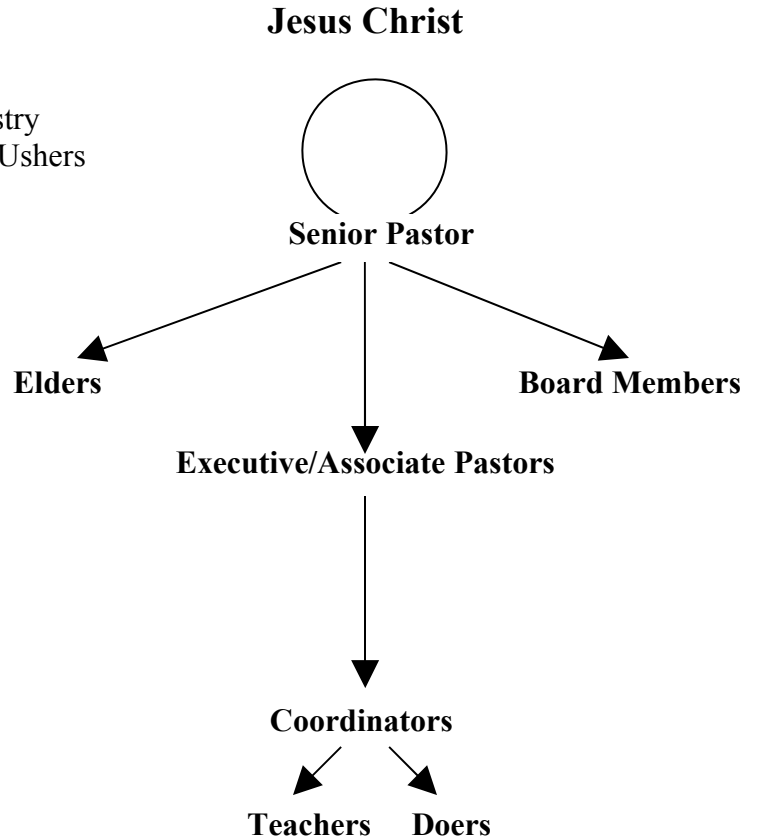
Supporting Scripture 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27 – ¹² “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling?

¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they *were* all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

²⁰ But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ... But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”



Position Definitions:

1. **Senior Pastor** – Serves as leader of the local church under the head which is Jesus Christ. Sets the vision of the church and works with the Executive and Associate Pastors to accomplish the goals he sets forth. He also directs the spiritual aspects of the church. The Pastor is the under shepherd of the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ. (Heb. 13:20, I Peter 5:2-4)
2. **Executive Pastor** – Serves as the heart of the body. Responsible for the operation of ministries in the church and to help the individual ministries accomplish their goals.
3. **Associate Pastors** – Serves as the vessels that pump life through the body. Responsible for setting and achieving goals of the ministry they oversee and the mentorship and welfare of the workers involved in their ministry.
4. **Elders** – Serves as an arm of the church helping Pastors in making spiritual decisions and discipling believers.
5. **Board Members** - Serves as an arm of the church by assisting the Senior Pastor in making financial and business decisions.
6. **Coordinators** - Are the hips of the body supporting the upper body and directing the legs and feet where they should go. They are leaders that have responsibility and oversight for the operation of the ministry assigned to them and over the Teachers and Doers under their authority.
7. **Teachers** – Are the legs of the ministry instructing those under their charge, bringing them to a deeper and fuller understanding of God, His Word and how to live a holy life pleasing to the Lord.
8. **Doers** – Are the hands and feet of the ministry helping the church move forward.

1. Inner Circle – All Pastors

- **Tenants of Faith** - Must practice, adhere, and agree with the tenants of faith as laid out in AHC bylaws.
- **Commitment** – Pastors must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings and prayer and also be committed to Senior Pastors’ vision and authority.
- **Recruitment** – Senior & Executive Pastor interviews and the Senior Pastor approves all positions
- **Supporting Scripture - 1 Tim 3:1-7:** *“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be 1. blameless, 2. the husband of one wife, 3. temperate, 4. sober-minded, of 5. good behavior, 6. hospitable, 7. able to teach; 8. not given to wine, 9. not violent, 10. not greedy for money, but 11. gentle, not quarrelsome, 12. not covetous; 13. one who rules his own house well, 14. having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 15. not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover he 16. must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”*

