



# **ELDERS' POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Revised 2014**

# **THE BOARD OF ELDERS OF THE UNION CHURCH OF GUATEMALA**

## **Policies and Procedures**

Adopted: January 1966  
Revised: 1969, 1971, 1976, 1979,  
1985, 1987, 2006, 2009 & 2014

The Elders of the Union Church subscribe to this statement prayerfully and humbly, recognizing their own unworthiness and their dependence upon Almighty God and upon His Son Jesus Christ, whose church this is, and seeking the guidance of His word and His Spirit.

By means of this statement the Elders pledge themselves to the greater service of the Union Church. This set of Policies and Procedures is not intended to limit or stereotype the work of the Board of Elders, but rather to preserve in useful form for the future the vision and experience of the Elders past and present. It is intended that any Policies and Procedures contained herein that prove unwise, impractical, or cumbersome shall be deleted or amended. On the other hand, it is to be hoped that new ideas and projects, as they prove their worth in the service of the church, shall not be lost in the minutes and files, but shall be incorporated into this permanent instrument.

This statement is a supplement to those provisions prescribed in the CONSTITUTION and the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS of the Union Church of Guatemala. This statement seeks to specify more particularly both the duties of the Board of Elders, and the individual duties of Elders. See especially 9.1 of the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS.

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## **ARTICLE A: OFFICERS**

### 1. Chairman

Two months before the annual congregational meeting, the Board shall elect from among its members a Board Chair for the next calendar year. The Chairman shall preside at the meetings of the Board, attend to its correspondence, execute (or delegate) its decisions, and prepare its reports in addition to the duties described in the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS, S 7.3.

### 2. Vice-Chairman

Two months before the annual congregational meeting, the Board shall elect from among its members a Vice-Chairman for the next calendar year, who shall substitute for the Chairman in his absence.

### 3. Secretary

Two months before the annual congregational meeting, the Board shall elect from among its members a Secretary for the next calendar year, who shall prepare and file the minutes of all the meetings of the Board.

### 4. Elder Oversight of Christian Education

At the beginning of each church fiscal year, the Board shall elect from among Members an Elder who will be responsible for oversight of the Christian Education program.

### 5. Method of Election

- Two months before the annual congregational meeting names of potential new Elders will be solicited from the present active board membership by the Chair of the Elder Board.
- Nominated persons must be members of the Union Church of Guatemala.
- Nominated persons must meet the biblical standards as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 *“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

- Approval of new members must be unanimous and in the case that the vote is not unanimous no reason for the no vote shall be required. The vote will be by secret ballot.
- Board approved new members will have their names submitted with the complete slate of new officers to be presented for approval at the annual membership meeting in January of the next year. Approval will be by simple majority.
- Once a person is part of the elder board membership he shall be considered a permanent member until such time as he is disqualified or submits his own resignation as a permanent member.
- The active elder board will be made up of no more than 12 members and not less than 8 (understanding that the moderator is a voting member).
- Active elder board members will serve a three-year term after which they will step down from an active role but will be available as an inactive permanent member of the elder board to serve the church as needed.
- After a one-year absence from the active board, any permanent elder board member, in good standing within the church, may be nominated to resume an active role.
- Elder Board officers for the next calendar year will be chosen by the elder board two months before the annual meeting. This will be by simple majority.

## **ARTICLE B: MEETINGS**

### 1. Regular

The board shall hold regular monthly meetings, which shall occur on the Monday following communion Sunday. A fixed day and hour shall be set by the Board, and notices shall be sent out to the members.

### 2. Special

Special meetings, for specific business, may be held at the call of the Chairman, the Pastor, or any two Elders. The reason for the meeting shall be stated when the call is issued.

3. Attendance

Note shall be made, in the meeting and in the minutes, of those present and absent. Each Elder is expected to attend every meeting of the Board. In the case of expected absence, he shall communicate the same to the Church Secretary or Board Chairman, with reason thereof as far in advance as possible. A majority of the active Elders in country at the time of the meeting shall constitute a quorum at any meeting. In case of no quorum, there shall be no meeting, and the Chairman shall call a meeting at the first convenient date.

4. Absences

In the case of unexcused absences, no more than three in a year shall be allowed before the involved Elder is dismissed from the active elder board. Consideration will be given by the Board as to whether this elder shall continue as an inactive member of the Union Church Elder Board. This decision will be made by simple majority.

