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BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

As revised at General Conference XXVIII online
Effective 19 July 2022

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ARTICLE I – NAME

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- A. The name of this Fellowship shall be the UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES (hereinafter referred to as UFMCC or Fellowship).
 - B. Each affiliated local church group will use the name METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH as part of its official title. The group may add either a prefix or suffix to distinguish it from other affiliated local church groups, such as: Grace Metropolitan Community Church, Metropolitan Community Church of Tallahassee, Metropolitan Community Church, Ashland, or Springfield Metropolitan Community Church.

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ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

21 The objectives of the UFMCC shall be:

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- A. To bind together churches for the purpose of sharing in the worship of God in the Christian tradition, and to make God's will dominant in the lives of all people, individually and collectively, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures.
 - B. To set up bodies for instruction in theology and in allied subjects for the propagation of the teachings of the Christian faith, as accepted by the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.
 - C. To instruct and encourage those who offer themselves to the teaching and philosophy accepted by this body.
 - D. To do all things that are compatible with the work of a Christian Church.

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ARTICLE III – SACRAMENTS AND RITES

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- A. SACRAMENTS: This Church embraces two holy Sacraments:
 - 1. BAPTISM by water and the Spirit, as recorded in the Scriptures, shall be a sign of the dedication of each life to God and God's service. Through the words and acts of this sacrament, the recipient is identified as God's own Child.
 - 2. HOLY COMMUNION is the partaking of blessed bread and fruit of the vine in accordance with the words of Jesus, our Sovereign: This is my body...this is my blood (Matthew 26:26-28). All who believe, confess and repent and seek God's love through Christ, after examining their consciences, may freely participate in the communal meal, signifying their desire to be received into community with Jesus Christ, to be saved by Jesus Christ's

47 sacrifice, to participate in Jesus Christ's resurrection, and to commit their lives anew to the
48 service of Jesus Christ.

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50 B. RITES: The Rites of the Church as performed by its duly authorized ministers shall consist of
51 the following:

52 1. The RITE OF ORDINATION is the setting apart of duly qualified persons for the
53 professional ministry of this Church. It is evidenced by the laying on of hands by authorized
54 ordained clergy or UFMCC Elders, pursuant to these Bylaws.

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56 2. The RITE OF ATTAINING MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH shall be conducted by the
57 Pastor or Interim Pastoral Leader before a local congregation at any regular worship
58 service. In accordance with criteria established by the local church, a baptized Christian
59 may become a member in good standing of the local church group through a letter of
60 transfer from a recognized Christian body or through affirmation of faith.

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62 3. The RITE OF HOLY UNION/RITE OF HOLY MATRIMONY is the spiritual joining of two
63 persons in a manner fitting and proper by a duly authorized clergy, Interim Pastoral Leader
64 of the church, or UFMCC Elders. After both persons have been counseled and apprised
65 of their responsibilities one toward the other, this rite of conferring God's blessing may be
66 performed.

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68 4. The RITE OF FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE is to be fittingly conducted by the
69 ministers of the Church for the deceased.

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71 5. The RITE OF LAYING ON OF HANDS or prayer for the healing of the sick in mind, body
72 or spirit is to be conducted by the ministers of the Church, at their discretion, upon request.

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74 6. The RITE OF BLESSING may be conducted by the ministers of the Church for persons,
75 things and relationships, when deemed appropriate by the minister. This includes the
76 dedication of a church building to the glory of God.

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78 **ARTICLE IV – MINISTRY**

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80 The UFMCC affirms the universal priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5-10). All members of the
81 Church are called by God to a ministry of the Gospel of Christ in the Church and in the world.

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83 UFMCC decrees that all people shall have equitable access and opportunity which is free from
84 discrimination on grounds of sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race,
85 ethnicity, culture, age, physical or cognitive ability, medical diagnosis, HIV status, health status,
86 nationality, or economic status in terms of: (1) Employment and personnel procedures and (2)
87 Service delivery -- so that MCC will pursue justice through all we do.

88

89 A. MINISTRY OF THE LAITY

90 1. THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS: Lay people are the People of God, called by
91 God and authorized by Scripture to respond to the Word, serving as Christ served, to the
92 end that the Church may be edified and the world transformed. UFMCC affirms that this
93 is the ministry of every lay person in the UFMCC.

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- 95 2. DEACONS: As outlined in the New Testament, their office is a historic ministry of service
96 and aid within the Christian Church.
97

98 B. MINISTRY OF THE CLERGY:

- 99 1. CLERGY: Clergy are members of the People of God, called by God, authorized and legally
100 recognized by the UFMCC to serve among the people as professional ministers of the
101 Word and Sacraments.
102 a. RESPONSIBILITIES: In accordance with their call, clergy shall administer the Rites
103 and Sacraments of the UFMCC and be teachers and preachers of the faith to the end
104 that the world may believe and the Church might be renewed, equipped, and
105 strengthened in its ministry.
106
107 b. QUALIFICATIONS: Clergy are those persons of professed and demonstrated call to
108 be professional Christian ministers who meet the qualifications established by the
109 Council of Elders.
110
111 c. ORDINATION: Persons who have met the academic standards and qualifications as
112 established by the Council of Elders may then be ordained. A person who is ordained
113 cannot function as a UFMCC clergy person until such person is licensed.
114
115 d. DISCIPLINE: The UFMCC will not condone disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, or
116 dereliction of duty. Procedures for discipline shall be developed by the Governing
117 Board. These procedures shall be included as an addendum to the UFMCC Bylaws.
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119 **ARTICLE V – GOVERNMENT, ORGANIZATION, AND OFFICERS**

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121 A. GOVERNMENT:

- 122 1. The UFMCC acknowledges the Holy Scriptures interpreted by the Holy Spirit in
123 conscience and faith as its guide in faith, discipline, and government.
124
125 2. The government of the UFMCC is vested in the General Conference, subject to the
126 provisions of the UFMCC Articles of Incorporation and its Bylaws, or documents of legal
127 organization. The officials elected by the General Conference are subject to the direction
128 and discipline of General Conference and are responsible to carry out its policies.
129
130 3. When the Moderator desires more flexibility with respect to Articles IV through IX of these
131 Bylaws, the Moderator can apply to the Governing Board, which may grant that flexibility.
132
133 4. This Fellowship is accountable to no outside ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but accepts the
134 obligation of mutual consent and cooperation involved in the free fellowship of other
135 churches, and does pledge itself to share in their common aims and endeavors subject to
136 the expressed approval of its membership.
137
138 5. Local Churches and the General Conference as defined by these Bylaws are set forth for
139 the purposes of Christian fellowship, worship, witness, and service, borne in the
140 cooperation, program development, and implementation of their Bylaws, Procedures, and
141 Policies.
142

143 6. A local church of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is that
144 church which subscribes to the government and doctrine of the UFMCC, and has been
145 authorized by the same.
146

147 B. LOCAL CHURCHES:

148 1. EMERGING CHURCHES: Within the UFMCC, all worshipping and/or ministry bodies that
149 seek to enter into the process of meeting the criteria for affiliation as established by the
150 Council of Elders and approved by the Governing Board may apply to UFMCC for
151 authorization as an “emerging church.” Emerging churches include parish extensions, new
152 church starts, and existing churches that seek to affiliate with UFMCC.
153

154 a. AUTHORIZATION: The Council of Elders shall establish procedures for authorization
155 of emerging churches, procedures for authorization of the leader for each emerging
156 church, and processes for supporting each emerging church until it achieves affiliation.
157

158 b. ACCOUNTABILITY: The emerging church shall be subject to these Bylaws and to the
159 approval or disapproval of actions by a designee of the Council of Elders. When such
160 come to exist, the emerging church shall then also be subject to its local Articles of
161 Incorporation, local Bylaws/Standard Operating Procedures, and any other document
162 of legal organization.
163

164 c. CLOSURE: If an emerging church other than a parish extension disbands or ceases
165 to operate, the net assets of the church will revert to the use of the General Conference
166 of the UFMCC. The Governing Board will decide the disposition of said property.
167

168 2. AFFILIATED CHURCHES: Within the UFMCC, all churches that meet the criteria as
169 established by the Council of Elders and approved by the Governing Board qualify for
170 affiliation and recognition as an affiliated church. The Council of Elders has the authority
171 to approve requests for affiliation. If an affiliated church ceases to meet the criteria for
172 affiliation, a designee of the Council of Elders may take appropriate actions of intervention,
173 which may include removal of the church’s affiliation status. The decision of the designee
174 may be appealed to the Council of Elders.
175

176 a. ASSOCIATED ORGANIZATIONS: A local church shall have the authority to establish,
177 authorize, and hold accountable special-purpose groups, ministries, and
178 organizations.
179

180 b. AFFILIATED CHURCH GOVERNANCE: The government of each affiliated church is
181 vested in its Congregational Meeting which exerts the right to control all of its affairs,
182 subject to the provisions of the UFMCC Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, or
183 documents of legal organization, and the General Conference. The Pastor and the
184 local church administrative body are authorized to provide spiritual and administrative
185 leadership in the affiliated church. The officials elected by the Congregational Meeting
186 are subject to the direction and discipline of the affiliated church and are responsible
187 to carry out the local church policies.
188

189 i. STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS: The affiliated church, in consultation with
190 UFMCC, shall determine an appropriate structure and systems for local church
191 governance that is appropriate for the size of church and cultural context. The

192 local church structure and systems shall include provision for (1) selection and
193 discipline of the local church administrative body, (2) a pastoral search process,
194 and (3) congregational meetings. It is incumbent upon the local church
195 administrative body of each local church to provide that church with a set of Bylaws
196 or standard operating procedures, subject to approval by UFMCC.
197

198 ii. ACCOUNTABILITY: The local church administrative body shall be subject to these
199 Bylaws, local Articles of Incorporation, local Bylaws/Standard Operating
200 Procedures, any other documents of legal organization, and to the approval or
201 disapproval by action of their local congregation as provided for in any of the
202 above.
203

204 iii. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: When there are conflicts or difficulty within a local
205 church, including apparent irreconcilable differences between the Pastor and
206 congregation, UFMCC shall have the authority to interface with that church, to take
207 appropriate measures, to provide resources and support, and to attend and have
208 voice at any meeting of the local church administrative body or Congregational
209 Meeting. UFMCC shall be required to intervene when invited (1) by the
210 Pastor/Interim Pastoral Leader, (2) by majority vote of the local church
211 administrative body, or (3) as a result of a petition signed by a minimum of one-
212 third (33%) of the members of the church.
213

214 Within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving the request for intervention, UFMCC
215 must officially notify all parties mentioned above. Within ten (10) days of the
216 request, UFMCC will establish the time-lines and process for the Ministry of
217 Reconciliation, which must be implemented within thirty (30) days of the initial
218 request.
219

220 c. PASTOR: The Pastor of an affiliated church is a duly ordained clergy person who has
221 been licensed to practice. Though there are a variety of pastoral roles, in a local
222 congregation the Pastor is elected to be responsible for the duties of teacher,
223 preacher, and spiritual leader. If no duly credentialed UFMCC clergy person is
224 available, an Interim Pastoral Leader may be appointed annually by UFMCC. All
225 UFMCC churches are led by Pastors or Interim Pastoral Leaders.

226 i. QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES: Pastors must be credentialed clergy in the
227 UFMCC. The Pastor of the church shall have the authority for ordering all worship
228 services of the church. The Pastor is a voting member of the local church
229 administrative body.
230

231 Associate and/or Assistant Pastor(s) and other personnel, uncompensated or
232 compensated, shall be appointed by the Pastor subject to the approval of the local
233 church administrative body. The Pastor shall act as personnel director of the local
234 church staff, shall have the authority to delegate such responsibilities and duties
235 as seems wise, and shall, with the approval of the local church administrative body,
236 determine compensation, vacation periods, and titles of office of the staff.
237

238 ii. REMOVING THE PASTOR FROM OFFICE: When irreconcilable differences exist
239 between the Pastor and congregation, the Pastor and congregation may choose
240 to terminate their relationship through mutual agreement. No petition for removal

241 of the Pastor based on irreconcilable differences is valid unless preceded by the
242 process of conflict resolution, as contained within the UFMCC Bylaws Article.
243 V.B.2.c.ii. Unilateral failure to renew a pastoral contract does not constitute
244 removal of the Pastor from office.
245

246 The process of removing the Pastor from office for disloyalty, unbecoming conduct,
247 dereliction of duty or when irreconcilable differences arise between Pastor and
248 congregation may be initiated by a petition submitted to the duly authorized church
249 officer as designated by the local Bylaws/Standard Operating Procedures, or
250 documents of legal organization, and signed by at least twenty-five percent (25%)
251 of the members in good standing; or by a vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the full Board
252 of Directors /local church administrative body. Within three (3) days, the Pastor
253 and UFMCC must be sent a copy of the completed petition or motion of the local
254 church administrative body by the designated church officer. After UFMCC and the
255 designated local church officer have validated the number of members who have
256 signed the petition and the clarity of the petition or validated the votes of the
257 members of the local church administrative body and the clarity of the motion,
258 UFMCC may place the Pastor on inactive status, but the Pastor remains fully
259 compensated until the final action of the congregation. Upon validating the petition,
260 a representative of UFMCC and the local church administrative body will set the
261 time and place of a special congregational meeting to determine whether the
262 Pastor shall remain in office. The date of the meeting shall occur within thirty (30)
263 days of the date the petition is submitted to the designated church officer or the
264 date the motion of the local church administrative body is received by UFMCC.
265