1. Blameless – Above reproach and suspicion, innocent
2. Husband of one wife – Married to one wife at a time, not a bigamist
3. Temperate – Agreeable, level-headed, restrained
4. Sober-minded – Sensible, real
5. Good behavior – Holiness
6. Hospitable - Gracious, friendly, courteous
7. Ability to teach – One who possesses scriptural understanding and can patiently impart their understanding to others.
8. Not given to wine – One who is not addicted to alcoholic beverages, one who does not partake in drunkenness.
9. Not violent – Peaceful, quiet, not given to sudden outbursts
10. Not greedy for money – Not covetous or ruled by the pursuit of money
11. Gentle – soft hearted
12. Not covetousness – Not greedy
13. One who rules his own house well – One who has a stable marriage and family life.
14. Having his children in submission with all reverence – One who properly disciplines his children according to the scriptures, teaching them and admonishing them in the fear of God. (This is for the Pastor and NOT the actions of their children.) **Eph 5:22-33**
15. Not a novice – Someone who has not been Born Again recently but who is mature in the faith.
16. Good testimony – Someone who has a good reputation in the community and the church. (AFTER conversion)
17. Free from sexual addictions. Does not view pornography in form and maintains a pure mind.

2. Core – Elders/Corporate Board Members/Pastor Wives

- Corporate Board Members make financial and business decisions, Elders assists Pastors in making spiritual decisions and helping with disciplining and other tasks as needed.
- Tenants of Faith - Must practice, adhere, and agree with the tenants of faith as laid out in AHC bylaws.
- **Commitment** – Core Members must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings and prayer. Must be teachable, committed and loyal to Senior Pastors’ vision and authority and to the Executive and Associate Pastors in your chain of command.
- **Recruitment** – Senior & Executive Pastor interviews and Senior Pastor approves all positions.
- Required to have been attending AHC for 1 year unless otherwise approved by the Senior Pastor.

- Appointment – The Senior Pastor appoints Elders and Board Members with recommendations from the Inner Circle and Core members. Elders and Board Members positions are one-year appointments that will be reevaluated at the end of their term.

Elders - Assists Pastors in making spiritual decisions and helps in the functioning of the ministry.

- Must have enough Bible knowledge to be able to refute false doctrine.
- Supporting Scripture Titus 1:5-9: *“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint** elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is 1. **blameless**, 2. **the husband of one wife**, 3. **having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination**.”*
 1. Blameless – Above reproach and suspicion, innocent
 2. Husband of one wife – Married to one wife at a time, not a bigamist
 3. Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination
 - One who properly disciplines his children according to the Scriptures, teaching them and admonishing them in the fear of God.
 4. Free from sexual addictions. Does not view pornography in any form and maintains a pure mind.

Corporate Board Members – Assists the Senior Pastor in making financial and business decisions.

3. Outer Core – Coordinators

- Coordinators are Deacons, one who has responsibility and oversight authority.
- Tenants of Faith - Must practice, adhere, and agree with the tenants of faith as laid out in AHC bylaws.
- Required to have been attending AHC for 6 months unless otherwise approved by the Senior Pastor.
- Commitment – Coordinators must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings and prayer. Must be teachable, committed and loyal to Senior Pastors vision and authority to the Associate Pastors, Elders and Deacons in your chain of command.
- Recruitment for position of Coordinator – Executive Pastor and another Core Leader interviews and Senior Pastor approves all positions.
- Responsibilities - Coordinator is responsible to recruit, interview, mentor and oversee your team members and keep them accountable by contacting them often and staying involved in their lives. You are more than just a leader on Sundays.
- Maintain monthly personnel schedule ready by the third week of each month.
- Notification - All serious problems must be reported to Executive Pastor. If you are not sure ask the Executive Pastor.
- Supporting Scripture, Acts 6:1-4; 7: *“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of 1. **good reputation**, 2. **full of the Holy Spirit** and 3. **wisdom**, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” **Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**”*
 1. Good reputation – Someone who has a good reputation in the community and in the church. (AFTER conversion)
 2. Full of the Holy Spirit – One who is led and walks in the Spirit. (Gal 5)
 3. Wisdom – Proverbs 9:10: *“The **fear of the LORD** is the **beginning of wisdom**, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*
 4. Free from sexual addictions. Does not view pornography in any form and maintains a pure mind.

