

Discipline in Alliance Churches

Edited from the *Uniform Policy On Discipline, Restoration, And Appeal*

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) believes the Scriptures establish standards of conduct and belief by which members of a C&MA church and individuals serving Christ through licensed ministry within the C&MA must live. The goals of discipline are to honor God; to protect the purity of the Church; to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed; and to bring fallen Christians to repentance. Discipline is administered to achieve restoration, while also providing for the spiritual welfare of the local church. Discipline is to be corrective and redemptive. It is to be exercised with mercy, grace, and forgiveness. However, restoration to fellowship with Christ and His Church does not necessarily result in a return to a position of leadership in the local church.

The Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal (Policy) and the disciplinary proceedings are ecclesiastical in nature, founded on the most sacred teachings of the Christian faith. The Policy and proceedings seek to apply Scriptural teachings concerning conduct and belief to persons holding positions of authority and leadership within the C&MA and to regulate the relationships between persons in the Christian Church. In addition, they seek to regulate the behavior and belief of members of C&MA churches who, by their membership, have submitted to the authority and discipline of the church. Unless otherwise provided for in the Policy, in a case of disagreement or dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the Policy, the jurisdiction to decide such matters lies solely with the C&MA National Office. As stated before, the Policy and its proceedings, including any decisions related to its interpretation or application, are ecclesiastical in nature and as such, any appeal to or other action before a court or civil tribunal is not permitted.

The Policy is not intended to create a legally enforceable contract or promise. The Board of Directors of the C&MA reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to modify the Policy at any time and for any reason.

I. BIBLICAL BASIS FOR DISCIPLINE

- A. **Growth in Faith.** Discipline serves to encourage growth and development in faith. *Rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in faith. . .* (Titus 1:13).
- B. **Redemption and Restoration.** Discipline serves to spiritually redeem and restore those who have fallen into immoral or otherwise unChrist-like ways. *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently (Galatians 6:1). If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. . .* (Matthew 18:15).

- C. **Bearing Another's Burden.** Discipline benefits the church because it teaches the church to be redemptive by carrying the burden of seeking to restore fallen believers. *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2).
- D. **Forgiveness, Comfort, Love.** Discipline involves compassion, even for those who have committed sinful acts and espoused beliefs contrary to Scripture. . . . *You ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow* (2 Corinthians 2:5-7).
- E. **Warning to the Divisive.** Discipline serves to deter and instruct against beliefs and conduct contrary to Scripture. *Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him* (Titus 3:10).
- F. **Judgment and Expulsion.** Discipline may lead to judgment, including expulsion from the church. . . . *Are you not to judge those inside (the church)? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you* (1 Corinthians 5:12, 13).

II. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- A. **Preliminary Considerations.**¹ Discipline always begins as a personal matter. As each believer studies God's Word, seeks him in prayer, and draws upon his grace, he/she is enabled by the Holy Spirit to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness. *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline* (2 Timothy 1:7). However, believers are sometimes blind to sins or they become so tangled in them that they cannot get free. This is why the Bible says, *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently* (Galatians 6:1).

In obedience to this command, the C&MA seeks to cultivate a redemptive atmosphere in which believers are committed to giving and receiving loving correction whenever sin seems too serious to overlook (Proverbs 19:11).

In Matthew 18:15–20, Jesus outlines the steps which should be taken to resolve conflict and exercise redemptive and restorative discipline in the church. The process begins with private conversation. However, if private conversation fails to lead a person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other believers to become involved in these conversations. *If he will not listen, Jesus said, take one or two others along* (Matthew 18:16). When personal conversations fail to resolve the matter, Jesus instructs us to “tell it to the church.” This signals a move to more specifically defined disciplinary procedures outlined in this document.

The C&MA encourages the mediation of personal conflicts whenever such measures are both possible and appropriate. Within the polity of the C&MA, we have purposed to fulfill Jesus' instructions to exercise church discipline by providing an orderly procedure by which the appropriate ecclesiastical authority may be informed and respond. These disciplinary Policies and Procedures are implemented

only after other appropriate steps have proven ineffective. They also recognize that some sins are of a public nature and cannot be addressed with personal conversation alone.