266 The Pastor has the right to appear on his/her own behalf before the congregational
267 meeting and may have an advocate of his/her own choice present. The action of
268 the congregation is final. If a special meeting is called to remove a Pastor, UFMCC
269 must be given notice that such action is being taken. A representative of UFMCC
270 shall attend as an impartial observer who shall moderate the meeting. If the Pastor
271 is removed, the local church administrative body will meet immediately after the
272 meeting with the representative of UFMCC to arrange for pastoral leadership until
273 the pulpit is filled. The local church administrative body may confer with UFMCC
274 as to available candidates for the office of Pastor.
275

- 276 d. LAY DELEGATE: Each affiliated church shall have one (1) vote for every one hundred
277 (100) members in good standing or portion thereof and shall elect one (1) Lay Delegate
278 for each vote. Each Lay Delegate shall carry one (1) vote. Each Lay Delegate shall be
279 a member in good standing of the congregation that such person represents and shall
280 serve a term of three (3) years. The duties of the Lay Delegate shall include, but not
281 be limited to, representation of the congregation at General Conferences and to be
282 informed of the UFMCC concerns and policies.
283

284 Each voting church may, in accordance with that local church's Bylaws or Standard
285 Operating Procedures, elect at least one (1) Alternate Lay Delegate for each Lay
286 Delegate elected. The Alternate Delegate(s) so elected shall, in accordance with
287 procedures set forth in the local church Bylaws or Standard Operating Procedures, be
288 empowered to assume the duties of any Lay Delegate who is unable or unwilling to

289 perform the duties of Lay Delegate, including but not limited to representation of the
290 congregation at General Conferences.
291

292 e. DISAFFILIATION: The process for disaffiliation will be established by the
293 Council of Elders and approved by the Governing Board. Disaffiliated
294 congregations may not continue to use the name Metropolitan Community Church
295 (MCC) or in any manner hold themselves out as being associated with UFMCC or as
296 being an MCC church.
297

298 3. DISCIPLINE OF CHURCHES: If any emerging or affiliated church shall fail to abide by the
299 Articles of Incorporation of the UFMCC, these Bylaws, or documents of legal organization,
300 the Moderator or a representative of the Moderator shall take appropriate action to require
301 compliance. The Moderator shall report any such action to the church involved and to the
302 Governing Board.
303

304 4. CHURCH PROPERTY: In every nation where UFMCC comes to exist and where
305 permitted by local or national laws, the local church's documents of legal organization
306 must name the UFMCC as the successor not-for-profit corporation/non-governmental
307 organization designated to receive the church's property in the event of (1) the dissolution
308 or abandonment of the church, or (2) failure to abide by the process for disaffiliation from
309 the UFMCC by the local church as contained in the UFMCC Bylaws.
310

311 5. CLOSURE: When a church disbands or ceases to operate, the net assets of the church
312 will revert to the use of the General Conference of the UFMCC. The Governing Board
313 will decide the disposition of said property.
314

315 6. RESERVATION OF POWERS: Any specific matters of congregational approval not
316 covered herein are left to local church option
317

318 C. ASSOCIATED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: When the mission of the UFMCC
319 would be best served by a special-purpose organization being accountable to the
320 denomination, the Governing Board shall have the authority to establish, authorize, and hold
321 accountable such special-purpose organization. Individuals from associated non-
322 governmental organizations may participate in all activities of UFMCC.
323

324 a. OFFICIAL OBSERVER: Each associated non-governmental organization may
325 designate a representative to serve as an Official Observer at General Conference,
326 with voice but no vote.

327 b. CLOSURE: When an associated organization disbands or ceases to operate, the net
328 assets of the associated organization will revert to the use of the General
329 Conference of the UFMCC. The Governing Board will decide the disposition of said
330 property.
331

332 D. ALIGNED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: Aligned non-governmental
333 organizations are those organizations that support the goals of UFMCC and that are aligned
334 with the work of UFMCC yet do not seek to become an affiliated church or associated
335 organization. Individuals from aligned non-governmental organizations may participate in all
336 activities of UFMCC.
337

- 338 a. RECOGNITION: The Council of Elders shall establish the process for granting
339 recognition to Aligned Organizations.
- 340 b. OFFICIAL OBSERVER: Each aligned organization may designate a representative
341 to serve as an Official Observer at General Conference, with voice but no vote.
342
- 343 E. FELLOWSHIP:
- 344 1. INTRODUCTION: Internationally, the government of the UFMCC is vested in the General
345 Conference, subject to the provisions of the Fellowship Articles of Incorporation, its
346 Bylaws, or documents of legal organization. Between General Conferences, the Council
347 of Elders is authorized to provide spiritual and pastoral leadership and the Governing
348 Board is authorized to provide administrative leadership on the international Fellowship
349 level.
- 350
- 351 2. MODERATOR: The Moderator is elected by the General Conference to serve as the
352 primary visionary and futurist in order to advance the mission and vision of UFMCC
353 worldwide through the exercise of prophetic challenge, creativity, spiritual and pastoral
354 authority, and leadership. As the primary UFMCC spokesperson, an Elder, and the Chief
355 Executive Officer, the Moderator is a voting member and moderates meetings of the
356 Governing Board and of the Council of Elders; moderates General Conference; appoints
357 Elders; and supervises UFMCC senior staff. The Moderator shall be responsible for
358 leading the visioning process for the Fellowship, having a presence at global events,
359 teaching and training, engaging in continuous learning, community relations, visitation and
360 assistance in churches, ecumenical relations, and global social justice. The term of office
361 of the Moderator shall be six (6) years.
- 362
- 363 a. MODERATOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE: The Governing Board shall
364 appoint a Moderator Nominating Committee of five (5) persons. The
365 responsibility of the Moderator Nominating Committee is to actively solicit
366 candidates for the position, review any and all applications, and select up to
367 five (5) qualified candidates. The qualified candidates shall be presented by
368 the Governing Board to the General Conference for election.
- 369
- 370 b. DISCIPLINE OF THE MODERATOR: Complaints about the Moderator must
371 be submitted to the Governing Board in written form and must be signed by a
372 minimum of one (1) member of the clergy from each of ten (10) different
373 churches and by the Lay Delegates representing the majority of the Lay
374 Delegate votes from each of ten (10) different churches, and may be initiated
375 by either the clergy or Lay Delegates. The Governing Board shall establish and
376 publish its procedure for considering complaints about the Moderator.
- 377
- 378 c. REMOVAL OF THE MODERATOR: If the Governing Board determines that
379 the Moderator is unable or unwilling to fulfill the responsibilities of the position,
380 the Governing Board may, by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the full Governing
381 Board, remove the Moderator from the position. Such action shall be reported
382 to the General Conference within five (5) business days. The Governing Board
383 may elect someone who meets the qualifications to serve as Interim Moderator
384 until the next General Conference, when an election shall be conducted to fill
385 the vacancy.
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- d. **VACANCY IN THE OFFICE OF MODERATOR:** In the event of a vacancy in the office of Moderator, the Governing Board shall elect an Interim Moderator to fill the vacancy until the next General Conference, when an election shall be held to fill the vacancy. The term of office of the Moderator elected by General Conference to fill the vacancy shall be six (6) years.
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3. **COUNCIL OF ELDERS:** The Council of Elders of the UFMCC is that body authorized by the General Conference to serve in a pastoral role and direct the spiritual life of the Fellowship. This Council shall consist of a Moderator and Elders appointed by the Moderator, subject to approval by the Governing Board and affirmation by General Conference. All UFMCC Elders are deemed professional ministers and are authorized to perform all of the Rites and Sacraments of the church.
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- a. **QUALIFICATIONS:** Elders must be those individuals of obvious spiritual quality and leadership who are mature, have sound judgment, have a proven record of accomplishment as lay or clergy members within the Fellowship, and have successful experience in envisioning and strategic planning for the future. Elders must be excellent communicators, skilled motivators and teachers, self-motivated and devoted to continuous learning. Further, Elders must be capable of understanding and working within sound fiscal guidelines, be sensitive to cultural differences, and be able and willing to embrace diversity. It is desirable that the Council of Elders reflect the diversity of the Fellowship.
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- b. **DUTIES:** The primary responsibility of Elders shall be to give pastoral leadership and care to enable the Fellowship in our spiritual journey. The Elders shall exercise spiritual and pastoral authority to build a shared vision for the UFMCC, prepare UFMCC for the future, and support UFMCC's strategic direction. The Elders serve as official representatives of the Fellowship in the areas of public and community relations; provide oversight of and support to congregations; consult with churches on issues related to church development; and fulfill other ecclesial and ceremonial duties.
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- Other than the Moderator, a member of the Council of Elders shall not serve simultaneously as a member of the Governing Board.
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- c. **ACCOUNTABILITY, DISCIPLINE, AND REMOVAL:** The UFMCC cannot condone disloyalty, unbecoming conduct, or dereliction of duty on the part of its Elders and, therefore, makes the following provisions for accountability, discipline, or removal:
- (1) **ACCOUNTABILITY:** All Elders shall be accountable to the Moderator, the Council of Elders, the UFMCC Bylaws, the UFMCC Code of Conduct, personnel policies as established by the Governing Board, and General Conference.
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- (2) **DISCIPLINE:** The Elder must be given written notice of a complaint and shall remain in position until final disposition of the complaint.
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- (a) **DISCIPLINE OF AN ELDER:** Complaints about an Elder other than the Moderator must be submitted to the Moderator in written form and be signed by a member of UFMCC. The Moderator shall determine whether to refer the complaint to the Council of Elders for resolution or to seek resolution of the

435 matter in another appropriate way. The Council of Elders shall establish and
436 publish its procedure for considering complaints about an Elder.

437
438 (3) REMOVAL:

439 (a) REMOVAL OF AN ELDER:

440 (i) The Moderator may remove an Elder at any time, with or without cause.

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442 (ii) If the Council of Elders determines that an Elder is unable or unwilling to
443 fulfill the responsibilities of the position, the Council of Elders may, by a
444 vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the full Council of Elders, recommend that the
445 Moderator remove that Elder from the position.

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447 (iii) Such action shall be reported to the Governing Board.

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449 d. VACANCIES: In the event of a vacancy, the Moderator may appoint someone who
450 meets the qualifications to fill the vacancy, subject to the approval of the Governing
451 Board.

452
453 4. GOVERNING BOARD: The Governing Board is that body authorized by the General
454 Conference to carry on the governance of the UFMCC between General Conferences in
455 an orderly manner. The Governing Board is composed of nine (9) persons, four (4) of
456 whom shall be lay persons and four (4) of whom shall be clergypersons plus the
457 Moderator, elected by the General Conference to be responsible for the governance of
458 UFMCC finances and operations and to serve as the corporation's Board of Directors,
459 having charge of all matters pertaining to Articles of Incorporation, all documents of legal
460 organization, property, and finances of the UFMCC. The Governing Board shall exercise
461 all corporate powers subject to the provisions and limitations of these bylaws and any
462 other applicable laws.

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464 a. QUALIFICATIONS: Members of the Governing Board must be members in good
465 standing within the Fellowship who, in the sole discretion of the UFMCC, have spiritual
466 quality and leadership, are mature, have sound judgment, and have a proven record
467 of accomplishment. Consideration will be given to elect members with diverse
468 perspectives, core competencies, and complementary skills consistent with the
469 required functions and responsibilities of the Governing Board.

470
471 b. GOVERNING BOARD CHARTER: A Charter of the Governing Board shall define the
472 functions, responsibilities and structures of the Governing Board. The Charter shall be
473 affirmed by a majority vote of the General Conference and included as an addendum
474 to UFMCC Bylaws.

475
476 c. TERM OF OFFICE: The term of office for members of the Governing Board shall be
477 six years, with the exception that General Conference XXIV shall elect two (2) lay
478 persons and two (2) clergy persons to three-year terms until the next General
479 Conference, when two (2) lay persons and two (2) clergy persons shall be elected to
480 six-year terms.

481
482 d. GOVERNING BOARD NOMINATING COMMITTEE: The Governing Board shall
483 appoint a Governing Board Nominating Committee of three (3) persons. The

484 Moderator shall serve as a consultant to the Governing Board Nominating Committee.
485 The responsibility of the Governing Board Nominating Committee is to actively solicit
486 candidates for the position, review any and all applications, and select qualified
487 candidates. The qualified candidates shall be presented to the General Conference
488 for election.
489

490 e. VACANCIES: In the event of a vacancy on the Governing Board among membership
491 elected at a duly convened General Conference, the Governing Board may appoint
492 someone who meets the qualifications to fill the vacancy until the next General
493 Conference, when an election shall be held to fill the unexpired term. Appointments
494 may only be utilized for filling vacancies up to 40% (3 members) of the total
495 membership of the Governing Board. When the number of appointed Governing Board
496 members exceeds 40% (3 persons) of the total membership of the Governing Board,
497 a special General Conference shall be called for the purpose of electing members to
498 the Governing Board. The process for selecting candidates for election shall conform
499 to the process outlined in Article V.E.4.d. - GOVERNING BOARD NOMINATING
500 COMMITTEE.
501

502 f. DISCIPLINE: The UFMCC cannot condone unbecoming conduct, malfeasance,
503 nonfeasance or dereliction of duty on the part of any member of the Governing Board
504 and, therefore, makes the following provisions for discipline or removal:
505

506 (1) If the Governing Board determines that one of its members is unable or unwilling
507 to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, the Governing Board may, by a majority
508 vote of the full Board, remove that member from the Board. The member must be
509 given written notice of the charges and, at that time, becomes inactive. The
510 member has the right to appear and present his/her own defense before the
511 Governing Board on his/her own behalf. The Governing Board will then review the
512 charges and, upon majority vote of the members of the Governing Board not
513 including the member charged, may remove the member of the Governing Board
514 or take such other action as it may deem appropriate. The decision of the
515 Governing Board shall be final.
516

517 (2) Governing Board members may be removed by a Special General Conference.
518

519 **ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP IN UFMCC**

520
521 A. MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING OF A LOCAL CHURCH: Any baptized Christian may
522 become a member in good standing of an emerging or affiliated local church. A local church
523 has the authority to determine any additional criteria for gaining and retaining membership in
524 that local church. Any additional criteria shall be in accordance with UFMCC Bylaws and be
525 compatible with UFMCC core values.
526

527 B. MEMBERS OF UFMCC

- 528 1. Members in good standing of each emerging and affiliated local church shall be
529 considered to be Members of UFMCC.
530 2. All clergy persons ordained by UFMCC shall be considered to be Members of
531 UFMCC.