4. Committed – Teachers and Worship Team Members.

- Tenants of Faith - Must practice, adhere, and agree with the tenants of faith as laid out in AHC bylaws.
- Commitment – Teachers and Worship Team Members must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings and prayer. Must be teachable, committed and loyal to Senior Pastors vision and authority to the Associate Pastors, Elders and Deacons in your chain of command.
- Required to be present when scheduled. A no show without notification may result in being removed from schedule.

Teachers:

- Recruitment – Coordinators interviews and approves all positions with the Executive Pastor being informed.
- Teachers and anyone dealing with the Youth or Children’s Departments are required to undergo background checks before they can minister to any children. Those already serving will be given time to comply.
- Teachers are required to have been faithful as a doer in the Children’s ministry for at least 3 months.
- Supporting Scripture, James 3:1 - *Not many of you should presume to be **teachers**, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*
 1. Must have enough Bible knowledge to be able to refute false doctrine.
 2. Rightly divide the word of truth - 2 Timothy 2:15: “*Be **diligent** to present yourself **approved to God**, a worker who **does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**”*
 3. Teachers should be well prepared in advance to teach their lesson
 4. Teachers should conduct themselves in a way as to be a godly role model that points people to a relationship with Jesus Christ.
 5. Teachers should not hesitate to ask for scriptural guidance from their Coordinators first than from an Elders and than their Pastor.

Worship Team Members:

- Recruitment – Worship coordinator interviews and the Executive Pastor approves all positions with the Senior Pastor being informed.
- You must have been coming to A.H.C. for at least 3 months (cumulative or consecutive) to be eligible to serve on the worship team.

5. Community - Doers

- Tenants of Faith - Must practice, adhere, and agree with the tenants of faith as laid out in AHC bylaws.
- Attendance – Expected to be present when scheduled. If Doer cannot fulfill their commitment they should notify the Coordinator as soon as possible. A no show without notification may result in being removed from monthly schedule.
- Commitment – Teachable, committed and loyal to Senior Pastors vision and authority to the Coordinators of the ministry you are serving.
- Doers and anyone dealing with the Youth or Children’s Departments are required to undergo background checks before they can minister to any children. Those already serving will be given time to comply.
- Recruitment – Coordinators interviews and approves with the Executive Pastor being informed.

Tenets of Faith & Doctrine

The Abundant Harvest Church accepts the Scripture as the revealed will of God, the all sufficient rule of faith and practice, and for the purpose of maintaining general unity, adopts these statements as fundamental truths and doctrine:

SCRIPTURE: We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. The Bible is a revelation from God, to man, by the Holy Spirit and is the infallible rule of faith and conduct. It is true, final, and eternal. It is the total council of God for the salvation of mankind. 1 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; Hebrews 4:12

TRIUNE GODHEAD: We believe the triune Godhead is comprised of three separate and distinct personalities, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each are eternally self-existent, self-revealed, and function as one in agreement, in purpose, in goal, and in will. 1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19

- **GOD THE FATHER:** We believe God the Father is the creator and sustainer of all things. In love, He created the universe to respond to Him. He created man in His own image for fellowship.
- **GOD THE SON:** We believe Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh, begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. In the flesh, He was all God and all Man. We believe He died both spiritually and physically for our sins. He is able to redeem all mankind because death was defeated through His resurrection. We believe He is seated at the right hand of the God the Father as High Priest and advocate of those who receive Him. Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; Romans 4:24; Ephesians 1:20; 4:8; Colossians 1:18; 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; Revelations 1:15
- **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT:** The Scripture ascribes to the Holy Spirit the acts and attributes of an intelligent being. As an instrumental segment of the triune Godhead, He guides, knows, moves, gives information, commands, forbids, sends forth and reproves. He indwells the New Covenant Believer and can be sinned against. Genesis 1:26-31; Mark 3:29; John 16:8, 13; Acts 7:51; 10:19; 13:2,4; 16:6; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 2:11; 12; Ephesians 4:30

MAN'S FALL: We believe man (Adam) was created in the image of God. As a direct result of Adam's voluntary transgression, every person born into this world enters it with a fallen sinful nature and is depraved. Genesis 1:26-31; 3:1-24; Romans 3:25; 5:12-21