If an offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others or to the testimony of Christ, and if the offense is not of such a nature that it would ordinarily disqualify a person from positions of leadership in the church, the proper ecclesiastical authority may choose to confront an individual entrapped by sin privately to establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin discovered. If the individual acknowledges his/her sin and repents, the matter may end there, unless a confession to additional people and public or private restitution is needed. In such cases, and when individuals have confessed of their own accord, the proper ecclesiastical authorities may, after an informal investigation, determine the extent and nature of disciplinary actions which may be imposed without a formal disciplinary hearing.

If an individual is unwilling to acknowledge or repent of sin, or if an offense is likely to harm others or to lead them into sin, cause division or disruption within the church, or compromise the public testimony of Christ and the C&MA, the proper church authority shall initiate formal disciplinary procedures as determined by this Policy.

- B. Persons Subject to Discipline.** This Policy applies to all workers licensed within the C&MA as defined by the Constitution and Bylaws, policies, and regulations of the C&MA; non-licensed international workers; certified non-clergy professionals; officers, employees, and elected personnel of the national C&MA entity, district entity, and church entity; and all members of C&MA churches.
- C. Submission of a Charge.** The disciplinary process is initiated when a formal charge of sinful conduct is submitted to the appropriate ecclesiastical authority either in person or by certified mail. When the charge is submitted verbally, the nature of the offense shall be recorded in writing and signed by the person(s) making the accusation. Charges which are submitted anonymously shall not be entertained.

A charge may be submitted by the ecclesiastical authority (as defined below) of any entity within the C&MA, such as the denomination, an international field, a U.S. district, a U.S. church, and an overseas national church through its national president. A charge may also be submitted by any two licensed workers within the C&MA or any two individual members of a U.S. C&MA church as long as the licensed workers or individuals are not members of the same immediate family. (Two persons are in the same immediate family if their relationship is one of husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, or grandparent and grandchild). In the case of sexual misconduct or child/vulnerable adult abuse, any one person, whether or not part of the C&MA, may submit the charge. Any person(s) making false statements in submitting a charge or providing false information in a disciplinary proceeding may be subject to discipline or other actions at the discretion of the appropriate ecclesiastical authority.

- D. Ecclesiastical Authority.** Disciplinary proceedings will be initiated and

administered by one of the following ecclesiastical authorities... If the charge relates to a member or unlicensed employee of a local C&MA church (excluding licensed worker or certified non-clergy personnel), the ecclesiastical authority will be the Board of Elders who shall act in consultation with the superintendent of the district in which the church is located. Note: The chairman of the Board of Elders is usually the senior pastor unless he has chosen a lay elder to assume the position.

E. Basis of Discipline. Matters that give rise to discipline include but are not limited to:

1. Holding to and/or promulgating doctrines contrary to the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith as outlined in the C&MA Statement of Faith.
2. Defiance or failure to submit to constituted authority as defined by the Board of Directors of the C&MA.
3. Moral failure involving sexual misconduct including abuse of a child or vulnerable adult.
4. Moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct.
5. Theft, misappropriation of funds or property, and other financial transgressions.
6. Dishonesty, fraud, perjury, and other misrepresentations.
7. Spreading false rumors about another.
8. Causing dissension or division within the church.
9. Violence or abuse directed toward others, especially a child or vulnerable adult.
10. Interference in the current ministry of a church by a former pastor or former member provided the former member is an active member of another Alliance church.
11. Judgment of guilty by a civil or criminal court of law, excluding minor traffic violations.

This introduction to the Policy is not meant to replace the Policy. Rather, it is presented to give members of Alliance Churches an overview of the Policy. For further information, please request a copy of the unedited version of the *Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal* from your church or the District Office. It will include these additional sections.

- III. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND CONSIDERATIONS
- IV. PROCEDURES FOR DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS
- V. DISCIPLINARY HEARING
- VI. RESTITUTION AND RESTORATION
- VII. DETERMINATION OF SEVERITY OF DISCIPLINE
- VIII. RESTORATION PROCESS
- IX. APPEAL
- X. REQUEST FOR REVIEW
- XI. AMENDMENTS