



General Handbook

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Abundant Harvest Church
510 New Bloomfield Road
P.O. Box 155, Duncannon, PA 17020
717.834.5444 • www.aharvest.org
www.facebook.com/ahcduncannon

General Handbook

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Introduction

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

AHC's Vision

Making, equipping, and inspiring disciples

AHC's Mission

Making, equipping, and inspiring disciples who **COMMIT** to obeying Christ, **CULTIVATE** their relationship with Christ, **CONNECT** others to Christ, and **CARE** for one another.

The 4 C's are what it means to be a disciple



COMMIT to obeying Christ

- Faithfulness in action, doers of the Word
- Serving within the church and beyond its walls
- Giving tithes and offerings

CULTIVATE your relationship with Christ

- Quiet time, seeking God in prayer, worship, Bible study
- Mentoring, by others, to others
- Church engagement

CONNECT others to Christ

- One-on-one witnessing, friendship
- Connection Groups, inviting the unchurched
- Missions, serving and/or giving

CARE for one another

- Hospitality, pursuing relationship
- Compassion, supporting those in crisis
- Encouragement, calling others to life

AHC's Guiding Principles

1. We consider each individual's gifts and abilities to be God-ordained for the purpose of serving His Kingdom both inside and outside of the local church body.
2. It is our calling to confirm, develop, and equip individuals who have the callings of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher, and evangelist so that they can be released to their God-given purpose to bless the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11).
3. We believe that committed service to a local church is an essential element in maturing one's gifts and callings.
4. We strive to build long lasting relationships that will assist in the development of one's gifts and callings.
5. We view ourselves and other churches as members of one team, each following a different vision from the same Lord, and, as such, we will not allow a spirit of competition to arise between us.
6. We will give of ourselves and our resources with sacrifice, having learned that sacrifice is essential for the advancement of the Kingdom as a whole.
7. We strive to function with a father's heart, desiring to mature sons and daughters to live by Kingdom principles. (1 Corinthians 4:15)
8. We strive to remain outward focused on the Kingdom of God as a whole and not merely inward focused on the local church body.
9. As an apostolic local church, we are willing to address the relevant cultural issues that affect the body of Christ and our society.
10. It must be understood that the execution of the apostolic plan is subject to the leading and timing of the Holy Spirit as He unfolds the will and purpose of God to us over time.

Leadership Structure¹

Overview

Inner Circle

All Pastors

Core

Elders

Pastors' Spouses

Corporate Board

Outer Core

Coordinators

Leader of any Ministry

Committed

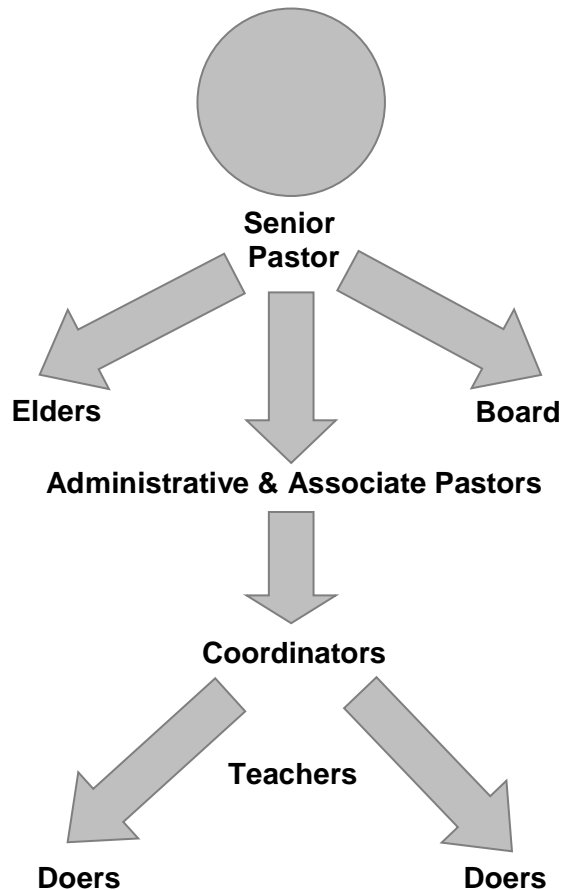
Teachers

Worship Team Members

Ushers

Community

Doers



Supporting Scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:12-21, 24-27

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."²⁴ ... 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."