THE SALVATION OF MAN: We believe God sent Jesus Christ as the Savior for all mankind. Through the Savior's shed blood on the cross, He became a substitute for every person, who by faith, accepts Him as their personal Savior. We believe all that receive Him through faith, not works, are Born Again; and are members of the family of God and the body of Christ. The inward evidence to the believer of his salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit. The outward evidence is a lifestyle of holiness. John 3:1-18; 5:24; 10:7-28; Romans 8:16; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 John 3:8; 5:11, 13

THE CHURCH: We believe the church is the body of Christ. Each believer, born in the Spirit, is an essential part of the general assembly and Church of the First Born, who are written in heaven. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22; 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:23

BAPTISM IN WATER: We believe in baptism by immersion as an ordinance of the church. Each member of the body of Christ should be baptized, but it is a not requirement to be born again. Baptism is an outward sign of what God has already done in an individual's life. It also serves as a testimony to all that the person now belongs to Jesus. Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:38; 16:33; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12

THE LORD’S SUPPER: We believe the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of the church. It commemorates the death of our Lord and is done in remembrance of Him. It is an outward sign of our participation in Him until He returns. Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

GIFT’S OF THE SPIRIT: We believe in the manifestation and operation of the nine gifts of the Spirit, listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. We believe they are for public and private use, but they are to be judged and operated under the guidance and correction of the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 2:15; 14:29; 1 John 4:1

BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT: We believe the promise from the Father to the believer is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The physical sign of this is speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:2-6; 1 Corinthians 12:1-32

DIVINE HEALING: By the power of God, through the prayer of faith, the physical body can be healed. Healing is provided for in the redemptive work of Christ and available to all that believe. Isaiah 53:3-5; Matthew 8:17; Mark 16:18; James 5:25; 1 Peter 2:24

LAYING ON OF HANDS: We believe the laying on of hands is a biblical practice. In Mark 10:13-16, Jesus practiced it as a blessing. We believe and practice the laying on of hands for infant dedications, for healing, to confer offices and to receive and cultivate the anointing. Mark 5:22-31,41; Acts 6:2-6; 28:8; 1 Timothy 4:14

FINANCIAL SUPPORT: We believe scripture requires believers to support the programs and needs of the church through tithes and offerings, in proportion to and as the Lord prospers them. Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-8

TOTAL PROSPERITY:

- Spiritual: John 3:3, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 10:9-10
- Mentally: Isaiah 26:3; 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 12:1-2 Physically: Divine Healing – Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24
- Financially: Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Malachi 3:10; 2 John 1:2; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-10
- Socially: Proverbs 3:4

COUNSELING: We believe a Christian can seek counseling from a Pastor or any leader designated by the Pastor. This can be for advice, direction, resolution, or guidance. The foundation of counseling will be derived from the Scripture. Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6

CHURCH DISCIPLINE: We believe in church discipline administered in a spirit of meekness, love and confidentially. The purpose of such discipline is restoration. Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1
THE STEPS OF DISCIPLINE ARE:

1. A one on one private meeting to seek a resolution.
2. A private meeting with a witness to seek a resolution.
3. As a last resort, exposure to the church leading to restoration or separation. **Please see Disciplinary/Restoration Policy found at Section 4.1 for more details.**

SEXUALITY: We believe that God created sex for the pleasure of humanity; however, the scripture does govern sexual behavior. We believe sex is only undefiled in the heterosexual marriage bed. Genesis 1:27-28; Hebrews 13: 4. Sexual sins include but are not limited to:

- Fornication – Sex before marriage – Acts 15:20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-9; 7:1-2; Ephesians 5:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- Homosexual – Sex between two people of the same sex – Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24-28
- Adultery – Sex with a partner other than one’s legal heterosexual spouse – Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Proverbs 5:32-33; Matthew 5:28; 19:19
- Bigamy – Having more than one heterosexual spouse at a time
- Pornography – Of all kinds, lewdness and uncleanness
- Elective Surgical procedures designed to change or alter one’s physical body to that of the other gender (male to female or female to male). Galatians 5:19-20

RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH: We believe Jesus Christ the Blessed Hope is coming again. The dead in Christ shall be resurrected and the living saints translated and caught up together to meet Him in the air. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Titus 2:13

