

## THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

**WE BELIEVE**, in One God; Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer who provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation. That in Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, God became human and is Sovereign Lord of life and history. That in the Holy Spirit, God is present in the world, empowering and guiding believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

**WE BELIEVE**, persons are created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation. That by disobedience, they have become sinful, but, by grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ. That being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order.

**WE BELIEVE**, that the Church is the one Body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.

**WE BELIEVE**, that the Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness of God's self revelation in Jesus Christ and in history, to illumine, guide correct and edify believers in their faith and witness.

**WE BELIEVE**, that God is at work to make each person a new being in Christ and the whole world God's Kingdom in which love, justice and peace prevail. That the Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

**WE BELIEVE**, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death gives assurance of life after death, and we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory make all creation new and to gather all the faithful in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

*(Revised in 1992 by the UCCP Faith and Order Committee)*

## PRAYER

O gracious God, behold your people. You have called us to remain in covenant with you and with one another.

From the beginning you have always been the solid foundation of the Church. Your providence has been our shelter in the storms of life; your strength our stay as we pursued the vision of our founding parents for a united and uniting, reformed and transforming Church.

You have given us diversity of heritage in our union - which has enriched our capacity for witness and reconciliation as a community of faith.

As we renew this covenant,

May your Spirit guide us into greater sensitivity, openness of hearts and minds, and a truly creative response to the challenges of our time;

May the guidance, blessing and the empowering presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, be upon us, even as we strive to be faithful to the true spirit of the covenant we today have forged anew.

Grant, we beseech you, O God, that this symbol of our resolve for greater service may be accompanied by your most assuring love and mercy.

To you alone we give glory and honor, knowing you are the Author of all perfect wisdom and truth.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

# **AMENDED CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES**

## ***Article I* NAME**

**Section 1.** The name of the Church is **UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES**, referred to as “**UCCP**” or “Church” whenever appropriate.

**Section 2.** All local Churches and church-owned entities shall bear prominently the name: United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

## ***Article II* DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES**

**Section 1.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is an integral part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

**Section 2.** **The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its Protestant heritage as a reformed and reforming church.** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-41, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 3.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is a united and uniting Church, in response to the prayer of Jesus Christ “that they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (John 17:21, RSV).

**Section 4.** The doctrines and beliefs of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines are based on the Word of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and articulated in the historic Christian creeds, expressed in the diverse heritage of faith and practice brought into the union by its uniting Churches, and embodied in its Statement of Faith.

**Section 5.** The fundamental values of love, justice, truth and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church.

**Section 6.** At all levels of its life and government, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall ensure, as far as practicable, the equitable representation of its general membership in terms of gender, age, sector, and geography.

**Section 7.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms the catholicity and ecumenicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the UCCP’s relations with other church bodies and in its support of efforts in interchurch cooperation and union in the Philippines and in the world.

**Section 8.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its historic faith and its pastoral and prophetic witness in the life and culture of the Filipino people. The Church supports the people’s aspirations for abundant life and holistic redemption from all forms of bondage, in accordance with the vision of the reign of God.

**Section 9.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines advocates vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions.

**The United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall observe responsible Christian stewardship by utilizing the properties under its care towards self-reliance and support of its various ministries.** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-42, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 10.** The United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall encourage and provide the means for amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members, as well as those involving the Church and its constituencies.

**Section 11.** In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.

**Section 12.** As steward of God's creation, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and the integrity of creation.

**Section 13. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines recognizes that nurturing the faith is part of its primary responsibility.** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-43, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 14.** Consistent with the heritage and commitment of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the autonomy of the Local Church shall be respected. The scope of such autonomy shall be defined in the By-Laws.

### **Article III MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1.** Membership in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall be through one of its local churches or congregations.

**Section 2.** Membership is acquired through baptism in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; or by dedication, confirmation, transfer and reception, public confession of **faith**, or affiliation. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-44, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 3.** The categories of membership, including honorary membership, the acquisition, loss or recovery of membership, and the rights and privileges as well as the obligations and commitments of the church members, including the institution and maintenance of discipline, shall be provided for in the By-Laws.