¹ Adopted 2009

Position Definitions

Senior Pastor/Elder

- Leader of the local church under the head, which is Jesus Christ.
- Establishes the vision of the church.
- Sets forth the goals of the church and works with the Administrative and Associate Pastors to accomplish those goals.
- Directs the spiritual aspects of the church.
- The Pastor is the under shepherd of the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 5:2-4)

Administrative Pastor

- Heart of the body.
- Responsible for the operation of ministries in the church and for helping individual ministries accomplish their goals.

Associate Pastors

- Vessels that pump life through the body.
- Responsible for setting and achieving the goals of the ministries they oversee.
- Responsible for the mentorship and welfare of the workers involved in their ministries.

Elders

- Arm of the church.
- Help Pastors make spiritual decisions and disciple believers.

Board Members

- Arm of the church.
- Assist the Senior Pastor in making financial and business decisions.

Coordinators

- Hips of the body, supporting the upper body and directing the legs and feet where they should go.
- Responsible for the operation of the ministry assigned to them and oversight of the Teachers and Doers under their authority.

Teachers

- Legs of the ministry.
- Instruct those under their charge, bringing them to a deeper and fuller understanding of God and His Word, as well as how to live a holy life pleasing to the Lord.

Doers

- Hands and feet of the ministry, helping the church move forward.

Inner Circle: All Pastors

Tenets of Faith

Must practice, adhere to, and agree with the tenets of faith adopted by the Board and outlined in this General Handbook.

Commitment

Pastors must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings, and prayer, and must be committed to the Senior Pastor's vision and authority.

Recruitment

Senior and Administrative Pastor interview, and Senior Pastor approves, all positions.

Supporting Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ² 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**; ³ [8] **not given to wine**, [9] **not violent**, [10] **not greedy for money**, but [11] **gentle**, [12] **not quarrelsome**, [13] **not covetous**; 4 [14] **one who rules his own house well**, [15] **having his children in submission with all reverence** ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ [16] **not a novice**, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a [17] **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 spouse 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:** Possesses scriptural understanding and can patiently impart that understanding to others.
8. **Not given to wine:** Not addicted to alcoholic beverages; 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 quarrelsome:** Not argumentative.
13. **Not covetous:** Not greedy.
14. **One who rules his own house well:** Has a stable marriage and family life.
15. **Having his children in submission with all reverence:** Properly disciplines his/her children according to the Scriptures, teaching them and admonishing them in the fear of God. (This is for the Pastors and **not** for the actions of their children.) Ephesians 6:4
16. **Not a novice:** Mature in the faith; not someone who has been Born Again recently.
17. **Good testimony:** Has a good reputation in the community and the church (**after** conversion).
18. **Free from sexual addictions:** Does not view pornography in any form and maintains a pure mind.

Core: Elders, Corporate Board Members, Pastors' Spouses

Tenets of Faith

Must practice, adhere to, and agree with the tenets of faith adopted by the Board and outlined in this General Handbook.

Commitment

Core Members must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings, and prayer. Must be teachable, committed, and loyal to the Senior Pastor's vision and authority and to the Administrative and Associate Pastors in their chain of command.

Recruitment

The Senior Pastor appoints Elders and Board Members with recommendations from the Inner Circle and Core members. Elder and Board Members positions are one-year appointments that will be reevaluated at the end of each term. Senior and Administrative Pastor interviews, and Senior Pastor approves, all positions. Required to have been attending AHC for one year unless otherwise approved by the Senior Pastor.