LAKE OF FIRE: We believe everyone who has not accepted the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal separation from the Godhead. The beast, the false prophet, the devil, his angels and all others whose name is not found in the Book of Life, shall be consigned to a second death in the Lake of Fire which burns with brimstone and is eternal punishment. Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43-47; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelations 19:20; 20:10-15

MILLENNIAL REIGN OF JESUS: We believe our Lord Jesus Christ, along with His saints, will return from heaven to Earth to rule and reign for 1,000 years. After this reign, there shall be a new heaven and earth. 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 19:11-16;

Disciplinary/Restoration Policy

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Scripture is clear that those who claim to follow Christ are to be separate from the world around them in their mindset, lifestyle and their conduct.

- ◆ *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” John 14:21*
- ◆ *... “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not.” Romans 6:2-3*
- ◆ *“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”. Galatians 5:24*
- ◆ *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification...” 1 Thessalonians 4:3*
- ◆ *... “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” 1 Peter 2:9*
- ◆ *“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8*

Jesus requires all Christians to be disciples. As the word suggests, this lifelong process requires discipline - a matter of learning, training, and knowledge. Webster's Dictionary explains that discipline is "training that corrects, molds, and perfects...the moral character." Scripture teaches that there are times when a Christian can wander so far from their calling as a disciple, that it is the responsibility of the church to administer corrective discipline to hopefully correct the error in that Christian's behavior/lifestyle.

- ◆ *Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you...”*
- ◆ *Luke 14:26-27,33: “Whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple...”*

Paul discusses specific instances of the application of church discipline: at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; II Corinthians 2:5-11) and at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:19-20). Discipline in the New Testament church was taken seriously and was a practical matter, not just a theoretical one.

The purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and the glorification of the Lord. When a sinning believer is rebuked and he turns from his sin and is forgiven, he is won back into fellowship.

The goal of church discipline, then, is not to throw people out of the church or to feed the self-righteous pride of those who administer the discipline. It is not to embarrass people or to exercise authority and power in some unbiblical manner. The purpose is to restore a sinning believer to holiness and bring him or her back into a pure relationship within the assembly. (2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

The Scripture explains two main purposes of discipline:

- ◆ **For the Individual:** to bring those who are in sin back into proper relationship with God.
“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” James 5:19-20 (see also Galatians 6:1)
- ◆ **For the Community:** to protect the church from the deception of sin.

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-4, 19-20; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:10-11;)

3. 2

The church desires repentance for all people. Discipline is directed towards...

- ◆ Those who are involved in activities that are defined by the Scripture as immoral or sinful:
"...you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." 1 Corinthians 5:11
- ◆ Those who are responsible for significant disruptions of order within the church:
"Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him." Titus 3:10
- ◆ Those who spread teachings contrary to Tenets of Faith, which is the understanding of the Scriptures as we at AHC believes and teaches.
"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them." Romans 16:17 (Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 5:6-7)

The issue of church discipline regards those in the church who willfully live in an ongoing lifestyle of sin, refusing to change and repent.

- ◆ *"We know that whoever is born of God does not (continue to) sin..."* 1 John 5:18
- ◆ *"If anyone loves Me he will keep my word."* John 14:23, 24 (the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God)
- ◆ *"He who says, 'I know him,' and does not keep His commands is a liar"* 1 John 2:3-4 (also 1 John 3:6,9)
- ◆ *"If we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"* Hebrews 10:26

In the issue of willful, habitual sin, church discipline is to be applied according to the Biblical principals, not cultural standards or religious tradition. Romans 13:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:31; 5:5; Revelation 21:8; 22:14-15 are among the many passages that clearly teach about unacceptable behavior on the part of Christians.

Jesus provides a model of church discipline in Matthew 18:15-18:

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector"

A.H.C.'s order of Church discipline is modeled after Jesus' instructions:

Step 1. If a church member is clearly sinning as defined by Scripture, an appropriate member of the church should lovingly and privately confront him/her with the issue. Jesus said, "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private" Here, an individual believer is to go to a sinning brother privately and confront him in a spirit of humility and gentleness. This confrontation involves clearly exposing his sin so that he is aware of it and calling him to repentance. If the sinning brother repents in response to the private confrontation, that brother is forgiven and restored. See Galatians 6:1

Step 2. If the confronted person refuses to change, then she/he must be confronted by a group of two or three, preferably including a pastor or elder. If this small group is unsuccessful and did not include the pastor, they should seek guidance from the pastor, who may find it necessary to confront the person directly. The presence of additional witnesses is as much a protection for the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. After all, a biased person could erroneously say, "Well, I tried to confront him, but he's unrepentant." It would be presumptuous to think that one person could make that ultimate determination, especially if he was the one

who had been sinned against. The witnesses are needed to confirm whether there is a heart of repentance or one of indifference or rejection. Such a report provides the basis for further action because the situation has been verified beyond the report of one individual.