532 3. All Members of UFMCC may serve on appointed committees, hold elected office,
533 and participate in all activities of UFMCC.

534
535 C. FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH: A local church body may, if it desires, accept into the Church
536 person(s) who, for one reason or another, feel that they cannot become regular members of
537 the Church but who support the goals of the Church and want to be part of the work of the
538 church. Such people shall be designated as "Friends of the Church." Friends may serve on
539 appointed committees and may participate in all activities of the Church. Friends may not,
540 however, serve on the local church administrative body and may not vote at congregational
541 meetings. Friends shall not be considered in determining the number of Lay Delegates that
542 a local church body may send to meetings of the General Conference.

543
544 D. DISCIPLINE: The UFMCC cannot condone disloyalty or unbecoming conduct on the part of
545 any of its members and friends; therefore, the local church administrative body shall develop
546 and implement a procedure for taking appropriate disciplinary action, as it deems necessary.
547

548 **ARTICLE VII – CHURCH SERVICES**

549
550 Each local church body shall hold services of public worship every week. Other worship services
551 may be held as determined by the Pastor with the approval of the local church administrative
552 body. In regard to the worship services of local church bodies, the Sacrament of Holy Communion
553 shall be offered at weekly worship, as well as at other worship services at the discretion of the
554 Pastor. Holy Baptism may be administered at any appropriate service of the local church body or
555 at any other time, at the Pastor's discretion.
556

557 **ARTICLE VIII – CHURCH MEETINGS**

558
559 A. GENERAL CONFERENCE: For the purpose of the transaction of business, the UFMCC will
560 hold a General Conference every third year, commencing 2007.

561
562 1. TIME, PLACE, AND NATURE: The time and place of the General Conference will be
563 announced at the previous General Conference. Notice of the time, place, and nature of
564 the General Conference must be given in writing to all church bodies ninety (90) days prior
565 to the upcoming General Conference.

566
567 a. NATURE: The Governing Board is authorized to determine the means by which
568 members of the Lay House and of the Clergy House may participate virtually in a
569 General Conference.

570
571 2. COMPOSITION: The General Conference of the UFMCC is that body consisting of a
572 Clergy House and a Lay House.

573
574 a. CLERGY HOUSE: Members of the Clergy House are ordained clergy with a License
575 to Practice and honorably retired clergy.

576
577 b. LAY HOUSE: Members of the Lay House are Lay Delegates; the Interim Pastoral
578 Leader of each affiliated church when that Interim Pastoral Leader is a member of

579 UFMCC; and the members of the Council of Elders and of the Governing Board who
580 are not clergy or Lay Delegates and are members of UFMCC.

581
582 3. VOTING IN SEPARATE HOUSES: The transaction of all business except procedural
583 matters must be approved by a separate majority vote of the votes carried by the Lay
584 House and a separate majority vote of the votes carried by the Clergy House.

585
586 4. QUORUM: A quorum shall consist of twenty percent (20%) of the number of lay people
587 eligible to vote at General Conference and twenty percent (20%) of the number of licensed
588 credentialed clergy eligible to vote at General Conference.

589
590 5. SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE: A special General Conference of the UFMCC can
591 be called by the Governing Board or by a petition submitted to the Governing Board by
592 fifty percent (50%) of all those persons eligible to vote at the General Conference.
593 Initiation of this petition may be by either clergy or laity. A special General Conference
594 shall be governed by the same rules as those pertaining to the General Conference except
595 when the purpose of the special General Conference is to consider affirmation of the
596 appointment of an Elder. When the purpose of a special General Conference is to affirm
597 the appointment of an Elder, notice of the time, place, and nature of the special General
598 Conference must be given in writing to all members of the Lay House and of the Clergy
599 House at least thirty (30) days in advance of the special General Conference.

600
601 a. PURPOSE: The purpose of a special General Conference must be stated in the
602 petition. The nature and purpose of a special General Conference must be stated in
603 the notices and written into the agenda of the special General Conference.

604
605 b. NOTICE: The written notice must be sent to all credentialed clergy and to all voting
606 church bodies at least thirty (30) days prior to the special General Conference.

607
608 B. LOCAL: Each local church shall establish the percentage of members required for the
609 transaction of business, the process for notifying members of the meeting, and the process
610 for calling special meetings, unless otherwise indicated in UFMCC Bylaws.

611
612 C. PROXY VOTING: No proxy and/or absentee ballots shall be allowed in any business meeting
613 of this Fellowship, except where specifically provided for in these Bylaws.

614

615 **ARTICLE IX – CHURCH FINANCES**

616
617 A. FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP: The UFMCC adopts and teaches tithing as the scripturally
618 affirmed means of supporting the church and its ministries, and as the expression of good
619 stewardship of time, skills, and money by individuals and church bodies. Therefore, it shall be
620 the responsibility of both the clergy and the lay leadership of emerging and affiliated church
621 to plan and implement programs of stewardship both to help persons grow in the grace of
622 giving and to fund the church's ministries. An offering shall be received at each service of
623 public worship in the local church and at conferences sponsored by UFMCC.

624
625 B. REPORTING: Each emerging church and affiliated church shall report all church receipts each
626 month to the UFMCC and with that report shall remit a percentage of the funds reported, as
627 determined by General Conference.

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1. Any money transferred permanently or for a long term from any exempt fund into the General Fund must be added to the income figures for that month, and assessments paid on them. Report and remittance are due to the UFMCC on or before the tenth (10th) day of the month following the month being reported.
 2. SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT PAYMENT: Wherever possible and desirable as determined by the Governing Board, churches shall send their assessment directly to the UFMCC Headquarters. However, the Governing Board may choose, in certain circumstances, to authorize special accounts in nations other than the United States to hold in trust the UFMCC assessment payments within that nation. The Governing Board, upon the recommendation of the Moderator, will name the signatories on said accounts and will approve a budget for use of those monies for UFMCC purposes and programs within the respective nation. The Governing Board shall establish appropriate policies and procedures concerning the care of funds held in trust for UFMCC. Whenever funds are transmitted internationally to UFMCC, Fellowship Offices shall provide documentation satisfactory to national/regional government authorities in the sending countries.
- C. FIDUCIARY BODIES: Whenever the Governing Board chooses to authorize special accounts to hold UFMCC funds in trust, the Governing Board may appoint a fiduciary body to have charge of all matters pertaining to the Articles of Incorporation, all documents of legal organization, real property, and finances held in trust, as legally permitted and appropriate. The Governing Board, in its discretion, shall determine the number of members of any fiduciary body. All actions of the fiduciary bodies must be reported to and approved by the Governing Board, except where specifically provided for in these Bylaws.
1. QUALIFICATIONS: Members of a fiduciary body must be members in good standing within the Fellowship who, in the sole discretion of the Governing Board, have spiritual quality and leadership, are mature, have sound judgment and a proven record of accomplishment. The term of office shall be two years.
 2. ACCOUNTABILITY: The fiduciary body shall be subject to these Bylaws, the fiduciary body's Articles of Incorporation, the fiduciary body's Bylaws, and the policies and procedures of the Governing Board.
 3. DISCIPLINE: The UFMCC will not condone conduct which is, in its sole discretion, disloyal or unbecoming or a dereliction of duty on the part of members of a fiduciary body. Therefore, the Governing Board shall develop and implement a procedure for taking appropriate disciplinary action, as it deems necessary.
- D. BOARD OF PENSIONS ASSESSMENTS: Each local church administrative body in the USA shall report quarterly the number of members in good standing for each month within every quarter and shall remit the Board of Pensions assessment as set by General Conference. Report and remittance are due to the Board of Pensions on or before the tenth (10th) day of the month following the quarter reported.
- E.. SIGNATURES: Any bank or financial account in the name of any church body, the UFMCC, or of any subordinate group or body, must require two signatures for withdrawals, one of which must be that of an officer elected or a person appointed under UFMCC Bylaws, the authorizing documents of the subordinate group or body, or the authorizing documents of the local church.

677 F. FORGIVENESS OF ASSESSMENTS: The Governing Board may grant forgiveness of late
678 assessments.
679

680 **ARTICLE X – RESERVATION OF POWERS**

681
682 All powers not delegated by these Bylaws are reserved to the local church bodies.
683

684 **ARTICLE XI – ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS**

685
686 A. ADOPTION: These Bylaws shall become effective immediately upon adoption by the General
687 Conference of the UFMCC and shall become binding upon all members and church bodies
688 within the Fellowship.
689

690 B. AMENDMENTS: These Bylaws may be amended or repealed at any duly convened meeting
691 of the General Conference according to the procedures adopted by the General Conference.
692 Such amendments or repeals can only be effective if two-thirds (2/3) of the duly authorized
693 Lay Delegates and two-thirds (2/3) of the duly authorized clergy attending vote in favor of such
694 amendments or repeals.
695

696 C. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL LAWS: If UFMCC Bylaws are inconsistent with laws of any
697 nation or other jurisdiction in which a local church body is organized, the Governing Board
698 may allow the Bylaws or other organizational documents to contain variances with these
699 Bylaws to facilitate compliance of the local church body with such laws.

BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

**As revised at General Conference XXV, Chicago, Illinois (USA)
Effective 02 July 2013**

Addendum 1

PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING BYLAW PROPOSALS

The Bylaw amendment process is managed by the Bylaws Team. The members of the Bylaws Team are appointed by and accountable to the Governing Board.

Criteria

In order for a Bylaw amendment proposal to be considered by the General Conference, the proposal must be sponsored by the Governing Board, the Council of Elders, a member of the Lay House or of the Clergy House of General Conference.

- a. Members of the Lay House are Lay Delegates; the Interim Pastoral Leader of each affiliated church when that Interim Pastoral Leader is a member of UFMCC; and the members of the Council of Elders and of the Governing Board who are not clergy or Lay Delegates and are members of UFMCC.
- b. Members of the Clergy House are ordained clergy with a License to Practice and honorably retired clergy.

Procedure for sponsorship by the Governing Board or the Council of Elders

- A. Whenever a majority of the Governing Board or the Council of Elders votes to propose a Bylaw amendment, the full text of the proposal is to be submitted to the Governing Board member responsible for managing governance processes.
- B. Bylaw amendment proposals from the Governing Board or Council of Elders are due to the Governing Board member responsible for managing governance processes no later than sixty (60) days preceding General Conference.
- C. Bylaw amendments proposed by the Governing Board or the Council of Elders shall include an impact statement from the Governing Board.
- D. Any Bylaw amendment proposal submitted by the Governing Board or by the Council of Elders, accompanied by the impact statement, will be placed on the agenda of the next General Conference.

Procedure for sponsorship by a member of the Lay House or Clergy House

1. A member of the Lay House or of the Clergy House should submit the Bylaw amendment proposal in writing to the Office of the Moderator by no later than six (6) months prior to the next General Conference. The written proposal needs to include at least the following information:

- a. The name and contact information of the person submitting the proposal.
 - b. A statement of whether the person submitting the proposal is a member of the Lay House or of the Clergy House of General Conference. A member of the Lay House who is a Lay Delegate or Interim Pastoral Leader should indicate the name of his/her church; other members of the Lay House should indicate whether he/she is a member of the Governing Board or of the Council of Elders.
 - c. Citation of the particular Article to be amended (example: Article V.B.3 (d)).
 - d. The current language of the Article to be amended.
 - e. The proposed language (how it is proposed that the Article would read after being amended).
2. In order for a member of the Lay House or of the Clergy House to submit a Bylaw amendment, the proposal must:
 - a. Have the written support of the sponsor's local church and
 - b. Have the written support of at least two (2) other churches from two (2) other countries.
 3. The Office of the Moderator will send the proposal to the Bylaws Team within five (5) business days after it is received.
 4. The Bylaws Team will review the proposal for its compatibility with MCC vision, mission, and values. Proposals that are not compatible with MCC vision, mission, and values will be returned to the originator.
 5. The Bylaws Team will review compatible proposals for clarity. The Bylaws Team may consult with the person submitting the proposal in order to gain clarification, if needed.
 6. No later than five (5) months prior to the next General Conference, the Bylaws Team will submit all compatible Bylaw amendment proposals for review and comment by:
 - a. The Governing Board; and
 - b. The Council of Elders.
 7. Comments are to be submitted to the Chair of the Bylaws Team by the date indicated by the Bylaws Team, but no later than three (3) months prior to the next General Conference.
 8. The Bylaws Team will share any comments received with the person who submitted the proposal. The person who submitted the proposal may then choose whether to withdraw or modify the proposal or to have the original proposal submitted to General Conference.
 - a. If the person who submitted the proposal chooses to modify the proposal, the modified proposal can be re-submitted to the Bylaws Team.
 - b. At its discretion, the Bylaws Team may choose to resubmit the modified proposal to all members of the Lay House and of the Clergy House, Governing Board, and Council of Elders for additional review and comment.
 9. Bylaws amendment proposals that are (a) deemed to be inconsistent with MCC vision, mission, and values and/or (b) not financially viable will not be submitted for consideration by General Conference.
 10. The Bylaws Team will ensure that any Bylaw amendment proposals that will be considered by the next General Conference, along with impact statements prepared by the Governing Board and Council of Elders, are made available to the members of the Lay House and of the Clergy House by no later than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the next General Conference.

BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

As revised at General Conference XXIV, Acapulco, Mexico
Effective 29 June 2010

Addendum 2

CHARTER OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

Introduction

The purpose of this Charter of the Governing Board is to give clarity to board members and to assure transparency and accountability to those who have elected them.

Functions of the Governing Board

1. Policy Governance: The primary function of the Governing Board is to establish broad policies that provide the basis for planning, implementation and evaluation of all efforts to fulfill MCC's purpose, vision and direction, consistent with MCC's core values. Further, it is a function of the Governing Board to assure accountability for the execution of such policies.
2. Strategic Direction: It is a function of the Governing Board to engage in processes of strategic planning based upon the statements of purpose, vision, direction and core values as affirmed by the General Conference. Such processes shall be conducted collaboratively with the Elders and senior staff and will result in the establishment of strategic priorities.
3. Fiduciary Accountability: In its fiduciary function the Governing Board is entrusted with the power and authority to act on behalf of the UFMCC, and is accountable for assuring that all policies, procedures and practices within its jurisdiction are in compliance with UFMCC Bylaws, all applicable laws, and high ethical standards. In all of its actions the Governing Board shall exercise the legal duties of loyalty, care and obedience.
4. Management Oversight: It is a function of the Governing Board to exercise oversight over all operations of the UFMCC including acquisition of its revenues, allocation of its resources, stewardship of its assets, management of its risks, and achievement of its purposes. In exercise of its management oversight the Governing Board will delegate management responsibilities to staff.

Responsibilities of the Governing Board

1. Ensure adequate resources
 - a. Review and assess current revenue streams and trends
 - b. Evaluate current fund development policies and practices
 - c. Approve new fund development policies
 - d. Participate in the mobilization of resources and fund development initiatives
2. Provide proper financial oversight
 - a. Approve an annual budget for all operations of the UFMCC
 - b. Review timely financial reports to assess both budget performance and the financial position of the UFMCC
 - c. Approve policies for the safety and growth of investment of UFMCC's assets

- d. Review the results of an annual independent audit of all funds controlled by the UFMCC
 - e. Evaluate current financial management policies
 - f. Approve new financial management policies
3. Engage and participate in effective organizational planning
 - a. Annually review and assess the results of the most recent strategic planning process
 - b. Initiate, if needed, a new strategic planning process which includes collaboration of Elders and senior staff along with the Governing Board
 - c. Select, as appropriate, up to three strategic priorities to be addressed in work plans
 - d. Review and approve an annual work plan as submitted by the Moderator
 - e. Participate with the Moderator in evaluation of the results of the annual work plan
 4. Ensure appropriate risk management
 - a. Conduct an annual risk management audit as recommended by legal counsel
 - b. Conduct an annual review of insurance coverage
 - c. Approve risk management policies
 5. Ensure effective management of human resources
 - a. Conduct an annual review of human resources policies and practices
 - b. Approve human resources policies
 6. Communicate with constituents and other stakeholders
 - a. Post approved minutes of meetings immediately on the UFMCC website
 - b. Develop a periodic communiqué from the Governing Board to constituents and stakeholders
 - c. Prepare an annual report from the Governing Board, including results of the independent audit, to be sent to constituents and stakeholders and posted on the UFMCC website
 7. Manage the board's internal processes
 - a. Develop policies and procedures for Governing Board meetings
 - b. Develop policies and processes for the orientation of new members of the Governing Board
 8. Fulfill the board's role in the UFMCC Bylaws processes
 - a. Establish and maintain a process for the interpretation of UFMCC Bylaws on request
 - b. Establish and maintain policies and processes for proposals from the Governing Board for amendments to UFMCC Bylaws
 9. Support, assess and provide feedback on the performance of the Moderator
 - a. Assure that the Moderator receives frequent and constructive feedback
 - b. In collaboration with the Moderator design a process for annual feedback and dialogue on the Moderator's performance, recognizing the multiple accountabilities of this position.
 10. Assess and evaluate board performance
 - a. Design a process to periodically evaluate the performance of the Governing Board
 - b. Implement a process to evaluate the performance of the Governing Board at least once before each General Conference.

Structures of the Governing Board

1. **Officers:** The officers of the Governing Board shall include a Chairperson, who is the Moderator elected by the General Conference of the UFMCC, plus a Vice Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer elected by the Governing Board.
2. **Chief Executive Officer:** The Moderator of the UFMCC elected by the General Conference and accountable to the General Conference shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the UFMCC, President of the corporation and Chairperson of the Governing Board. As head of staff the Moderator will be the individual accountable to the Governing Board for effective management of all operations of the UFMCC.
3. **Committees/Teams:** The Governing Board may create and empower committees or teams to which some of the responsibilities of the Board may be delegated. Every committee or team of the Governing Board shall have a written charter that includes a statement of the group's purpose, members, duration, expected outcomes, limitations, reporting accountability, and resources, such as funding and/or staff support.
4. **Delegation of Duties to Advisors:** From time to time the Governing Board may choose to enter into agreements with advisors, such as contractors or consultants, to work on behalf of the Governing Board. In such cases, the agreements shall be in writing with accountability solely to the Governing Board.
5. **Meetings:** The Governing Board will determine the frequency and locations of its meetings. Meetings may be conducted by electronic means which allow all directors participating to hear each other simultaneously. No less than a majority of the members of the Governing Board must be present in order to transact business. Members of the Governing Board are also considered present if they are participating by electronic means which allows all participants to hear each other simultaneously.

Conduct of Board Members

1. **Compensation:** No member of the Governing Board, including the Moderator, shall be compensated financially for his or her service as a member of the Governing Board. Members of the Governing Board may be reimbursed for necessary travel and/or other out-of-pocket expenses in accordance with the policies and budget approved by the Governing Board.
2. **Conflict of Interest:** The Governing Board shall develop a Conflict of Interest policy applicable to its members
3. The Governing Board shall develop a Code of Conduct applicable to its members

Reservation of Powers

Powers beyond those limited by the Bylaws of the UFMCC, applicable laws or this Charter shall be within the purview of the Governing Board.

1 **BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP**
2 **OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES**

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4 **Addendum 3**

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6 **Criteria for the Affiliation of Churches**
7 **Established by the Council of Elders**
8 **Approved by the Governing Board, 5 October 2021**

9
10 **Effective 5 October 2021**

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13 1. Demonstrate willingness to ascribe to the UFMCC core values, vision, and
14 mission.
15
16 2. Demonstrate willingness to embrace UFMCC Bylaws as a covenantal
17 relationship.
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19 3. Provide identifiable Pastoral leadership authorized by UFMCC.
20
21 4. Gather for worship, engage in spiritual practices, and partake in rites and
22 sacraments. In gatherings and ministry reflect UFMCC's Statement of Faith and
23 the context of which the church is located.
24
25 5. Demonstrate generosity through sharing of treasures and talents to ensure
26 viability of the church.
27
28 6. Have a plan and make every good faith effort to compensate their pastor in some
29 way, always moving toward a sustainable level of regular compensation.
30
31 7. Organize and register as applicable by national and/or local law. Exceptions to
32 this include where incorporation or registration of churches would not be granted
33 to an MCC church or where an attempt to register the church with the
34 government could put the members of the church at risk of personal injury or
35 harm.
36
37 8. Establish governance structure that assures minimum standards for risk
38 management, accountability to the congregation and to the UFMCC Bylaws.
39
40 9. Submit monthly assessment and an annual report to UFMCC.
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42 10. Submit local church Bylaws/Standard Operating Procedures to the UFMCC
43 offices for review and approval.
44
45

46 “Within the UFMCC, all churches that meet the criteria as established by the Council of
47 Elders and approved by the Governing Board qualify for affiliation and recognition as an
48 affiliated church. The Council of Elders has the authority to approve requests for
49 affiliation. If an affiliated church ceases to meet the criteria for affiliation, a designee of
50 the Council of Elders may take appropriate actions of intervention, which may include
51 removal of the church’s affiliation status. The decision of the designee may be appealed
52 to the Council of Elders.”

Quoted from UFMCC Bylaws, Article V.B.2

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BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Addendum 4

(Effective 1st of January 2012)

MCC POLICY FOR DISCIPLINE OF MINISTRY LEADERS (AS ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNING BOARD)

Metropolitan Community Churches is a beloved community of justice, compassion, and reconciliation. We also seek to be a community of accountability and restoration. We call ourselves to the highest level of professional ethics, especially among our ministry leaders. We strive to hold each other in graceful accountability to authentic, integrated, and embodied ministry with one another and with and among God's people.

The MCC Director of Formation and Leadership Development has the responsibility for extending nurture to and ensuring accountability by all authorized ministry leaders within MCC. All persons authorized for ministry by MCC are expected to cooperate fully with MCC's accountability and disciplinary policy, processes, and procedures.

It is the policy of Metropolitan Community Churches that all individuals who are authorized by MCC to provide ministry leadership are to abide by and to be held accountable to the Statement of Ethical Guidelines for ministry leaders in MCC and by the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy.

For the purpose of this policy, those authorized by MCC to provide ministry leadership is defined as those who are:

1. Clergy ordained by MCC;
2. Ordained clergy from another denomination who have been granted a license to practice by MCC;
3. Registered as In Care with MCC;
4. Interim Pastoral Leaders;
5. Lay people elected by General Conference; and
6. Lay people who are appointed to positions by the Governing Board or Council of Elders.

This Policy and Process for Discipline of Ministry Leaders is not intended to create a promise or representation of continued employment, nor is it intended to create an express or implied contract with respect to the length of your employment or any other matter related to the terms and conditions of your employment. This Policy and Process from Discipline of Ministry Leaders does not create a legal entitlement to progressive discipline.

Metropolitan Community Churches reserves the right to suspend, terminate or otherwise alter the terms of services provided by any Ministry Leader without following the procedures set forth herein when exigent circumstances exist mandating action be taken.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR MINISTRY LEADERS IN MCC (AS ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS)

All ministry leaders authorized by Metropolitan Community Churches use the guidelines that follow to hold ourselves accountable to each other and to a ministry of integrity. When we fall short, MCC provides systems whereby there is room for discipline and grace. We seek to restore, to rehabilitate and to make restitution whenever possible; to help people escape loneliness, despair, and degradation; and to contribute to the wholeness of the body – where we seek to do no harm, but rather to edify.

We recognize that there are certain violations of our covenant of ministry together. Some behaviors are implicitly illegal and/or immoral, which constitute ethical violations and may result in a judiciary process, the end result of which may be suspension, loss of licensure and/or removal from office. Some behaviors and attitudes are unethical by our standards and compromise our ability to perform and provide ministry. Other behaviors and attitudes harm us and interfere with our ministry and our own efforts toward wholeness. We seek to address these violations honestly within the framework of our commitment to restorative, when possible, rather than retributive justice.

Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders

- **Honesty.** Ministry leaders strive to operate on the highest level of trust and integrity, which requires that we act honestly and fairly in our dealings with others. We strive to make all of our communication accurate, honest, and clear. We intentionally avoid misrepresenting the truth or misleading others. We strive to give appropriate credit to the originators of ideas or quotations that we utilize in our written or spoken communication, and will not knowingly present the material of others as our own.
- **Confidentiality.** Ministry leaders respect the integrity and protect the welfare of individuals as well as the communities we serve. We take seriously our obligation to safeguard information entrusted to us as professional ministers. If there is a legitimate reason for the health and well-being of an individual or the community for us to divulge information that has been shared with us in confidence, we will actively seek permission for this disclosure from the person(s) providing us the information before doing so. We also recognize that it may occasionally be appropriate to disclose confidential information, e.g. if that information pertains to the immediate danger of bodily harm/loss of life or when applicable laws mandate reporting.
- **Nonviolence.** Ministry leaders respect the inherent worth and dignity of all people and actively work to counter the forces of violence that inflict harm to individuals and communities. Such forms of violence include, but are not limited to, bias or discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, age, class, nationality, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, and any other characteristic of human diversity. We strive to ensure that our words and deeds do not directly lead to physical, psychological, spiritual, or ritual abuse.
- **Responsible Fiscal Management.** Ministry leaders strive to be faithful stewards of the resources for which we are given responsibility, including financial resources. We conduct our fiscal affairs with appropriate regard to recognized business and accounting procedures, as well as applicable civil laws. We do not condone theft, fraud, or the misappropriation of church funds or property.
- **Sexual Responsibility.** Ministry leaders affirm sexuality as a gift from God and strive to honor this gift by conducting our own lives in accordance with responsible, positive sexual ethics and in accordance with the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy. A positive sexual ethic balances desire within

the embodied framework of our emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual selves, while preserving and honoring mutuality and consent.