### **Article IV THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

**Section 1.** In faithfulness to Jesus' proclamation of his own mission (Luke 4:18-19), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), the Church, as the People of God, is called to a ministry of love and service and the search for peace based on justice and reconciliation, in obedience to, and as exemplified by Jesus Christ.

Having been given a diversity of gifts, all church members are called upon to participate in this ministry, looking forward to the attainment of unity in faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and mature personhood according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

**Section 2.** Within the Church, some are called as ordained ministers, lay church workers and others charged to perform specific ministries to enable the Church to fulfill its mission and service, and to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

**Section 3.** Schools, health-care institutions, service agencies, sectors and organizations duly recognized by the Church shall contribute to the fulfillment of its life and ministry.

**Section 4.** The ordination of ministers and the classification and assignment of all church workers shall be provided for in the By-Laws.

## **Article V LOCAL CHURCH**

**Section 1. Nature.** A Local Church **consists of** baptized or dedicated persons who adhere to the Statement of Faith of the UCCP, who worship in a particular place and carry out the Church's mission and ministry. It is the basic unit of the Church. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-45, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 2. Recognition.** To be recognized as a Local Church, a **worshipping** congregation shall have at least seventy-five (75) members, shall subscribe to the Constitution and the statutes of the Church, and shall have demonstrated its capability to conduct its life, ministry and administrative affairs for at least two (2) years. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-46, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 3. Rights and Privileges.** The Local Church shall enjoy the rights and privileges of membership accorded the basic units of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

**Section 4. Duties and Functions of the Local Church.** The Local Church shall have the following duties and functions:

- a) proclaim the Gospel in Witness and service;
- b) provide for the growth and nurture of its members;
- c) promote stewardship and the other program thrusts of the Church;
- d) ensure that its worship is orderly and solemn yet joyful and meaningful;
- e) recruit, recommend and support candidates for its varied forms of ministry;
- f) support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church;
- g) hold an annual congregational meeting;
- h) submit to the Conference an annual report of its life and work;
- i) strive to fulfill faithfully and promptly all obligations to the other church bodies;
- j) relate and respond to the life and concerns of society;
- k) relate with other local churches and worshipping congregations within the Conference towards a more holistic ministry; and
- l) perform other duties and functions that may be assigned to it.

**Section 5. Structure. The Structure of the Local Church may consist of the following:** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-47, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

- a) the Congregation;
- b) the Church Council;
- c) the Board of Elders;
- d) the Board of Deacons;
- e) the Board of Christian Educators;
- f) the Pastor(s) and other Church workers; and
- g) the Board of Trustees, ( *As Amended by GA 2002-48, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 6. The Congregation.** Authority in the Local Church emanates from the congregation in light of God's Word.

**Section 7. Composition.** The congregation shall consist of the following:

- a) officers and members of the Church Council; and
- b) regular members of the Local Church. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-49, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 8. Duties and Functions of the Congregation.** The duties and functions of the congregation **as the highest policy making body** shall be the following: ( *As Amended by GA 2002-50, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

- a) receive members into the Church according to the provisions for membership and ensure their nurture and continuing holistic educational and spiritual development;
- b) **advocate vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions among its members;**
- c) acquire, dispose of or encumber the properties of the church in accordance with the statutes of the UCCP and the applicable laws:
- d) call and support church workers;
- e) elect officers and members of the Church Council **and the different boards;** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-50, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- f) approve, support and monitor the implementation of the programs of the Local Church;
- g) adopt an annual program and budget and approve plans for the ensuing year;
- h) affirm, modify or reverse the actions of the Church Council in appropriate cases;
- i) assess the life and work of the Local Church;
- j) elect delegates to the Conference and other church bodies; and
- k) perform such other duties and functions as are vested in the congregation.