3. 3

Step 3. If the sinning brother refuses to listen and respond to the confrontation of the witnesses after a period of time, those witnesses are then to tell it to the church. The pastors and elders of AHC will not carry out the third or fourth stage of church discipline until they are absolutely certain that the erring believer has truly sinned, is continuing to sin, and that he has refused to repent when appropriately confronted. If the person refuses to repent than the situation is made known publicly, before the entire assembly, or through a fellowship group in which the person is known. The third step is to clearly indicate to the congregation that they are to pursue the person aggressively and plead with him to repent before the fourth step becomes necessary. That crucial and potent procedure often draws the sinner to repentance and obedience. If repentance does take place, the sinning believer is forgiven and restoration process is started.

If step 3 is deemed as necessary the following policies will apply:

- ◆ This step will be determined by the Senior Pastor with the input of the council of Pastors and Elders.
- ◆ This step is not necessary when the individual/s repents and changes are made to their behavior.
- ◆ The motive of this step should never be to bring humiliation. The motive is to bring repentance and restoration to the sinning believer in a spirit of love and humility.
- ◆ If this step is deemed as necessary the only information that will be shared with the congregation is the information relevant to the congregation. Many details need not be announced.

Step 4. The fourth and final step in the process of church discipline is ostracism (separation from the body of believers, the church). If a sinning believer refuses to listen even to the church, he/she is to be ostracized from the fellowship. Jesus said, “Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer”. The term “Gentile” was primarily used of non-Jews who held to their traditional paganism and had no part in the covenant, worship, or social life of the Jews. On the other hand, a “tax-gatherer” was an outcast from the Jews by choice, having become a traitor to his own people. Jesus’ use of these terms doesn’t mean that the church is to treat these people badly. It simply means that when a professing believer refuses to repent, the church is to treat him as if he were outside of the fellowship. They are not to let him associate and participate in the blessings and benefits of the Christian assembly.

When a man in the Corinthian church refused to forsake a sexual relationship with his stepmother, the apostle Paul commanded that the man be removed from their midst (1 Cor. 5:13). The believers were not even to share a meal with him (1 Cor. 5:11), for dining with someone was symbolic of a hospitable and cordial fellowship. The one who is persistently unrepentant is to be totally ostracized from the fellowship of the church and treated like an outcast, not a brother.

As far as the welfare of the church is concerned, the purpose of putting the brother out is to protect the purity of the fellowship. The necessity of this step is to prevent a little leaven from leavening the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6, Galatians 5:9), to warn the assembly of the seriousness of sin (1 Tim. 5:20), and to give a testimony of righteousness to a watching world.

But as far as the welfare of the brother himself is concerned, the purpose of the ostracism is not to punish but to awaken, and it must therefore be done in humble love and never in a spirit of self-righteous superiority (2 Thess. 3:15).

When a church has done everything it can to bring a sinning member back to purity of life but is unsuccessful, that individual is to be left to his sin and his shame. The command not to have fellowship or even social contact with the unrepentant brother does not exclude all contact. When there is an opportunity to admonish him and try to call him back, the opportunity should be taken. In fact, such opportunities should be sought. But the contact should be for the purpose of admonishment and restoration and no other.

When all else fails and there is no repentance, the person must be asked not to attend, until she/he has made substantial progress in correcting the situation. The Senior Pastor with council of the elders will determine the reinstatement of an individual.

3.4

(Substantial progress in most cases may include not only correction of physical circumstances, but a period of counseling and accountability under the guidance of the pastoral staff to substantiate repentance, spiritual, emotional, and mental change, as well as a physical change in the circumstances.)