- **Responsible Use of Authority.** Ministry leaders strive to use our authority responsibly. We use our professional training, relationships, and practices for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage. We are mindful of the power differential that exists in our relationships with those we serve and supervise, and strive to structure these relationships in mutually respectful, mutually empowering, and non-exploitative ways.
- **Professional Services.** Ministry leaders respect the various educational and vocational standards, as well as the systems of accreditation, affiliation, and mutual accountability that exist for our own and other professions. Therefore, as ministry leaders, we truthfully represent the facts of our professional qualifications and affiliations, and we limit our own professional practices to those for which we are equipped, authorized, and licensed. Regardless of our professional qualifications, ministry leaders, when acting in the course and scope of their functions and duties for MCC, must limit their activities to Biblically-based counseling or guidance. MCC is not authorized as a provider of psychological, psychiatric or other physical or mental healthcare services. UFMCC clergy allows ministry leaders to provide religiously-based counseling or guidance, not secular services.
- **Exercise of Professional Etiquette in Collegial Relationships.** Ministry leaders recognize that we do not do ministry on our own and we strive to honor and respect our network of colleagues in MCC. We mutually support our shared ministry by doing no harm through word or deed to the ministries or reputations of other colleagues or churches. We value the highest good of local churches over our own personal ambition or advantage. We commit ourselves to practicing professional courtesy with our colleagues and maintaining clear boundaries with former churches and parishioners. For example, we return to churches we have formerly served only with the invitation/agreement of the current pastor. Additionally, we honor the role of the current pastor in performing rites and sacraments and perform or participate in sacramental functions only with the invitation/agreement of the current pastor.
- **Ethical and Responsible Use of Social Media.** Understanding that we live in a world that is highly connected by social media and virtual technology, Ministry Leaders seek to maintain appropriate boundaries and behavior in the virtual world as in the physical world. We adhere to safe church practices in our use of digital communication as well as social media and networking sites. We maintain an awareness of best practices for social media as outlined in [MCC's Social Media Guidelines for Clergy and Congregations](#). We observe the same ethical boundaries and behaviors with regard to former churches or church members as we do in the physical world.
- **Commitment to Addiction Recovery.** Ministry leaders understand that addiction to alcohol, drugs, and other substances/practices can do us harm, impair our judgment, and seriously interfere with our ability to effectively minister in our communities. We strive for appropriate and responsible use of substances and affirm our intention to seek treatment and recovery for ourselves when necessary.
- **Covenant with MCC.** Ministry leaders recognize the MCC Bylaws as a reflection of the covenantal relationship that exists between MCC and its members, friends, groups, and affiliated churches. We will honor the Bylaws and will participate and encourage our churches to participate regularly in MCC Network Gatherings and General Conferences as primary avenues for our shared discernment, continuing education/formation, mutual edification, and relationship building.

MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy (AS ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS)

Since its founding, UFMCC has offered a counter voice to the sex negativity of Judeo Christian culture. Therefore, the UFMCC Sexual Misconduct Policy must, on the one hand, acknowledge the risk of sexual misconduct, while on the other hand avoid the risk of the disembodiment of leaders who are called to model health and wholeness, including sexual wholeness.

Let it be affirmed that sex is a gift from God. The divine value of sex includes but is not limited to pleasure, procreation, intimate communications, grace, and love. God's gift of sexuality is to be responsibly embraced by all people, whether partnered or single, lay or clergy. A complete and responsible sexual ethic embraces the beauty of relationships among people of many sexual orientations and gender identities.

A positive sexual ethic balances desire within the embodied framework of our emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual selves, while preserving and honoring mutuality and consent.

Following are some examples of certain behaviors that constitute a sexual misconduct:

1. Sexual contact with a minor is sexual misconduct; or
2. Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is legally incompetent or in any other way a vulnerable adult; or
3. Sexual harassment of any person, including those in relationships in which there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to sexually oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated requests for social engagements; or
4. Whether clergy or lay, using one's position of privilege for sexual exploitation is sexual misconduct. A perpetrator who induces another person to undertake or endure a sexual act by serious abuse of that person's position of dependency on the perpetrator, shall be guilty of sexual exploitation.
5. The attempt to develop a sexual relationship with a person with whom s/he has a pastoral or supervisory relationship

A "pastoral relationship" is defined as a relationship between a clergy person, employee or volunteer and person receiving direct supervision, individual spiritual and/or pastoral counseling and providing confidential and/or privileged information to the clergy person, employee or volunteer.

At times, a clergy person, employee, or pastoral leader may develop an appropriate sexual relationship within the context of UFMCC ministry, including the congregation in which a person is serving, if there has been no direct supervision or individual spiritual counseling. Such relationships are to be entered into with extreme caution and a spirit of discernment.

MCC PROCESS FOR DISCIPLINE OF MINISTRY LEADERS (AS ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS In December 2011)

The process for discipline of MCC ministry leaders consists of seven stages:

- Stage 1: Pre-Complaint
- Stage 2: Complaint
- Stage 3: Investigation
- Stage 4: Hearing
- Stage 5: Resolution
- Stage 6: Appeal
- Stage 7: Healing of the Affected Church/Board/Agency

Anyone who alleges that an MCC spiritual leader has violated the MCC Statement of Ethical Guidelines for ministry leaders or the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy should immediately submit a Report of Concern form to the Director of Formation and Leadership Development. The Director of Formation and Leadership Development will decide whether consideration of such Report of Concern should be initially addressed at the local level (Stage 1) or be initially processed as a Complaint (Stage 2). Allegations of egregious misconduct, violations of the Sexual Misconduct Policy, or other actions involving potential or actual civil or criminal charges may be initially processed as a Complaint (Stage 2).

The Office of Formation and Leadership Development maintains a file on each authorized ministry leader. The file includes information regarding the authorized ministry leader's involvement as the subject of any disciplinary matter. Full access to the disciplinary file of an authorized ministry leader is limited to staff of the Office of Formation of Leadership Development. Unless otherwise specified in the MCC Process for Discipline of ministry leaders, disclosure of any disciplinary information beyond the outcome of the disciplinary matter and license status of the authorized ministry leader is limited to the authorized ministry leader, members of the Council of Elders and Governing Board, and such other disclosure as might be required by local, state, or national law.

APPOINTMENT OF JUDICIAL PERSONNEL

The Council of Elders will appoint lay and clergy members of UFMCC to serve in an International Judicial Pool (the Pool). These persons must be members in good standing of UFMCC. The term of office is five (5) years. Members of the Pool are supported and supervised by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development (the Director).

Members of the Council of Elders or of the Governing Board are not eligible to serve as members of the International Judicial Pool or to serve in a temporary capacity as a Judicial Officer, Investigator, Judiciary Committee member, and/or Appeals Panel member.

An appointed member of the Pool may not be assigned to a disciplinary matter unless that member has successfully completed training for the particular role for which the member is being considered. Training and certification will be provided by the Director.

JUDICIAL OFFICERS

The Director shall appoint an unbiased person from the Pool to serve as the Judicial Officer when:

- The Director receives a Report of Concern alleging that a ministry leaders has violated the MCC Statement of Ethical Guidelines for ministry leaders and/or the Sexual Misconduct Policy;
- The Director finds that the Report of Concern falls within the purview of the MCC Process for Discipline of ministry leaders; and
- The Director finds that the allegations are reasonably reliable.

The Judicial Officer is responsible for coordinating the processing of the Report of Concern until the matter is resolved.

INVESTIGATORS, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS, AND APPEALS PANEL MEMBERS

The Judicial Officer shall select investigators, Judiciary Committee members, and Appeals Panel members from among the members of the International Judicial Pool. Those selected will be those who have no vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings. If an appropriate person from the International Judicial Pool is not available or if, in the judgment of the Judicial Officer, particular skills and/or expertise are needed, the Judicial Officer may appoint another person who has no vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings to serve in a temporary capacity as an investigator, Judiciary Committee member, and/or Appeals Panel member. Professional investigators may be used, if deemed necessary by the Judicial Officer.

CHALLENGES TO THE APPOINTMENT OF JUDICIAL OFFICIALS

The person making the Report of Concern and/or the ministry leader may challenge the appointment of a particular Judicial Officer, investigator, or member of the Judiciary Committee. Challenge to an appointment can be made only if the person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader can substantiate that the person being challenged is potentially or actually biased for or against the person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader and therefore would be unable to impartially fulfill his/her responsibilities in the judiciary process.

1. To challenge the appointment of the Judicial Officer, the person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader must submit a written challenge to the Director within two (2) business days of having received notification of the appointment of the Judicial Officer or within ten (10) business days after it is sent, whichever occurs first.
2. To challenge the appointment of a particular investigator or member of the Judiciary Committee, the person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader must submit a written challenge to the Judicial Officer within two (2) business days of having received notification of the appointment of the particular investigator or member of the Judiciary Committee or within ten (10) business days after it is sent, whichever occurs first.

Upon receiving a written challenge, the Director or Judicial Officer will consider the challenge, render a decision, and inform the person making the Report of Concern and the ministry leader of the decision in writing within three (3) business days.

1. In his/her sole discretion, the Director or Judicial Officer may decide either (a) to remove the challenged person from the assignment and appoint someone else, or (b) to allow the challenged person to fulfill the assignment.
2. The decision of the Director or Judicial Officer is not subject to appeal.

The person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader does not have the right to submit an appeal on the basis of potential or actual bias if the person with the concern or the ministry leader failed to make a timely challenge to an appointment, as prescribed above, unless such demonstration of bias occurred after the time for challenge of appointment has expired. Where the demonstration of bias occurs after the time to challenge a Judicial Officer, investigator or member of the Judiciary Committee, the person making the Report of Concern or the ministry leader must submit a written challenge to the Director or Judicial Officer within two (2) business days of having become aware of the demonstration of bias.

CHALLENGES TO PROCEDURAL ERRORS

The person with the concern or the ministry leader may challenge the implementation of a procedure contained within the judiciary process only if the person with the concern or the ministry leader can substantiate that the alleged procedural violation may substantially impact the resolution of the complaint.

1. To challenge implementation of the procedures by the Judicial Officer, the person with the concern or the ministry leader must submit a written challenge to the Director within two (2) business days of the date when the person with the concern or the ministry leader becomes aware that an alleged error occurred.
2. To challenge implementation of the procedures by an investigator, member(s) of the Judiciary Committee, or member(s) of the Appeal Panel, the person with the concern or the ministry leader must submit a written challenge to the Judicial Officer within two (2) business days of the date when the person with the concern or the ministry leader becomes aware that an alleged error occurred.

Upon receiving a written challenge, the Director or Judicial Officer shall consider the challenge, render a decision, and inform the person with the concern and the ministry leader of the decision in writing within three (3) business days.

1. In his/her sole discretion, the Director or Judicial Officer may decide either to:
 - a. Direct the erring Judicial Officer or judiciary personnel to correct the error by redoing the procedure that was challenged;
 - b. Allow the erring judicial official to continue in the assignment but appoint someone else to correct the error in procedure;
 - c. Remove appointment from the erring judicial official and appoint someone else to complete the assignment;
 - d. Determine that there was no error; or
 - e. Allow the error in procedure to stand.

The person with the concern or the ministry leader shall not have the right to submit an appeal on the basis of procedural error if the person with the concern or the ministry leader failed to make a timely challenge to a procedural error, as prescribed above.

COSTS OF THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

The cost of administration of the disciplinary process shall be the responsibility of MCC. MCC reserves the right to seek restitution from anyone who brings forward a frivolous or malicious Statement of Concern.

1. The cost of bringing forward a Statement of Concern shall be the responsibility of the person with the concern.
2. The cost of responding to and defending against a Statement of Concern and of the ministry leader's participation in any prescribed program of growth or corrective action shall be the responsibility of the respondent ministry leader.
3. The cost of any healing process shall be the responsibility of the affected church or agency.

If the person with the concern, the ministry leader, or the affected church/agency is financially unable to bear the costs of participation in the MCC Process for Discipline of ministry leaders, a request for assistance may be made to the Moderator.

OVERVIEW OF POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Reconciliation is a key component of the disciplinary process. MCC seeks to rehabilitate and restore, not punish those deemed unfit under the process. The purpose of this section is to outline the possible outcomes that may result in disposing of a Report of Concern and discuss generally the range of rehabilitation, sanctions and reconciliation/healing options available to the Judicial Officer and the Judiciary Committee. If the Judiciary Committee finds that a concern is sustained, it then recommends to the Judicial Officer any rehabilitation and sanctions that should be considered in the appropriate resolution of the case. This may include rehabilitation requirements that are to be met if the ministry leader wishes to continue in ministry and any sanctions if appropriate under the circumstances.

Whenever a Report of Concern is filed in MCC, it is responded to and a determination is made by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and/or the Judicial Officer as to the most appropriate way to proceed in considering the matter. The following dispositions are possible to resolve a Report of Concern:

- A. Reporting Person Not Cooperative:** If the person who reports the original Report of Concern refuses to participate in the process to determine the veracity or weight of their concern, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and/or the Judicial Officer may decide to take no further action on the Report of Concern and determine that the concern does not warrant further action by a Judiciary Committee.

This situation might occur, for instance, when the assigned investigator attempts to interview the person with the concern and the person refuses to respond to efforts to make contact, answer questions, provide documentation necessary to determine the veracity of their report, etc. In this situation, the Judicial Officer shall inform the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and the Moderator of this decision. The Director of Formation and Leadership Development will then communicate with the Board of Directors of the affected church or leaders of the authorized ministry to advise them that the process has been terminated. The Report of Concern shall be placed in the ministry leader's file, along with a document prepared by the Judicial Officer indicating that no action was taken due to lack of cooperation from the person with the concern.

- B. Concern Unfounded:** After the investigation is completed, the Judicial Officer determines that there is no trustworthy evidence that supports the Report of Concern. This finding is a complete exoneration of the ministry leader and will be a finding that reflects their conduct was proper, within all rules and bylaws, consistent with good ethical behavior and good ministry practice within MCC. This means that the ministry leader shall be determined to be reaffirmed fit for ministry.

If this is the determination, the Judicial Officer may deem that the process does not warrant further action by a Judiciary Committee. The Judicial Officer shall inform the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and the Moderator of this decision. The Director of Formation and Leadership Development will then communicate with the Board of Directors of the affected church or leaders of the authorized ministry to advise them that the process is completed. This finding shall not be used in any manner to limit the ministry leader's fitness for ministry or future assignments. The Report of Concern shall be filed in the ministry leader's file, along with a statement prepared by the Judicial Officer indicating that the matter was fully

investigated and a determination was made that the concern had no merit and thus was not referred to a Judiciary Committee. If the file is reviewed by any person in the future where disclosure of the Report of Concern is made, there will be also disclosure of the written decision of the Judicial Officer as well.