**Section 9. The Local Church Council**

**A. Composition.** The Local Church shall be governed by a Church Council which **may** consist of the following: ( *As Amended by GA 2002-51, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

- 1) Chairperson;
- 2) Vice Chairperson;
- 3) Secretary;
- 4) Treasurer;
- 5) Financial Secretary, **who is at the same time, Chairperson of Board of Deacons;** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-52, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- 6) Auditor;
- 7) Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- 8) Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators; ( *As Amended by GA 2002-53, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- 9) Chairperson of the Board of Trustees;
- 10) heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- 11) Pastor and other church workers, without vote;
- 12) where applicable, the representatives of Church-owned or -related schools, health-care institutions and other institutions operating in the area, without vote;
- 13) such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and
- 14) the Conference Minister, without vote.

**B. Duties and Functions of the Church Council.** Except those duties and functions that are vested in the congregation under this Constitution, the Church Council shall have the following duties and functions:

- 1) exercise functions and implement programs consistent with the thrusts set forth by the General Assembly;
- 2) submit reports on the church's life and work, including those on the spiritual growth of the congregation, its outreach programs as well as the financial reports and the proposed budget for ensuing year;
- 3) **Affirm, modify or set aside actions, decisions or orders of any of the boards which may be in conflict with its action, decision or order, or that of another board, or where there is clear error, injustice or deviation from existing Church policy statute;** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-54, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- 4) transmit request and questions to the appropriate committees of the Conference;
- 5) attend to matters beyond the competence of standing committees;
- 6) act on requests or petitions submitted by church members;
- 7) recommend to the Conference candidates for the ministry and for appointment as lay preachers or licentiates, subject to the confirmation of the congregation;
- 8) call a special meeting of the congregation upon the request of one-third (1/3) of the members; and
- 9) exercise other duties and functions as may be assigned to it by the congregation;

**Section 10. Local Church Workers.** Local Church workers are those called by the Local Church and assigned officially by the Conference.

The Pastor is the spiritual leader, shepherd, and executive officer of the Local Church. He/She is the representative of the Church to the congregation, as well as the representative of the congregation to the other bodies of the Church and the larger society.

**Section 11. The Board of Elders.** The Board of Elders, which shall also act as the Board of Christian Mission, shall attend to the spiritual welfare and discipline of the church members, the mission concerns of the Local Church, and matters affecting church membership, including the maintenance of discipline **and amicable resolution of disputes or conflicts.** ( *As Amended by GA 2002-55, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 12. The Board of Deacons.** The Board of Deacons, which shall also act as the Social Concerns Committee, shall oversee the effective and efficient implementation of the stewardship program of the Church.

**Section 13. The Board of Christian Educators.** The Board of Christian Educators shall oversee the education program of the Local Church.

**Section 14. The Board of Trustees.** The Board of Trustees shall oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church properties.

**Section 15. Term, Election, Other Matters.** The qualifications, term of office, duties and responsibilities of the Pastor and Officers of the Local Church, the procedures for election and other matters pertaining to its structure and government shall be provided for in the By-Laws and the statutes of the Church.

**Article VI**  
**THE CONFERENCE**

**SECTION 1. Nature and Composition.** The Conference is an organized body of no less than thirty (30) local churches, in a defined area and with no less than ten (10) ordained ministers **and ten (10) unordained church workers** with pastoral or ecclesial assignments. *( As Amended by GA 2002-56, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 2. The Conference in Session.** The Conference in session shall be composed of the following:

- a) church workers accredited by the Conference;
- b) one (1) lay representative, **not otherwise a church worker**, from each Local Church for every two hundred (200) members, or major fraction thereof; provided that where there are more than one delegate the duly recognized youth organization shall be represented; provided finally that a Local Church shall have at least one (1) but not more than (5) delegates; *( As Amended by GA 2002-57, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*
- c) to include further that in all instances the chairperson of the Church Council is an automatic delegate.**
- d) officers and members of the Conference Council;
- e) ministerial students under the care of the Conference;
- f) retired church workers;
- g) heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Conference;**
- h) where applicable, the representative of Church-owned or - related schools, health-care institutions and other institutions operating within Conference area, without vote;**
- i) whenever applicable, designated representatives of partner churches, without vote;
- j) representatives from accredited ecumenical and service agencies within the Conference, without vote; and
- k) one (1) representative from each worshipping congregation, without vote.