## **ARTICLE C: SPIRITUAL INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH**

1. General Conduct

The Board of Elders is charged with the general conduct of persons using the premises of the Church and of groups representing the Church; particularly that there shall be no use of intoxicating beverages, and no wine other than for sacramental purposes; and that there be no gambling or games of chance. It has been the policy since the founding of this church that dancing is not appropriate in the building.

2. Administration of Communion

This Church shall observe open Communion. Regular Communion Services shall be celebrated at times determined by the Board of Elders. Special Communion Services may be celebrated as determined by the Board of Elders. The form of communion shall be determined by the Board of Elders.

3. Church Covenant

The Board of Elders shall undertake to bring before the Congregation from time to time the Church Covenant.

4. Relationship with Church Members

The spiritual welfare of individual church members cannot be separated from the welfare of the church itself, and the Elders shall share with the Minister this task, carrying out as far as possible the responsibilities detailed below:

a. Responsibilities of the Board as a whole

- 1) Appraisal of church programs and care that they are meeting the spiritual needs of the people;
- 2) In emergencies, such as funerals, to communicate with all members of the congregation, when requested to do so by the Minister and to provide other assistance as required.

b. Responsibilities of the individual Elders as well as of the whole Board

- 1) Assisting the Minister in pastoral calling;
- 2) Contacting inactive members to help them feel at home in the church and to encourage them to greater participation, working with the Minister along this line;
- 3) Contacting the sick, lonely and troubled, widows/widowers advising the Minister about these persons.

To facilitate this work, the Church membership may be apportioned among the Elders in convenient groupings.

5. Relations with Other Groups

By other groups is meant groups not already sponsored by or related to the Union Church. The Board of Elders is charged with the decision as to whether the Union Church shall or shall not cooperate with a given group. In all such matters the Board of Elders shall request to be consulted.

Whereas the arrangements for the use of the premises (including scheduling, assignment of rooms, determination of what fees are applicable, and related matters) rest with the Board of Finance and Administration; nevertheless, the Board of Elders shall in each case request to be consulted concerning whether or not to cooperate with the group desiring to use the building. In the case of very short notice, a decision may be made by the special executive committee (the Pastor, Moderator and Elder Board Chairman).

In the decision whether to continue to cooperate with a given group, the following criteria shall be used: the group shall be one whose aim and actions are in keeping with the Kingdom of God and with the spirit and activities of the Union Church. In the case of a religious group, the policy of sponsorship does hold; however, there shall be used the religious criterion of general agreement in Christian beliefs. Concerning Roman Catholics groups, the policy is accepted that there may be cooperation, to the extent of joint meetings, as long as no compromise is made with historic Protestant belief and practices. In the case for request for use of the facility by a secular group, the

decision for approval will be made on a case-by-case basis.

6. Praying for the Sick

- a. When the Minister is available at the time a sick person approaches the Church to request prayer for healing, he shall be given the opportunity to take charge of the proceedings in the manner he prefers, the elders cooperating with him.
- b. When the Minister is not available, and a sufferer initiates a request for prayer and healing in accordance with James 5:14, the elders shall conduct the proceedings in a manner consistent with James 5:14, recognizing that:
  - 1) Respect for the wishes of the sufferer must be honored with regards to the laying on of hands and anointing with oil.
  - 2) Miraculous healing may occur but most often the Lord works through us and through the gifts of modern medicine to bring physical healing.
  - 3) Instances may occur when the elders in attendance feel the situation is more complicated than they are able to deal with and in such cases they may halt the proceedings in order to consult with the pastor as soon as possible.

**ARTICLE D: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

1. Provisions in the CONSTITUTION, Article III, Membership

a. Eligibility:

A person may become a member of this Church by presentation of a letter of demission from any Protestant Church; by solemn affirmation of having been received as a member of a Protestant Church; or by declaration of faith in God through Jesus Christ, and a loyal purpose to work with others through the Church for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

b. Covenant:

The covenant which members of this Church make one with another as is found in the CONSTITUTION.

c. Dual Membership:

If specifically requested, members may affiliate with this congregation without severing their relationship to their home church.

d. Acceptance:

Persons who meet the above conditions shall be received for membership by the Board of Elders.

e. Demission:

- 1) Letter of demission to any other Christian Church, or certificates of good standing, may be given upon approval of the Board of Elders.
- 2) Members leaving Guatemala permanently may be placed by the Board of Elders upon an inactive list, unless they specifically request otherwise; if they should return to Guatemala, they shall be restored to active membership at their own request. Such persons, moreover, shall be eligible to receive letters of demission or certificates of good standing.
- 3) The names of members may be dropped from the roll by action of the Church Council, upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, either for prolonged absence or for manifest lack of sympathy with the aims of the church. If at all practical, the members to be dropped will be visited by not less than two members of the Board of Elders previous to taking any action, in order to determine if such action is deemed advisable or is warranted. Such members may be reinstated by the Council upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.