- C. Concern Not Sustained:** The Concern was fully investigated and referred by the Judicial Officer to a Judiciary Committee for hearing; the Committee decided that there was insufficient evidence or information to determine that the Concern was true.

If a concern is not sustained, then a discussion with Judicial Officer and the Chair of the Judiciary Committee will jointly determine whether the ministry leader could still benefit from some sort of growth plan or intervention due to any ancillary findings that may have been observed or discovered during the process. Such growth plan or intervention is purely for the benefit of developing or training the ministry leader and shall not be seen in any manner as punitive or as a sanction. If such finding is recommended, the Judicial Officer will contact the ministry leader and recommend the plan. Participation by the ministry leader in any such plan is optional, not required. Documentation of the Not Sustained finding by the Judiciary Committee, an outline of the plan developed and recommended, and the decision of the ministry leader to participate or not to participate will be filed in the ministry leader's file. If the file is reviewed by any person in the future where disclosure of the Report of Concern is made, there will be also disclosure of the written decision of the Judicial Officer, the recommended plan and the Ministry Leader's decision to participate or not. The Not Sustained finding shall not be used in any manner to determine the ministry leader's current fitness for ministry, but the recommended plan and the ministry leader's decision to participate may be used for future decisions involving same or similar conduct or Reports of Concern and may be used in future determinations of fitness.

- D. Concern Sustained:** The Concern was fully investigated and referred by the Judicial Officer to a Judiciary Committee for hearing; the Committee decided that there was sufficient evidence or information to determine that the Concern has been substantiated. If a concern is sustained, then a discussion occurs among the members of the Judiciary Committee to determine which path to restoration should be recommended to the Judicial Officer. The Chair of the Judiciary Committee may invite the ministry leader and/or the person with the concern to participate in the discussion in whole or in part. While the ministry leader and the person with the concern may participate in the discussion, the determination of what is to be recommended is the purview of the Judiciary Committee.

STAGE 1: PRE-COMPLAINT

Prior to submitting a Report of Concern Form (which is called for at Stage 2) and as soon as a potential for conflict or difficulty arises, the person with a concern and/or a ministry leader should first attempt to resolve the matter in one of the following three ways:

1. Request assistance from the ministry leader’s authorizing body.
2. Request that the Director organize a Support Consultation; the Director has the sole authority to determine how to respond to the request.
3. Request intervention by an Elder.

The Director may issue an exemption from Stage 1 when the conflict involves egregious misconduct, potential violation of the Sexual Misconduct Policy, or actions involving civil or criminal charge.

1. REQUEST ASSISTANCE FROM THE MINISTRY LEADER’S AUTHORIZING BODY

Ministry Leader	Authorizing Body
Clergy ordained by MCC and serving in an MCC church	The administrative body of the local MCC church where the ministry leader is serving
Clergy ordained by MCC and serving in other ministry settings	The other ministry setting
Clergy ordained by other denominations who have been appointed by an Elder	The appointing Elder
Those registered as In Care with MCC	The administrative body of the endorsing church
Interim Pastoral Leaders who have been appointed by an Elder	The appointing Elder
Lay people who serve in elected or appointed positions at the denominational level	The Moderator, acting on behalf of General Conference

All authorizing bodies are strongly encouraged to adopt and publish an appropriate policy and procedure for conflict resolution. In the event that no local policy for conflict resolution exists, the following “Basic Conflict Resolution Policy for Authorizing Bodies” may be utilized.

Basic Conflict Resolution Policy for Authorizing Bodies

The root word of discipline is “disciple.” This is a familiar word. A disciple is one who follows and, as in the case of the Biblical disciples, grows into leadership. This process of learning and growth is different for every person. Unfortunately, conflict is often a part of this growth process. For that reason, the intent of the conflict resolution policy is first and foremost to support the growth of our leaders and congregations as they seek to be leaders in their own communities.

Conflict is a part of any congregation’s cycle of life; sometimes those conflicts are between ministry leaders and the people they serve. There are healthy and unhealthy ways to deal with these conflicts. Unhealthy ways include rumor, gossip, and avoidance. Healthy ways include direct dealing, admitting our shortcomings, and forgiving one another. It is the intent of this policy to encourage direct conversation (direct dealing)

between the persons directly involved in an attempt to resolve the conflict or disagreement before bringing forth a complaint against another person.

The attempt at direct resolution is a first step. At this step, only those who are directly affected participate. Most conflicts can be resolved at this level in a spirit of love and mutual respect.

If a conflict or concern cannot be resolved one on one, then the Board of Directors should be made aware of the situation and assign a mediator from the Board or congregation to hear the complaint or problem and to help the parties reach an agreement or understanding, in the spirit of love and respect for one another. At this point, only the Board and those directly affected are involved. In a good process, other people in the congregation do not hear 'sides of the story', rumors, or gossip.

Sometimes direct intervention by the Board is inappropriate, especially in instances of egregious misconduct, sexual abuse, assault or harassment, or actions involving civil or criminal charges. In such rare instances, the Board should refer the matter directly to the Director of Formation and Leadership Development.

2. SUPPORT CONSULTATION

One of the ways in which MCC facilitates processes of reconciliation and restoration is by providing Support Consultations that are facilitated by a Covenant Team. A Covenant Team provides authorized ministry leaders a safe space for counsel and/or encouragement without fear of recrimination. A Covenant Team consists of experienced ministry leaders appointed by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and may be augmented by other appropriate ministry leaders at the discretion of the Director.

A Support Consultation takes place when something has occurred or might be occurring that needs to be looked at in some depth. In most cases, this consultation is precipitated by a situation or concern that has arisen with the ministry leader, the setting for ministry, or the relationship between the ministry leader and the authorizing body.

In a Support Consultation, the Covenant Team is seeking to clarify the specific issues, find the extent to which there may be an impediment to effective ministry, and identify ways for actions to be taken to resolve an identified problem. The desired outcome is for all covenantal partners involved to agree to a course of action that will be evaluated together at a specified later date.

The Covenant Team

When there is a need for a Support Consultation, the Director selects at least three (3) members of MCC to serve as the Covenant Team for that situation. The members of the Covenant Team may include lay people and clergy.

Participation

A Support Consultation may be requested by an authorizing body, a ministry leader, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, or a member of the Council of Elders. A ministry leader may want support in addressing a concern with the setting for ministry. An authorizing body or Elder may seek assistance in working through an issue, or the Director may initiate a consultation if circumstances

warrant. MCC staff familiar with the situation may also share information with the Director to determine whether a Support Consultation is called for.

When a Support Consultation is convened, it is appropriate to include all covenantal partners most directly involved in the situation. If, for example, a ministry leader requests a consultation to address a particular conflict with an authorizing body, both the ministry leader and the authorizing body would be given opportunity to participate in order to address the concern together.

Issues Addressed

The consultative nature of a Support Consultation may be used to address a wide range of concerns including:

- A situation that may be hindering the person's ability to practice or function in ministry effectively.
- A request by a spiritual leader for an opportunity to reflect on his or her ministry and consider options for the future.
- A concern caused by a change in the setting for ministry with resulting changes in the conditions under which the call was extended and accepted.
- A concern about conflict that has arisen between the spiritual leader and the local church or other authorizing body, or certain members within the local church or other authorizing body.
- Other issues or concerns involving the relationship among the various covenantal partners.

The Support Consultation allows the Covenant Team to address issues in a nurturing, pastoral manner—identifying the issues, determining the concerns that need to be addressed, and working toward a plan of action with all covenantal partners.

A Support Consultation is not intended to address questions about a person's fitness for ministry. If, during the course of the conference, the Covenant Team becomes aware of information that raises a question about the spiritual leader's fitness for ministry, the Covenant Team may request the Office of Formation and Leadership Development to initiate a Fitness Review.

Potential Outcomes

A Support Consultation can result in any of the following outcomes:

- **No Further Action Required.** The concern is explored and the consultation provides sufficient opportunity for reflection or counsel. No further action is needed.
- **Mutually Agreed-upon Plan of Action.** The concern is explored with all the parties involved and a plan to address or correct the situation is agreed upon with checkpoints to review progress. Those involved agree to all the actions called for in the plan.
- **Advisory Statement.** The Covenant Team prepares an advisory statement about the situation if all parties cannot agree to follow a mutually agreed-upon plan of action. Such an advisory statement may outline the needed course(s) of action determined during the consultation, any

potential consequences related to the course(s) of action, and mention of specific resources available related to the course(s) of action. The advisory statement is shared with all covenantal partners, the appropriate Elder, and any other parties directly involved in the situation. The advisory statement becomes a permanent part of the records of Metropolitan Community Churches and is placed in the ministry leader's file.

3. INTERVENTION BY AN ELDER

When intervention by an Elder is requested, the intervention process to be followed shall be in accordance with MCC Bylaws Article V.B.4.b.

Potential Outcomes

An intervention by an Elder can result in the following outcomes:

- **No Further Action Required.** The concern is explored and the intervention provides sufficient opportunity for reflection or counsel. No further action is needed.
- **Mutually Agreed-upon Plan of Action.** The concern is explored with all the parties involved and a plan to address or correct the situation is agreed upon with checkpoints to review progress. Those involved agree to all the actions called for in the plan.
- **Advisory Statement.** The Elder prepares an advisory statement about the situation if all parties cannot agree to follow a mutually agreed-upon plan of action. Such an advisory statement may outline the needed course(s) of action determined during the intervention, any potential consequences related to the course(s) of action, and mention of specific resources available related to the course of action. The advisory statement is shared with all covenantal partners and the Director of Formation and Leadership Development. The advisory statement becomes a permanent part of the records of Metropolitan Community Churches and is placed in the ministry leader's file.

Information Gathering and Record Keeping

An intervention by an Elder is primarily designed to bring resolution to a situation. With that in mind, records are maintained in such a way that all covenantal partners are encouraged to share openly and honestly in order to strengthen the ministry.

The details of the intervention need to be reported by the Elder to the covenantal partners who participated in the consultation and to the Director for placement in the confidential files maintained by the Office of Formation and Leadership Development.

Should the matter be referred to Stage 2, the Elder shall also provide a written summary of the process followed to address the concern, the participants in the process, and a general statement of the outcome.

The confidential records should also include a summary of the contacts between the Office of Formation and Leadership Development and the involved parties, a description of the concern, and steps taken to address the concern. The details of any agreements, recommendations, or advisory statements resulting from a Support Consultation should be made in writing and kept in the ministry leader's confidential MCC file where they can be accessed by appropriate parties in the future.

STAGE 2: COMPLAINT

Unless the Director of Formation and Leadership Development has determined that the allegations in the Report of Concern substantively indicate it should be initially proposed as a Stage 2 complaint, a Report of Concern will not, in most cases, be received for consideration at Stage 2 of the MCC Process for Discipline of Ministry Leaders unless the person with the concern can attest to having participated in good-faith Stage 1 attempts to resolve the concern and that such attempts had not resolved the matter.

If the matter is not resolved during Stage 1 to the satisfaction of the person making the Report of Concern, the ministry leader, and the authorizing body, then the Director of Formation and Leadership Development may make any related information or documentation available to the person making the Report of Concern and/or the ministry leader, upon request. Only if the Director of Formation and Leadership Development has determined, after consulting with legal counsel if necessary, that the release of such information or documentation will not subject MCC to liability for violation of privacy of other legal rights. A request for information must be received by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development within twenty (20) calendar days of the completion of Stage 1. The request for information must be fulfilled within ten (10) calendar days after the request is received.

REPORT OF CONCERN

Anyone who alleges that an MCC ministry leader has violated the MCC Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders or the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy, or has exhibited other actions involving potential or actual civil or criminal charges should submit a Report of Concern Form (Form DP-1) to the Director. The Director will decide whether consideration of such concern should be initially addressed at the local level (Stage 1) or be initially processed as a Complaint (Stage 2).

The Report of Concern form is designed to guide the investigation process by providing specifics about the nature of the concern, potential evidence and witnesses, and what, if any, steps have already been taken to achieve resolution.

The Report of Concern form may also be used for self-reporting by ministry leaders who have been found guilty of criminal misconduct or who have been held civilly liable for misconduct involving moral turpitude.

The Director of Formation and Leadership Development may also initiate a Report of Concern on behalf of MCC.

DETERMINATION OF PURVIEW AND RELIABILITY

Upon receiving a Report of Concern, the Director shall first determine if the complaint falls within the purview of the MCC Policy for Discipline of Ministry Leaders. If the Director finds that the concern falls within the purview of the MCC Policy for Discipline of Ministry Leaders, then the Director shall determine whether the allegations stated in the concern are reasonably reliable. Reasonably reliable concerns are those that are based (a) on first-hand information or (b) on other information of such a nature as to indicate sufficient reliability to warrant further inquiry.

NOTIFICATION OF DETERMINATION

Within five (5) business days of receiving a Report of Concern, the Director shall issue a written determination of purview and reliability to the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and the Moderator. A copy of the determination and of the Report of Concern shall be placed in the ministry leader's MCC file.

1. If the Director of Formation and Leadership Development determines that the concern falls outside of the purview of the MCC Policy for Discipline of Ministry Leaders and/or that the concern is not sufficiently reliable so as to warrant further inquiry, notification shall include a copy of the written determination and of the Report of Concern. A copy of the determination and of the Report of Concern shall be placed in the ministry leader's MCC file.
2. If the Director of Formation and Leadership Development determines that the concern falls within the purview of the MCC Process for Discipline of Ministry Leaders and that the concern is reasonably reliable, notification to the ministry leader shall include:
 - a. A copy of the MCC Process for Discipline of Ministry Leaders;
 - b. The notice of determination;
 - c. A copy of the Report of Concern and any supporting documentation or other material submitted by the person with the concern; and
 - d. A copy of the Response to Concern Form (Form DP-2).