**Section 3. Officers.** The Conference shall have the following officers:

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) Secretary;
- d) Financial Secretary;
- e) Treasurer;
- f) Auditor;
- g) Conference Minister, without vote;
- h) Deputy Conference Minister, without vote and
- i) other officers which the Conference or its Council shall deem necessary, without vote.

**Except for the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister, all the officers of the Conference shall be lay persons, not otherwise church workers.** *( As Amended by GA 2002-58, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 4. Duties and Functions.** The Conference shall have the following duties and functions;

- a) proclaim the faith and promote the expansion of the Church;
- b) affirm and apply in all its activities and programs the Declaration of Principles;
- c) ordain candidates for ministry according to the procedures of the Church;
- d) appoint and consecrate licentiates and other lay Church workers;
- e) install ministers in their respective assignments, with the Conference Minister or the duly appointed representative officiating;
- f) receive ministers from other communions according to the regulations of the Church;
- g) ensure that every Local Church within the Conference shall have a church worker and that every active church worker shall have an assignment;
- h) create, organize and establish such committees, boards or bodies as may be necessary and essential in the performance of its duties and functions; ( As Amended by GA 2002-59, Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)**
- i) exercise supervision over local churches and pastoral assignments within its area; review the status of existing local churches; and organize or recognize new ones;
- j) support, spiritually and financially, the lay and clergy formation program of the Church;
- k) elect delegates to the General Assembly;
- l) elect its representative to the National Council;
- m) elect members of the Conference Council and Conference representatives to other church bodies.
- n) receive and act on petitions and appeals from the local churches or on matters referred to it by the higher bodies of the Church;
- o) develop, implement and evaluate programs consistent with the program thrusts of the General Assembly in the Local Churches;
- p) review all acts of the Conference Council;
- q) adopt a Conference budget;
- r) coordinate the programs of the church-recognized organizations;
- s) endeavor to fulfill faithfully and promptly all financial and other obligations to other church bodies; and
- t) provide adequate salaries of church workers within the area.

**Section 5. Sessions.**

- a) The Conference shall meet annually.
- b) Special sessions may be called by the Conference Ministers upon request of the Conference Council.
- c) The delegates to the special session of the Conference shall be the accredited members in the last regular sessions. Vacancies by reason of death, transfer, incapacity, or resignation, shall be filled as prescribed in the By-Laws.

**Section 6. Quorum.** A majority of the Local churches through their accredited representatives shall constitute a quorum, provided that not less than (5) ordained ministers and five (5) other church workers of the Conference are present.

**Section 7. The Conference Council.** Every Conference shall have a Conference Council composed of the following:

- a) officers of the conference who shall be the officers of the Council; the Conference Minister without vote;
- b) three (3) ordained ministers elected by the Conference;
- c) three (3) unordained church workers elected by the Conference.
- d) three (3) lay persons elected by the Conference from among the men, women and youth;
- e) heads or representatives of church-recognized organizations;
- f) the Conference representative **to** the National Council; (*As Amended by GA 2002-60 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- g) heads or representatives of church-owned or -related schools and institutions within the Conference; (*As Amended by GA 2002-61 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- h) other officers and members as may be designated by the Conference; **without vote**; (*As Amended by GA 2002-62 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- i) the Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, without vote unless he/she is a member of the Conference; and
- j) whenever applicable, the Bishops Emeritus residing in the area.

**Section 8. Duties and functions.** The Conference Council shall serve as the interim body of the Conference. It shall act on all matters referred to it except those that pertain to the Conference in session.