2. Application for Membership

The Board of Elders shall provide an application form for the use of each prospective member. This form shall include place to indicate: (1) occupation; (2) present church affiliation; (3) assent to the Church Covenant; and (4) category of admission whether by affirmation of faith, reaffirmation, transfer, or dual membership. Applications shall be acted upon at each regular meeting of the Board.

Opportunity shall be provided for a period of instruction and nurture for all prospective members.

3. Orientation of Prospective New Members

The Elders shall conduct a session for orientation of prospective new members. This shall be done for all new members, and the effort shall be made to do so before they unite with the church, or, if that is not feasible, immediately after their reception. The character and formality of the sessions will vary with the number of prospective new members present at a given session.

The content of the orientation sessions shall include at least:

- a. History and organization of the church;
- b. Opportunities for nurture of the spirit;
- c. Avenues of fellowship and service; and
- d. Stewardship.

In addition to the oral briefing, each prospective new member or family shall be given:

printed or mimeographed materials containing the above points,  
as well as copies of the CONSTITUTION,  
the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS,  
a church directory, and  
a current budget.

Attached to these materials shall be for each prospective new member, a questionnaire of his preference of church activities, which he will be urged to fill in and give to the Activities Coordinator.

#### 4. Reception of New Members

Opportunity to unite with the Church shall be provided regularly at the hour of morning worship. An appropriate certificate of membership, signed by the Minister, the Moderator, and the Clerk of the Church, shall be given to each new member at this time. No one shall be received in absentia.

Following the formal reception of new members, arrangements shall be made for their welcome, preferably immediately following the worship service at which they were received.

#### 5. Demission

Requests for letters of demission shall ordinarily be acted upon at the regular meetings of the Board of Elders. In exceptional instances, the Chairman of the Board may obtain approval from the members individually, and appropriate record shall be made in the minutes of the next regular meeting.

## **ARTICLE E: EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH**

### 1. Definition

A primary and urgent task of this Church is to call anyone and everyone to believe in Christ as Savior, to repent and to obey Christ as Lord of all. Christ's claim as Savior and Lord is to be laid on every individual and on the whole of society.

### 2. Responsibility

The Minister and the Board of Elders have the responsibility for leading the Church in performing this task. This service is faithfully rendered only as the Church keeps this task as the goal of all its work, and as its members are led to witness to Christ in their personal contacts and in their family, business and social relationships.

The Board of Elders will be responsible for providing both among themselves, and within the congregation, a regular ministry of visitation of newcomers and prospects. They will also inform the Minister of such persons and families, and cases of spiritual awakening.

## **ARTICLE F: DUTIES IN ABSENCE OF THE MINISTER**

### 1. General

The Board of Elders, in the absence of the Minister, shall assume his spiritual responsibilities, but not administrative tasks such as the church office and the church bulletin.

### 2. Sunday Morning Worship Service

In the absence of the Minister, the Elders shall have charge of the Sunday Morning Worship Service, including pulpit supply, either taking part themselves, or providing suitable ordained or lay participants. Included in the charge shall be the preparation of the draft of the order of service for the Church bulletin. In the absence of the Minister, the supply preacher, whoever he may be, ordained or lay, member or nonmember, shall be offered the customary honorarium.

### 3. Pastoral Services

In the absence of the Minister, the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall be designated as the person to be called in cases of illness or emergency. In prolonged absence of the Minister, the responsibilities of ARTICLE C, section 4 ("Relationship With Church Members") shall be carried on as far as possible; the Chairman of the Board of Elders

shall substitute for the Minister, and the individual Elders shall increase their efforts correspondingly.

## **ARTICLE G: UNION CHURCH ELDERS' DISCRETIONARY FUND**

### 1. The Purpose of the Fund

The Union Church Elders' Discretionary Fund, hereafter referred to as EDF, shall be used to help needy individuals and those organizations whose aims are in harmony with those of the Union Church of Guatemala.

This fund shall not be used for loans, neither to individuals nor to organizations, nor shall it be used for mere handouts to meet the superficial wants of panhandlers.

### 2. Income

The money for this fund shall be derived from those funds designated in the church's annual budget for benevolence, from the special offering that is normally solicited at the conclusion of the monthly communion service, and from donations to the fund by individuals or organizations.