RESPONSE TO CONCERN BY THE MINISTRY LEADER

The ministry leader shall complete and submit the Response to Concern Form to the Director within ten (10) business days.

Within five (5) business days of receiving the completed Response to Concern Form, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development shall:

1. Appoint a Judicial Officer to be responsible for coordinating the processing of the complaint until the matter is resolved.
2. Provide to the Judicial Officer a copy of the Report of Concern and any supporting documentation or other material submitted by the person with the concern and a copy of the Response to Concern Form and any supporting documentation or other material submitted by the ministry leader.
3. Provide the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and the Moderator with the name of the Judicial Officer.
4. Provide to the person with the concern a copy of the Response to Concern Form and any supporting documentation or other material submitted by the ministry leader.
5. Provide to the Moderator a copy of the Report of Concern and of the Response to Concern Form.

ADMISSION OF ALLEGATIONS

A ministry leader may admit to the allegations in writing at any point in the disciplinary process, up to and including during a hearing.

1. If the written admission is received prior to the date of the hearing, within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written admission, the Judicial Officer may determine resolution of the matter with the ministry leader and the person with the concern.
2. If the written admission is received during or after the pre-hearing conference, the Judicial Officer may cancel the hearing. In such instance, the Judiciary Committee may meet with the ministry leader and consult with the person with the concern and/or with the affected church or agency to determine resolution of the matter.
3. A written copy of the admission and determination will be provided to the person with the concern and the Moderator within five (5) business days following determination of the resolution and will be placed in the ministry leader's MCC file.

NOTIFICATION TO THE AFFECTED CHURCH/AGENCY - In consultation with the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, the Judicial Officer shall determine whether the affected church/agency will be informed that a complaint has been received against the ministry leader serving that church/agency. This notification will not include a copy of the written Report of Concern and/or of the Response to Concern.

INACTIVE STATUS

1. At the discretion of the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, the Director may place the ministry leader on inactive status. The ministry leader must be placed on inactive status immediately if the allegations indicate the possibility of injury to persons or property.
 - a. If placed on inactive status, the ministry leader shall cease to function as a ministry leader until resolution of the matter.
 - b. A ministry leader placed on inactive status who is compensated by MCC or an MCC congregation shall continue to receive all compensation, insurance, and other benefits until resolution of the matter.
2. Should secular criminal charges arise from substantially the same incident(s) giving rise to the Report of Concern:
 - a. The disciplinary process shall be suspended until the resolution of the secular criminal charges.
 - b. The Director of Formation and Leadership Development shall decide whether to place the ministry leader on inactive status, pending resolution of the secular criminal charges.
 - c. While on inactive status pending resolution of the secular criminal charges, continuation of any compensation to a ministry leader who is employed by UFMCC shall be at the sole discretion of the Moderator, in consultation with the Governing Board.

- d. While on inactive status pending resolution of the secular criminal charges, any compensation to a ministry leader employed by a local church or other agency shall be at the sole discretion of the administrative body of that local church or agency.

STAGE 3: INVESTIGATION

If the Director of Formation and Leadership Development finds that the concern falls within the purview of the MCC Judiciary Process and that the concern is reasonably reliable, the concern is considered to be a formal “complaint” and the Judicial Officer will arrange for an investigation to be conducted.

SELECTION OF INVESTIGATOR - Within ten (10) business days of receiving a Report of Concern, the Judicial Officer shall select an investigator to conduct a preliminary investigation. The Judicial Officer shall provide the investigator with a copy of the complete Report of Concern and Response to Concern forms, including any supporting documentation or other material submitted by the person with the concern and the ministry leader.

TIME PERIOD FOR THE INVESTIGATION - The investigation will be conducted within a time period to be determined by the Judicial Officer and may be extended, if necessary.

INVESTIGATOR’S REPORT – A Report of Investigation (Form DP-3) will be submitted by the investigator to the Judicial Officer within five (5) business days of the conclusion of the investigation.

OUTCOME OF INVESTIGATION - If the Judicial Officer determines that the outcome of the investigation is that the complaint is not substantiated, the Judicial Officer will submit the Report of Investigation Form to the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and will provide a written summary to the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and the Moderator within five (5) business days of receipt of the Report of Investigation. The written summary of the findings will be placed in the ministry leader's MCC file to identify possible patterns of misconduct.

If the Judicial Officer determines that the complaint has been substantiated and the ministry leader does not admit to the allegations in the complaint in writing, the Judicial Officer shall bring charges against the ministry leader.

CHARGES

If the Judicial Officer determines that the complaint has been substantiated and the ministry leader has not admitted to the allegations in writing, the Judicial Officer shall bring charges against the ministry leader.

1. Within five (5) business days of receiving the Report of Investigation, the Judicial Officer shall provide the following to the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and the Moderator:
 - a. A formal Statement of Charges (Form DP-4), prepared by the Judicial Officer;
 - b. The Report of Investigation, including a complete copy of the investigation records, all documentation, and any other information that had been submitted to the investigator; and
 - c. A procedural summary (Form DP-5), prepared by the Judicial Officer.

The Judicial Officer shall simultaneously notify the affected church/agency by sending them a copy of the formal statement of charges and procedural summary.

2. Within five (5) business days of issuing the Statement of Charges, the Judicial Officer shall select three (3) persons from the International Judicial Pool to form the Judiciary Committee and shall appoint one of the three members of the Judiciary Committee to serve as Chair. A member of the International Judicial Pool may not serve on a Judiciary Committee if the member:

- a. Has a potential bias for or against the ministry leader;
 - b. Has a potential bias for or against the person bringing the concern;
 - c. Has been directly involved in prior efforts to seek resolution of the concern;
 - d. Has been directly or indirectly involved in previous stages of the process;
 - e. Has been directly impacted by the concern; and/or
 - f. Would be directly impacted by the outcome.
3. Within five (5) business days following the selection of the Judiciary Committee, the Judicial Officer shall provide each member of the Judiciary Committee with:
- a. The Report of Concern;
 - b. The Response to Concern;
 - c. A formal statement of charges, prepared by the Judicial Officer;
 - d. The Investigator's Final Report, including a complete copy of the investigation records, all documentation, and any other information that had been submitted to the investigator; and
 - e. A procedural summary, prepared by the Judicial Officer.

Staff of the MCC Offices will provide administrative and logistical support to the Judicial Officer and the Judiciary Committee.

PRE-HEARING CONFERENCE

The Judiciary Committee shall meet within fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of receiving the formal statement of charges to conduct a pre-hearing conference. The purpose of the pre-hearing conference is for the Judiciary Committee to review the charges, investigation records, and summary of investigation in order to determine whether to order any further investigation be conducted prior to the hearing. The Judicial Officer may participate in the pre-conference hearing upon the request of the Chair of the Judiciary Committee.

If the Judiciary Committee discovers during the pre-hearing conference or during the hearing that there are other concerns regarding the fitness of the ministry leader beyond those addressed in the Statement of Charges, the Chair of the Judiciary Committee shall inform the Judicial Officer in writing. Upon receipt of such information, the Judicial Officer shall then refer those concerns to the Director of Formation and Leadership Development for resolution; resolution can include initiating a separate disciplinary process to allow for due process through a complete investigation of the new information. Such referral shall not be a consideration in the proceedings related to the Statement of Charges that gave rise to the pre-hearing conference.

STAGE 4: HEARING

The Judiciary Committee will convene a hearing within forty-five (45) calendar days from the date of receiving the formal statement of charges. Further investigation may be conducted during this interval, if deemed necessary by the Judiciary Committee and the Judicial Officer.

SCOPE OF THE HEARING

In order for the Judiciary Committee to determine whether the ministry leader did or did not violate the Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders in MCC and/or the Sexual Misconduct Policy, the scope of the hearing is limited to consideration of the matter(s) contained in the Statement of Charges.

LOCATION OF THE HEARING

The hearing may be conducted either in physical or virtual space, as determined by the Judiciary Committee and the Judicial Officer.

If the hearing is to be conducted in physical space

The location of the hearing is to be in the geographical area in which the ministry leader and/or the person with the concern resides or in another location deemed more appropriate by the Judiciary Committee and the Judicial Officer. Under normal circumstances, the hearing shall not be conducted in the work, home, or ministry location of the ministry leader or of the person with the concern.

At the sole discretion of the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, any witnesses that are unable to be present at the hearing may be allowed to present their testimony via telephone or videoconference. In such instances, the ministry leader, the person with the concern, their advocates, and the Judiciary Committee must be able to hear at the same time the witness's testimony, the questions posed to the witness, and the witness's responses to questions.

If the hearing is to be conducted in virtual space (including but not limited to telephone conference call)

The Judicial Officer shall ascertain whether the ministry leader and the person with the concern have access to the technology that would be needed to participate in the hearing. If the ministry leader or the person with the concern does not have such access, the Judicial Officer shall seek to facilitate such access or shall determine that the hearing will be conducted in physical space.

RECORD OF THE HEARING

A complete and accurate record of the hearing, including a complete audio or video record of the proceedings, shall be prepared by the Judiciary Committee and retained by the Judicial Officer until final resolution of the matter. Upon final resolution, the Judicial Officer is to provide the complete record of the hearing to the Director of Formation and Leadership Development.

SECURITY DURING THE HEARING

The Judicial Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, shall determine whether security personnel should be present at the hearing. If the presence of security personnel is requested by the Chair, the Judicial Officer shall ensure that such arrangements are made.

NOTIFICATION OF THE HEARING

The Judicial Officer shall notify the ministry leader and the person with the concern of the date, time, duration, and location of the hearing at least thirty (30) calendar days in advance.

ADVOCATES FOR THE PERSON WITH THE CONCERN AND THE MINISTRY LEADER

Both the person with the concern and the ministry leader shall be permitted to have an advocate present at the hearing. Advocates do not serve in the role of legal counsel (neither as “prosecutor” nor as “attorney for the defense”) but are present to provide support to and to speak on behalf of the person they are accompanying.

MATERIALS TO BE CONSIDERED DURING THE HEARING

No later than ten (10) business days prior to the hearing, the Judicial Officer shall provide to the Judiciary Committee all audio, video, and/or written materials that are to be considered during the hearing.

The ministry leader and the person with the concern shall be responsible for providing such material to the Judicial Officer no later than fifteen (15) business days prior to the hearing. Under normal circumstance, materials that are not submitted to the Judicial Officer by at least fifteen (15) business days prior to the hearing shall not be considered during the hearing.

During the hearing, the Judiciary Committee shall limit its consideration to:

1. The written Report of Concern with any accompanying documentation that initiated the disciplinary process and the written Response to Concern with any accompanying documentation;
2. A statement from the Director of Formation and Leadership Development regarding any Stage 1 efforts;
3. The formal Statement of Charges, prepared by the Judicial Officer;
4. The investigation records, including all documentation or other information that had been submitted to and/or collected by the investigator;
5. Other relevant audio, video, or written materials provided by the ministry leader or person with the concern;
6. A procedural history summary and disposition, prepared by the Judicial Officer;
7. Oral statements provided during the Hearing by the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and witnesses who have relevant first-hand information regarding the concern;

8. If a witness or person with the concern has died or become incapacitated and so is unable to testify, the Judiciary Committee may consider the investigator's recording of any interview with and/or written deposition from that witness or person with the concern.
9. At the sole discretion of the Judiciary Committee, any audio, video, or written materials presented by witnesses during the hearing; and
10. Under very rare circumstances and at the sole discretion of the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, any additional evidence that might be discovered less than fifteen (15) business days prior to the hearing. Copies of such additional evidence shall be distributed to all parties at the beginning of the hearing.

WITNESSES

Those who do not have relevant first-hand information regarding the concern may not participate in the Hearing as witnesses, except in the following instances:

- When a witness has relevant expert opinion; and/or
- When a witness is able to testify about what that witness heard directly from someone who is now dead or too disabled to be able to testify on his/her own behalf.

The ministry leader and the person with the concern may present witnesses and have an opportunity to question witnesses.

The Judiciary Committee may also invite additional witnesses and shall have an opportunity to question all witnesses.

The names and contact details of potential witnesses to be presented by the ministry leader or the person with the concern must be submitted to the Judicial Officer by no later than fifteen (15) business days prior to the hearing.

The Judicial Officer shall submit the list of potential witnesses to the Chair of the Judiciary Committee within ten (10) business days of the hearing. The Chair of the Judiciary Committee has the sole authority to determine which potential witnesses will be called upon during the Hearing, to determine the amount of time to be allocated to each witness, and to determine whether to exclude certain potential witnesses.

After verifying the availability of each potential witness, the Judicial Officer shall provide the final list of witnesses to the ministry leader, the person with the concern, and the Judiciary Committee no later than five (5) business days prior to the hearing.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE HEARING

While honoring transparency of process, the content of the entire judiciary process is confidential. Therefore, the hearing is closed to the public.

Those who may be present during the hearing include and are limited to the following:

1. The ministry leader and his/her advocate may be present throughout the hearing;
2. The person with the concern and his/her advocate may be present throughout the hearing;
3. All members of the Judiciary Committee must be present throughout the hearing;
4. Witnesses may be present in the hearing only during the time when they are presenting testimony and answering questions put to them during the hearing by the ministry leader, the person with the concern, their advocates, or the Judiciary Committee;
5. Translators or interpreters that are needed to assist participants with visual, auditory, or mobility needs may be present while the person being assisted is present in the hearing;
6. Language interpreters that are needed when the hearing participants do not speak a common language may be present while the participant(s) being assisted are present in the hearing; and
7. The Judicial Officer may be present throughout the hearing but is not required to be present at the hearing.

