

## Congregational Code of Ethics

Just as pastors and church staff ought to have and follow a code of ethics, so should the congregation. A congregational code of ethics should address:

- core values
- relational behavior with other congregations and the community
- relational behavior between congregants

### Core values:

Core values are consistent, passionate, and particular convictions that have a biblical basis for influencing our decisions, driving our ministry, and describing our behavior. They are the penetrating motivators which describe an organization's intrinsic excellence or desirability. They describe the essence of an organization. Written in the present or past tense, they state the organization's driving passion.

Core values will remain intact throughout an organization's duration. They may be tweaked, but they may not be changed. Will these values stand the test of time?

Associated with emotions and intellect, they inspire and move people to action. Do these values generate enthusiasm and energy? Do these values touch people's emotions?

Core values describe the essence of a person's or organization's existence. They must be based on biblical principles which reflect God's unique assignment. Can these values be found in scripture?

Decisions are made based on clearly expressed values. Are the core values comprehended so that the correlating behavior will be recognized? Are decisions of the organization based on the stated values?

When everyone in the organization shares the values, then they act together for the common cause. Can the motivations of strong commitment within the organization be tied to the statement of values?

The characterization of the organization will be recognized by the stated values and the way in which they are exercised. The values will be congruent and model a consistency of behavior. Does the performance of the organization reflect the core values?

## Relational behavior:

The *Credentials Manual* of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana is very specific in defining the appropriate behavioral attributes of congregations. The appropriate congregational behavioral...

- Is a nurturing local body of believers providing fellowship, inspiration, and support to all within its reach.
- Is obedient to God's call to mission at home and around the world.
- Provides opportunity for growing in Christian grace and equipping for service.
- Lives in harmony with the doctrines and teachings of the Word of God as commonly understood by the teaching heritage of the Church of God movement.
- Upholds a lifestyle characterized by holiness, service, and wise stewardship, as taught by the Bible and consistent with established practices of the Church of God movement.
- Is involved in area, district, state, and national ministries of the Church of God movement, including such joint activities as worship, training, recreation, and mission projects.
- Endeavors to live peaceably as pastors and members with one another and their neighbors.
- Is supportive, respectful, and nurturing of all deserving overseers, including its pastor(s) and duly elected leaders.
- By both prayer and financial support, contributes to the world mission of the church through the cooperative ministries of the Church of God movement.
- Registers annually for the *Yearbook* of the Church of God and otherwise intentionally links itself to the life and the Church of God movement.
- Invites the counsel of the state office or area assembly's credentialing committee and Church of God Ministries, Anderson, Indiana, during times of pastoral change or congregational conflict.
- Abides by the procedures for calling a new pastor as outlined in the section of this *Credentials Manual* titled "When Ministers Move..."
- Is governed by the Holy Spirit, giving decisional authority to pastors and lay leaders as one way to allow Christ preeminence in all things.
- Calls and retains on a long-term basis only senior pastors who are approved or likely to gain approval by the assembly under whose jurisdiction that pastor resides.
- Maintains in its articles of incorporation a conditional deeding clause, with the beneficiary being the appropriate state, provincial, or area organization of the Church of God (Anderson).

(*Credentials Manual* Section 6.00)

Once a congregational code of ethics has been established, it is essential to educate the entire congregation. The education should be intentional in stressing the reason for having a code of ethics. The congregational code of ethics demonstrates to the congregation the importance of accountability for behavior of all those who call themselves a part of a Church of God congregation. Accountability is not just for pastors and church staff, it is for everyone. The message of any individual church can be tarnished by the inappropriate behavior of one member when they are representing the church.

Examples of a congregational code of ethics can be found in the ABC's of Church of God Management Manual – Third Edition Block A3 – Directional Statements. You can also see a sample at:

<http://www.ucmi.org/ucai/codes.htm>