Responsibilities

Elders. Assist Pastors in making spiritual decisions, discipling church attendees, and carrying out other tasks as needed to assist in the functioning of the ministry. Must have enough Bible knowledge to be able to refute false doctrine.

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

Supporting Scripture: Titus 1:5-6

⁵ 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—⁶ 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 spouse at a time, not a bigamist.
3. **Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination:** Properly disciplines his/her 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.

Outer Core: Coordinators

Tenets of Faith

Must practice, adhere to, and agree with the tenets of faith adopted by the Board and outlined in this General Handbook.

Commitment

Coordinators must be committed to supporting the church through regular tithes, offerings, and prayer. Must be teachable, committed, and loyal to the Senior Pastor's vision and authority and to the Administrative and Associate Pastors, Elders, and Deacons in their chain of command.

Recruitment

Administrative Pastor and another Core Leader interviews, and Senior Pastor approves, all positions. Required to have been attending AHC for six months unless otherwise approved by the Senior Pastor.

Responsibilities

Coordinators are Deacons and have responsibility and oversight authority. Responsible to recruit, interview, mentor, and oversee their team members and keep them accountable by contacting them often and staying involved in their lives. They are leaders on more than just Sundays. Responsible for posting monthly volunteer schedule by the third Sunday of each month.

Notification

All serious problems must be reported to the Administrative Pastor. If in doubt, speak with the Administrative Pastor.

Supporting Scripture: Acts 6:1-4, 7

¹ 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. ² 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. ³ 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; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.... ⁷ 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:** Has a good reputation in the community and in the church (**after** conversion).
2. **Full of the Holy Spirit:** One who is led by and walks in the Spirit. (Galations 5:18)
3. **Wisdom:** Proverbs 9:10: *The **fear** of the **LORD** is the **beginning** of **wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One **is** understanding.*
4. **Free from sexual addictions:** Does not view pornography in any form and maintains a pure mind.

Committed: Teachers and Worship Team Members

Tenets of Faith

Must practice, adhere to, and agree with the tenets of faith adopted by the Board and outlined in this General Handbook.

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 the Senior Pastor's vision and authority and to the Administrative and Associate Pastors, Elders and Deacons in their chain of command.

Recruitment

Teachers. Coordinators interview and approve all positions and inform the Administrative Pastor. Teachers are required to have been faithful **doers** in the Children's ministry for at least three months. Teachers and anyone dealing with the Youth or Children's Departments are required to undergo background checks **before** they can minister to children.

Worship Team Members. Worship coordinator interviews, and Administrative Pastor approves, all positions and informs the Senior Pastor. Individual must have been coming to AHC for at least three months to be eligible to serve on the worship team.

Attendance

Required to be present when scheduled. A no-show without prior notification may result in being removed from the schedule.

Supporting Scripture: James 3:1

Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

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 as Godly role models that point young people to a relationship with Jesus Christ.
5. Teachers should not hesitate to ask for Scriptural guidance, first from their Coordinator, then from an Elder, and then from a Pastor.

Community: Doers

Tenets of Faith

Must practice, adhere to, and agree with the tenets of faith adopted by the Board and outlined in this General Handbook.

Commitment

Teachable, committed, and loyal to Senior Pastor's vision and authority and to the Coordinator of the ministry being served.

Recruitment

Coordinators interview and approve and inform the Administrative Pastor. Doers dealing with the Youth or Children's Departments are required to undergo background checks **before** they can minister to children.

Attendance

Expected to be present when scheduled. If Doers cannot fulfill their commitment, they should notify their Coordinator as soon as possible. A no-show without prior notification may result in being removed from the monthly schedule.

Dress Code

As all of the above positions involve *first impression ministries*, individuals serving are expected to be well groomed, neat, and clean, and dressed non-provocatively. When scheduled to serve, individuals will be required to abide by the dress code defined below.