### 3. Administration of the Fund

At its first meeting each year, the Board of Elders shall elect from among its members a Coordinator of the fund as well as a Treasurer.

#### a. The Responsibilities of the Coordinator shall be as follows:

- 1) He shall receive and investigate all requests for financial assistance. It is required that requests be submitted in the form prepared for this purpose.
- 2) He shall submit a report of the requests investigated at the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Elders. Where he is unable to investigate a request, he shall disclose this to the Board. (See 4.1 for Emergency Requests.)
- 3) He shall assure that any allocations approved by the Board shall be received by the intended beneficiary as soon as possible.
- 4) He shall maintain a record of all requests submitted, separating those approved from those denied.
- 5) He shall give a quarterly report to the congregation on how the fund has been used.
- 6) He shall, at the conclusion of his term as Coordinator, pass on all records to his successor.

b. The Responsibilities of the Treasurer shall be as follows:

- 1) He shall receive monthly from the Church Treasurer the check for the amount designated for benevolence.
- 2) He shall coordinate the receipt of the special offering taken on Communion Sunday.
- 3) He shall promptly deposit all benevolence funds in the Union Church Elders' Discretionary Fund bank account.
- 4) He shall issue the check for those requests approved by the Board of Elders, and present them promptly to the Coordinator for ultimate disposition.
- 5) He shall maintain a careful record of all transactions in the ledger provided for the purpose.
- 6) He shall reconcile the monthly bank statement with the ledger.
- 7) He shall submit a report of the current status of the fund at the monthly meeting of the Board of Elders.
- 8) He shall carefully file all monthly bank statements and cancelled check.
- 9) He shall assure that the books are audited once a year by another Elder.
- 10) He shall, at the conclusion of his term as Treasurer, pass on all records to his successor.

c. Minister's Discretionary Fund

The Minister shall be provided with an appropriate sum from the Union Church Elders' Discretionary Fund to be used at his discretion to alleviate special needs that he may encounter.

4. Other Practices of the Fund

- a. No allocations from the fund shall be made except at the regular or specially called meetings of the Board of Elders, except as allowed below in Article G.4.f. by the standing sub-committee.
- b. When a request pertaining to an Elder's personal ministry is being considered, the Elder shall not be present for that discussion.

- c. The fund may be used to meet emergency needs of individuals within the congregation.
- d. The congregation shall be informed quarterly of the existence of this fund and of the way it has been used.
- e. The Treasurer, together with the Coordinator, shall submit a report of all allocations to the Chairman of the Board of Elders, who shall include it in his annual report to the Congregation.
- f. The elders also agree to the existence of a standing sub-committee made up of the Pastor, the church Moderator, and the elder Chairman, who will be able to decide on emergency benevolence giving during the month between board meetings in an amount not to exceed \$750. For emergency benevolence requests exceeding \$750, approval may be given between board meetings by a majority of the active elder board members via phone or email or other electronic means.
- g. The elders have agreed that no more than \$2000 may be allocated to any individual or organization during one calendar year. However, the Elder Board may allocate an amount to exceed this limit outside the customary benevolence request via other means, i.e. special offerings during the year.

## **ARTICLE H: PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Board of Elders shall function as a Pulpit Committee to nominate a Minister. In this task the Board will be guided by all the provisions in Section 6.1 (1) and (2) and 6.2 (1) and (2) of the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS.

## **ARTICLE I: YOUTH MINISTER SELECTION COMMITTEE**

The Board of Elders shall function as a Youth Minister Selection Committee. The Youth Minister shall be employed by the Church Council upon nomination of the Board of Elders.

## **ARTICLE J: APPLICATION, AMENDMENTS AND SUSPENSION**

### **1. Application**

The Elders shall consider themselves directed in all things, as far as is feasible at any time, by this set of Policies and Procedures. Candidates for election to the Board of Elders shall be asked to read these Policies and Procedures, and it is expected that they shall subscribe to them in general. They shall be the public property of the church, and

as such shall be available to any interested member or entity of the church.

2. Amendments

Amendments may be acted upon by the Board of Elders at any regular meeting of the Board, provided that all members of the Board shall have been given two weeks written notice. Amendments shall be made by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board of Elders.

3. Suspension

Except in those situations where the MANUAL OF OPERATIONS and/or the CONSTITUTION would be violated, any of the stipulations or provisions of this document may, upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Board at a regular meeting, be suspended.

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