Because church discipline requires the utmost in sensitivity, discretion and Christian maturity, discipline should be a matter entrusted to the pastor and elders. The elders have been appointed to serve as lay ministers for the body, based on their Christian maturity and leadership. Church discipline cases often involve sensitive details that do not need to be revealed to the entire church body. Therefore, elders and pastors are trusted to be WISE of whom they chose to speak to, and what they say in regards to the matters of Church Discipline.

What church discipline is not:

- ◆ Church discipline is not a way to get revenge or to cause embarrassment; it is an act of love and humility.
- ◆ Church discipline is never physical; it addresses the spirit.
- ◆ Church discipline is not a matter for those outside the church (1 Corinthians 5:9); it is designed for the attendees of the local church and is enacted by that church alone.
- ◆ Church discipline is not optional; it may seem like an unpleasant task, but a church without discipline would be in far worse condition: *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”* Hebrews 12:11
- ◆ Church discipline is not to be initiated in anger; the church should discipline with tolerance, patience, and gentle correction (Galatians 6:1).
- ◆ Church discipline is not to protect the reputation of the church; it is to protect the corporate holiness and also to express the truth of personal holiness to the individuals within the church.
- ◆ Church discipline is not a matter of style, method, or procedure; it is a matter of purity and orderliness within the church.

Every matter of church discipline will depend upon a number of factors, like their attitude, severity, repetition, and duration of the problem. Therefore, to some extent, each instance of church discipline will call for different responses from the pastor, elders, and church members. Each case is to be handled with the utmost love, respect and discretion and always according to clear Biblical standards.

Some of the information used came from “Grace Community Church Discipline”, of 13248 Roscoe Boulevard, Sun Valley, California 91352.

Some of the information used came from “King’s Way Christian Fellowship & Biblical Church Discipline”

All scripture quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

Scriptures on the topic of church Discipline

Proverbs 15:10, 12: “Harsh discipline *is* for him who forsakes the way, *And* he who hates correction will die.”

I Corinthians 11:32: “But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord”

II Corinthians 7:8-10-12: “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow lead to repentance”

I Timothy 5:17-22: “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”

II Timothy 2:25-26: “Correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance”

II Timothy 3:16: “All scripture...is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction....”

II Timothy 4:2: “Preach the word convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”

Titus 1:10-16 (13&16): “Therefore rebuke them sharply... That they may be sound in the faith”

Titus 2:15: “Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise (depreciate) you.”

Hebrews 12:5-9: “For whom the Lord loves He chastens.”

Hebrews 13:17: “Obey those who rule over you and be submissive for they watch out for your souls.”

Jude 22-23: “On some have compassion...but others save with fear pulling them out of the fire.

Revelation 3:19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”

3.5

Restoration Process

We believe the Bible is clear that we should confront sin regardless of the person’s position and also believe that the restoration process should be applied differently based on the following conditions:

1. Type of sin. (example: stealing as compared to adultery)
 - a. Family Issues - Abuse of any kind toward a member of ones family, not martial problems such as a marriages needing counseling.
 - b. Moral Issues – This includes all forms of sins that can lead to spiritual death. (1 John 5:16,17; James 1:15)
 - c. Character/Integrity Issues - Such as stealing etc.
2. How long the person has been saved. (Example: A New Believers who does not know the Bible as compared to a person who has been born again for years.)

Note: *A new believer will be taught with love what the Word of God says about their situation. They will in no way be purposefully pushed out of the body of Christ.*
3. The position of person in the ministry.

Once the sin has been confronted and the person admits and repents of their sin the restoration process will begin. The Senior Pastor or Executive Pastor will then determine a custom restoration plan based on the three conditions listed above and assign a mentor. The general restoration process is as follows.

1. A Pastor or Elder is assigned to the believer during the whole process as an accountability mentor. The mentor will meet with the believer at least once a week either in person or over the phone during the assigned period. Texting, e-mails etc. do not qualify as meeting together although they are encouraged as daily check-ups.
2. The believer will either have a probationary period or, depending on the situation, will be asked to take a break from their ministry position (not as discipline but to help them concentrate while they are working through their difficulties) or both. During this time the mentor will teach the believer specific Scriptures and methods to help them through their time of difficulty, pray with them and be by their side during this process.

Note: *Each situation is different and therefore specific probationary and sabbatical (break) time periods are not listed but are based on each individual believers need.*