- Attire should be nice, neat, casual, and modest.
- Shorts and jeans are allowed but should be in very good condition, not faded, and with no holes or strings.
- Only **Christian** T-shirts are permitted, and they should be in very good condition, not severely wrinkled, torn, or faded.
- Body piercing will be permitted, provided it is tasteful, modest, and relatively inconspicuous. Appropriateness will be determined by the Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.
- Men are not permitted to wear tank tops or sweat pants.
- Women should be tastefully dressed. No miniskirts, tank tops, sweatpants, or revealing shirts should be worn. Skirts should be at or below the knees.

Tenets of Faith and Doctrine

Abundant Harvest Church accepts the Scriptures as the revealed will of God and 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 counsel 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, and self-revealed, and they 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 is all God and all Man. We believe He died 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 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

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 1:2; Mark 3:29; John 16:7-8, 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 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

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We believe in church discipline administered in a spirit of meekness, love, and confidentiality. 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.

Refer to the full Disciplinary/Restoration Policy in this Handbook.

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

GIFTS 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 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 in the redemptive work of Christ and is available to all who believe.

Isaiah 53:3-5; Matthew 8:17; Mark 16:18; James 5:14-15; 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

SEXUALITY/MARRIAGE

We believe that God created sex for the pleasure of humanity; however, the Scripture does govern sexual behavior. We believe sex is undefiled only in the heterosexual marriage bed. Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Abundant Harvest Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the Pastors and staff of Abundant Harvest Church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Any wedding performed at Abundant Harvest Church is considered to be a Christian Worship Service and therefore agrees with our Tenets of Faith. 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

Homosexuality. 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 5:1-20; Matthew 5:28; 19:18

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). Genesis 5:2, Psalms 139:14-17, Matthew 19:4

RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

We believe that 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

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 a new Earth. 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 19:11-16

LAKE OF FIRE

We believe that 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 names are not found in the Book of Life shall be consigned to a second death in the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone and is eternal punishment. Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43-47; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15

Disciplinary and Restoration Policies^{2 3}

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

- *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.* John 14:21a
- *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!.* Romans 6:1b-2a
- *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 4:3a
- *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 did not call us to uncleanness, but in 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.

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

Paul discusses specific instances of the application of church discipline at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 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 purposes of church discipline are the spiritual restoration of the fallen attendee and the consequent strengthening of the church and 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 neither to throw people out of the church nor 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).

² Adopted 6/19/2009

³ Sources: *Grace Community Church Discipline*, 13248 Roscoe Boulevard, Sun Valley, California 91352 and *King's Way Christian Fellowship & Biblical Church Discipline*

Two Main Purposes of Discipline

For the Individual: to bring those who are in sin back into proper relationship with God.

¹⁹ *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover 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)

Who Is Subject to Church Discipline

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

- Those who are involved in activities that are defined by the Scriptures as immoral or sinful:

...I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. 1 Corinthians 5:11

- Those who are responsible for significant disruptions of order within the church:

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition. Titus 3:10

- Those who spread teachings contrary to the Tenets of Faith, which is the understanding of the Scriptures that AHC believes and teaches.

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. Romans 16:17 (also 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
- ²³ *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word...”* ²⁴ *He who does not love Me does not keep My words ...* 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 commandments, is a liar.* 1 John 2:4 (also 1 John 3:6)
- *If we sin willfully after we have received 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 Biblical principles, and not to 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:

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ But 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.” ¹⁷ And 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. ¹⁸ “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Order of Church Discipline

AHC’s order of Church discipline is modeled after Jesus’ instructions:

Step 1. If a church attendee is clearly sinning as defined by Scripture, an appropriate representative of the church should lovingly and privately confront him/her with the issue. Jesus said, “And if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” 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.

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 she/he has refused to repent when appropriately confronted. If the person refuses to repent, then 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 the restoration process is begun.