If the person with the concern and/or the ministry leader does not attend the hearing, the Judiciary Committee shall hear the evidence of the person with the concern and/or ministry leader who does attend and of any witnesses for either party who do appear and shall consider any other information that has been submitted in accordance with the MCC Process for Discipline of Ministry Leaders. Thereafter, the Judiciary Committee shall render a decision and determine resolution.

DETERMINATION OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Immediately following the hearing, the Judiciary Committee shall deliberate in closed session to determine whether the ministry leader did or did not violate the Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders in MCC and/or the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy.

- A. Concern Not Sustained:** The Judiciary Committee decided that there was insufficient evidence or information to determine that the Concern was true.
- B. Concern Sustained:** The Judiciary Committee decided that there was sufficient evidence or information to determine that the Concern was true.

A unanimous decision is required. If a unanimous decision cannot be reached, the determination of the Judiciary Committee shall be that the hearing was inconclusive.

STAGE 5: RESOLUTION

Whether the determination of the Judiciary Committee is that the ministry leader did violate the Statement of Ethical Guidelines for Ministry Leaders in MCC and/or the MCC Sexual Misconduct Policy or that the hearing was inconclusive, the Judiciary Committee shall then continue in closed session to decide the appropriate resolution of the matter.

In making its decision regarding resolution, the Judiciary Committee should take into account the ministry leader's demonstration of repentance, the probability of rehabilitation and restoration of the person to fitness for ministry, the impact on the person(s) who have been harmed by the ministry leader, and the possibility of future behaviors by the ministry leader that may be harmful to others.

The decision of the Judiciary Committee regarding resolution may be made by consensus or by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the Judiciary Committee.

POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

The Judiciary Committee (in consultation with the Judicial Officer and the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, as needed) may choose from among five possible resolutions to the matter. One of the possible resolutions affirms the person's continued authorization, one is corrective action, and three are disciplinary in nature.

1. **Reaffirmation of Fitness** – Affirms the ministry leader's continued authorization for ministry without condition.
2. **Conditional Affirmation of Fitness** – A corrective action indicating the need for certain actions to be taken as part of a prescribed program of growth.
3. **Censure** – A disciplinary action. Censure is an official statement of the denomination's disapproval of a behavior as unbecoming an MCC ministry leader; the statement is issued by the Chair of the Judiciary Committee. Censure affirms the ministry leader's continued authorization for ministry while expressing disapproval of the particular behavior.
4. **Suspension** – A disciplinary action. The concern about the ministry leader's current fitness for ministry is sustained; authorization for ministry may be suspended for a definite period of time while a prescribed program of corrective action is undertaken.
5. **Termination** – A disciplinary action. The ministry leader is determined to be unfit for ministry and authorization as an MCC ministry leader is terminated.
 - a. If the ministry leader is a clergy person, the action of termination removes the ministry leader's clergy credentials.
 - b. If the ministry leader is a lay person, the action of termination removes the ministry leader from the position to which the ministry leader had been elected or appointed.

If the resolution to the matter is either conditional affirmation of fitness or suspension, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development shall design the program of growth or corrective action. The Director may consult with the ministry leader, Judicial Officer, Chair of the Judiciary Committee, the

Moderator, and/or others as might be needed to make an informed and conscientious decision. The prescribed program of growth or corrective action should be limited to that which is needed in order to remedy the concern and correct the relevant identified deficiencies. Within ten (10) business days following conclusion of the hearing and determination of resolution, the Director shall notify the ministry leader of the program of growth or correction action that has been prescribed.

Participation by the ministry leader in the prescribed program of growth or correction action cannot be mandated. However, non-participation may be considered as a basis for either (1) imposing further limitations upon the ministry leader until such time as the prescribed program is undertaken and completed or (2) termination, at the sole discretion of the Director of Formation and Leadership Development.

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

The Judiciary Committee shall immediately inform the Judicial Officer of the resolution. The Chair of the Judiciary Committee shall then prepare and submit the written decision to the Judicial Officer within three (3) days following the conclusion of the hearing. A copy of the Determination and Resolution will be placed in the ministry leader's MCC file.

A copy of the Judiciary Committee's written Determination and Resolution and a notification of the appeal process and rights shall be sent by the Judicial Officer via expedited mail to the person with the concern, the ministry leader, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, and the Moderator within three (3) business days following receipt of the written Determination and Resolution by the Judicial Officer.

Within three (3) business days following receipt of the written Determination and Resolution, the Director of Formation and Leadership Development, in consultation with legal counsel, shall appropriately publicize the decision and inform the affected church or agency.

Notification to the affected church or agency shall include:

- A brief written statement approved by legal counsel which can be read only to Members of the affected church or appropriate representatives of the agency;
- A more detailed confidential summary of the decision which would be available only to those members of the local church's or agency's administrative body who agree to abide by a confidentiality agreement; and
- Information regarding any remaining steps that might remain to be taken in the disciplinary process.

STAGE 6: APPEAL

1. Either the person with the concern or the ministry leader may appeal the determination and/or resolution of the Judiciary Committee on the grounds of:
 - a. **Bias.** There is record that the appellant had alleged at any earlier stage of the judiciary process that there was bias on the part of the investigator, the Judicial Officer, or a member of the Judiciary Committee; there is evidence that the allegation of bias had gone unaddressed by the judicial personnel; and the appellant can substantiate that the alleged bias adversely affected the decision of the Judiciary Committee.
 - b. **Procedural error.** The appellant alleges and can substantiate that the outcome would have been different had it not been for the procedural error.
2. Appeals must be made in writing to the Judicial Officer within ten (10) calendar days from the postmark date that the ministry leader/person with the concern is notified in writing of the decision.
 - a. New information or evidence that was not presented during or prior to the hearing may not be introduced on appeal.
 - b. Written appeals must be submitted on the Appeals Form (Form DP-7) that is available from the Judicial Officer and may be no longer than seven (7) pages, including any attachments.
 - c. Appeals on the basis of procedural error shall be limited to demonstrating who / what / when / how of the procedural violation and its adverse impact on the outcome.
 - d. Appeals on the basis of bias shall be limited to demonstrating that such bias existed, that judicial personnel had been made aware of such bias, that the judicial personnel did not address the allegation of bias, and how the alleged bias adversely affected the decision of the Judiciary Committee.
3. Within five (5) business days of receiving the request for an appeal, the Judicial Officer shall select three (3) impartial members of the International Judicial Pool to serve on the Appeals Panel. The Investigator, members of the Judiciary Committee, and the Judicial Officer for the matter are not eligible to serve on the Appeals Panel.
4. The considerations of the Appeals Panel shall be limited to a review of the following and only as they relate to the stated basis for the appeal:
 - a. The formal statement of charges, prepared by the Judicial Officer;
 - b. A procedural history summary and disposition, prepared by the Judicial Officer;
 - c. The Judiciary Committee's written decision;
 - d. The appeal document; and

- e. At the sole discretion of the Appeals Panel, any inquiry of the Judiciary Committee members by the Appeals Panel.

The Appeals Panel shall not retry the issues on the merits but shall uphold the decision of the Judiciary Committee if the Appeals Panel finds that the decision of the Judiciary Committee was not the result of bias or procedural error.

5. The decision of Appeals Panel must be determined within ten (10) business days and shall be made by no fewer than two (2) of the three (3) members of the Appeal Panel. The Appeals Panel shall immediately send written notification of its decision to the Judicial Officer. The Judicial Officer shall notify the person with the concern, the ministry leader, the Moderator, and the Director of Formation and Leadership Development of the decision of the Appeals Panel within three (3) business days.
6. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final unless the determination results in removal of clergy credentials.
7. In the event that the determination of the Appeals Panel results in removal of clergy credentials, an automatic review of the proceedings and appeals process will be conducted by the Council of Elders within fifteen (15) business days of the determination of the Appeals Panel.
 - a. The Council of Elders shall uphold the decision of the Appeals Panel if the Council of Elders finds that the decision of the Appeals Panel is not the result of bias or procedural error.
 - b. If the Council of Elders determines that the decision of the Appeals Panel is the result of bias or procedural error, the Council of Elders shall issue its own decision and resolution.
 - c. The determination of the Council of Elders is final.
8. Copies of the decision of the Appeal Panel and of any review by the Council of Elders will be provided to the person with the concern, the ministry leader, and the Director of Formation and Leadership Development. A copy shall also be placed in the MCC file of the person charged.

STAGE 7: HEALING OF THE AFFECTED CHURCH OR AGENCY

The process of healing the affected church or agency begins when it is determined that a Report of Concern is to be investigated. A person designated by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development is assigned to the affected church or agency to assist in the healing process; this person may also assist the leaders and congregation in understanding the fitness review and judiciary processes. This person will NOT be the assigned investigator, nor may he/she have any personal bias or conflict of interest. He/she may not be assigned in any other capacity during the ongoing fitness review/judiciary process.

The Director of Formation and Leadership Development is responsible to identify and train persons who have the maturity, knowledge, skills, spiritual gifts, temperament and discernment to be assigned in this capacity. Persons appointed to this role are those who have completed the training and demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Director of Formation and Leadership Development that they can do the job at hand. Their responsibility is to assess the needs of the affected local church/ministry in consultation with the Board of Directors or ministry leaders and to assist in obtaining assistance as may be needed to move the church/ministry toward health and restoration. Consultation with a member(s) of the Council of Elders is an integral part of determining what the particular healing process should be.

Local church and ministry leaders may refuse the assistance of the designee or other help that is offered, but are strongly encouraged to accept it.

An ongoing review of the Healing Process is the responsibility of the Council of Elders and is conducted to ensure that the process is working for the specific affected church or agency. The need for confidentiality agreements will be determined by the Director of Formation and Leadership Development and, when used, must be strictly adhered to by all parties involved in the healing process. Gossip, rumors and “talking out of school” by participants is strictly discouraged; breaches of confidentiality could be cause for the initiation of a separate formal Report of Concern.

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Form DP-1: Report of Concern
Form DP-2: Response to Concern
Form DP-3: Report of Investigation
Form DP-4: Statement of Charges
Form DP-5: Procedural Summary
Form DP-6: Determination and Resolution
Form DP-7: Notice of Appeal
Form DP-8: Decision of the Appeals Panel
Form DP-9: Process Tracking (for internal use)

BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

**As approved at General Conference XXVI, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
Effective 05 July 2016**

Addendum 5

CHARTER OF MCC CORE DOCUMENTS

Introduction

MCC CORE DOCUMENTS (MCCCD) is a repository of texts that have been deemed by the denomination to be worthy of preservation.

1. Preservation of a text serves as a map of MCC's historic development. Preservation does not imply the force of governance.
2. Documents added to the MCCCD will be maintained in the repository in perpetuity to preserve MCC's history.
3. Documents added to the repository will be filed in chronological order and will note the year of their writing and the year in which they were accepted into the repository.
4. A text may appear in multiple revisions within the MCCCD (e.g., the MCC Statement of Faith).
5. Texts will be added to the MCCCD by a 2/3 majority vote in both the Clergy House and Lay House of General Conference.

1 **BYLAWS OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP**
2 **OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES**

3 As revised at General Conference XXVIII, Online
4 Effective 19 July 2022

5 **Addendum 6**

6
7
8 **CRITERIA FOR DISAFFILIATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES**

9 (As approved by the Governing Board on 16 July 2022, following the Bylaw Amendment
10 adopted at General Conference XXVIII 2022 online).
11

- 12 i. **DISAFFILIATION BY AN AFFILIATED CHURCH:** Should a local church
13 desire to disaffiliate from the UFMCC, a representative or representatives
14 appointed by the Moderator must be allowed to meet with the congregation
15 and shall have voice at the Congregational Meeting called for the purpose
16 of disaffiliating. The decision to disaffiliate must receive a two-thirds (2/3)
17 vote of the Members present at a duly called Congregational Meeting called
18 for the purpose of disaffiliating.
19
- 20 ii. **NOTIFICATION TO UFMCC:** At least sixty (60) calendar days prior to a
21 Congregational Meeting called for the purpose of disaffiliating, the local
22 church shall notify the Moderator in writing that such a Congregational
23 Meeting will be held. The written notification to the Moderator shall include:
24 (a) the date, time, and place of the Congregational Meeting; and (b) a copy
25 of the local church membership list. Except in the event of the death or
26 resignation of a listed Member, no Members may thereafter be removed
27 from membership in the local church and no Members may be added to the
28 membership in the local church until after the Congregational Meeting called
29 for the purpose of disaffiliating.
30
- 31 iii. **NOTIFICATION TO MEMBERS:** At least thirty (30) calendar days prior to
32 a Congregational Meeting called for the purpose of disaffiliating, all
33 Members of the local church must be notified in writing at their last known
34 address on the membership list of the date, time, place, and purpose of the
35 Congregational Meeting called for the purpose of disaffiliating. A copy of
36 the notification to members shall be simultaneously submitted to the
37 Moderator.
38
- 39 iv. **VOTING PROCESS:** Voting at the Congregational Meeting called for the
40 purpose of disaffiliating shall be done by secret ballot.
41
- 42 v. **CONTINUING AFFILIATION:** In the event that a congregation votes to
43 disaffiliate, those members of the congregation wishing to continue

44 affiliation with UFMCC may be designated by the Moderator as the
45 continuing Metropolitan Community Church affiliated with the UFMCC.

46
47 vi. DISPOSITION OF ASSETS: After existing financial obligations to the
48 UFMCC are met, the disaffiliating local church has the right to net assets.

49
50 vii. NOTIFICATION TO AFFECTED THIRD PARTIES: In the event that a
51 congregation votes to disaffiliate, the UFMCC shall notify affected third
52 parties that the disaffiliated congregation is no longer associated with the
53 UFMCC and that the disaffiliated congregation may not hold itself out as
54 being an MCC church. Affected third parties include, but are not limited to,
55 banks, creditors, and government agencies that issued
56 corporation/registration status to the disaffiliated church.