If step 3 is deemed 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 repents and changes are made to her/his 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 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 like a heathen and a tax collector.” The term *heathen* 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 collector* 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 Corinthians 5:13). The believers were not even to share a meal with him (1 Corinthians 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 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9), to warn the assembly of the seriousness of sin (1 Timothy 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 Thessalonians 3:15).

When a church has done everything it can but is unsuccessful in bringing a sinning Christian back to purity of life, 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 AHC until she/he has made substantial progress in correcting the situation. (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.) The Senior Pastor, with counsel of the elders, will determine the reinstatement of an individual.

Because church discipline requires the utmost in sensitivity, discretion, and Christian maturity, discipline should be a matter entrusted to the Senior Pastor/Elder with the advisement of the Elder Team. 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** in whom they chose to speak to, and in what they say in regards to, 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 5:9-11); 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.
Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to 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, including the attitude of the offender and the severity, repetition, and duration of the problem. Therefore, to some extent, each instance of church discipline will call for different responses from the Senior Pastor/Elder, Elder Team, and church attendees. Each case is to be handled with the utmost love, respect and discretion and always according to clear Biblical standards.

Additional Scriptures on Church Discipline

- ¹⁰ *Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, And he who hates correction will die. ¹² A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, Nor will he go to the wise. Proverbs 15:10, 12*
- *But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord. 1 Corinthians 11:32a*
- ⁸ *For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. ¹² Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you. 2 Corinthians 7:8-12*
- ¹⁹ *Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. ²¹ I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. ²² Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. 1 Timothy 5:19-22*
- *Correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:25-26*
- *All scripture ... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16*
- *Preach the word ... convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:2*
- *Therefore rebuke them sharply... that they may be sound in the faith. Titus 1:10-16 (esp. v.13, 16)*
- *Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise [depreciate] you. Titus 2:15*
- *For whom the Lord loves He chastens. Hebrews 12:5-9*
- *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls... Hebrews 13:17*
- *On some have compassion ... but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. Jude 22-23a*
- *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Revelation 3:19*

Restoration Process for Church Attendees

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

Type of sin (example: stealing as compared to adultery)

Family Issues: Abuse of any kind toward a member of one's family (not marital problems such as a marriages needing counseling).

Moral Issues: This includes all forms of sin that can lead to spiritual death. (1 John 5:16-17; James 1:15)

Character/Integrity Issues: Stealing, etc.

How long the person has been saved. (Example: A new believer 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.

The position of the person in the ministry.

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

1. A Pastor or Elder is assigned to the believer as an accountability mentor throughout the process. 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 have either 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. 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 the restoration process.

Note: Each situation is different and, therefore, specific probationary and sabbatical (break) time periods are not defined but will be based on each individual believer's need.

Restoration Process for Elders and Pastors

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

Type of sin (example: stealing as compared to adultery)

Family Issues: Abuse of any kind toward a member of one's family (not marital problems such as a marriages needing counseling).

Moral Issues: This includes all forms of sin that can lead to spiritual death. (1 John 5:16-17; James 1:15)

Character/Integrity Issues: Stealing, etc.

The position of the person in the ministry.

Once the sin has been confronted and the person admits their sin and repents, the restoration process will begin. The Senior Elder will determine a custom restoration plan based on the conditions listed above. The **general** restoration process is as follows.

1. The Elder/Pastor will be required to go before the Elder Team to reveal his or her sin in order for the restoration process to begin (1 Timothy 5:19-21). All Pastors, whether serving as Elders or not, may be required to go before the general body to begin the restoration process according to the Elder Team's decision. The Senior Pastor/Elder will be the accountability mentor for Pastors. The entire Elder Team will be the Senior Elder's accountability mentor and the majority will determine the direction concerning his restoration.
2. The Senior Elder is the accountability mentor for all Elders. The Senior Elder will meet with the Elder 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.
3. The Elder/Pastor 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. 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 the restoration process.

Note: Each situation is different and, therefore, specific probationary and sabbatical (break) time periods are not defined but will be based on each individual believer's need.