**Section 9. Meetings.**

- a) The Conference Council shall meet three (3) times a year.
- b) Special meetings may be called by the Conference Minister **or the Chairperson, or at least three (3) voting members.** (*As Amended by GA 2002-63 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 10. Quorum.** At least fifty percent (50%) of the voting members of the Conference Council shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 11. The Conference Minister.**

- a) The Conference Minister shall be the spiritual leader, shepherd and chief executive of the Conference.
- b) *Qualifications.* To qualify for election as Conference Minister, a person must be an ordained minister of **the Church in** good standing, have formal theological training, be at least 30 years of age at the time of election, and must have rendered full-time active service as an ordained minister for at least five (5) years, **at least** two years of which as a full-time minister of a Local Church of the UCCP. The candidate must also have been a **member of**, and have served within, the Conference for at least two (2) years immediately prior to election.

(*As Amended by GA 2002-64 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

c) *Election.*

1. The election of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister shall be presided over by the Bishop of the Church assigned in the Jurisdictional Area **or his/her authorized representative, who is also a Bishop.** (*As Amended by GA 2002-65 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
2. The Conference Minister and the Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected by the accredited members of the Conference in session from among the qualified ministers who have recorded their availability with the Secretary of the Conference. Election shall be by ballot, without nomination or discussion, and shall be preceded by a period of quiet

meditation and prayer. A majority vote of the members present and voting shall be required for election.

d) *Term.* The Conference Minister shall be elected for a term of two (2) years, with two (2) possible reelections.

e) *Duties.* The duties and functions of the Conference Minister shall be prescribed in the By-Laws.

**Section 12. Other Officers.** The qualifications, term of office, manner of election, duties and functions of the other officers of the Conference, and the filling of vacancies shall be provided for in the By-Laws and statutes of the Church.

## **Article VII THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Section 1. Nature.** The General Assembly is the highest policy-making body of the Church.

**Section 2. Composition.** The General Assembly shall be composed of the following:

a) four (4) delegates from each Conference for every five thousand (5,000) members or a major fraction thereof; provided, that at least one (1) of them shall represent the youth; provided further, that one of them shall be the Conference representative to the National Council; provided furthermore, that fifty (50%) percent shall **be women and at least (50%) percent of which shall be lay, not otherwise church workers. In all circumstances, the chairperson of the Conference shall be automatic delegate;** and provided finally, that each Conference must have at least four (4) but not more than twelve (12) delegates; (*As Amended by GA 2002-66 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

b) Conference Ministers;

c) Bishops Emeritus;

d) all officers of the General Assembly;

e) one (1) representative from each duly recognized national organization;

f) one (1) representative each from the aggragation of the Church-owned or -related schools, health-care institutions and service agencies; and,

g) other members as may be co-opted by action of the General Assembly, without vote.

**Section 3. Duties and Functions of the General Assembly.** The General Assembly shall have the following duties and functions;

a) proclaim the faith, determine the ministry and mission policies of the Church, provide for the conduct of mission, and **make, issue or approve** statements on important public issues and concerns;

b) formulate policies and determine program thrusts and priorities of the Church in consultation with local churches, conferences and other constituencies;

c) elect and proclaim the Bishops of the Church and assign them to their respective jurisdictional areas;

d) elect the other officers of the Church;

e) set-up the organizational structure of the Church;

f) review the actions of the National Council;

g) dispose of matters referred to it with respect to worship, general welfare and government of the Church;

h) recognize new Church bodies, reorganize existing ones, and determine their geographical boundaries based on standards set by the Church;

- i) foster union and/or partnership with churches and other bodies whose purposes and aims are consistent with that of the UCCP;
- j) receive through the Conference other local churches which adhere to the UCCP Statement of Faith, its Constitution and statutes; and
- k) act on proposed amendments to the Constitution or call for a Constitutional Convention as stated in Article X of the Constitution.

**Section 4. Meetings.** The General Assembly shall meet every four (4) years in the month of May inclusive of the anniversary dates.

**Section 5. Quorum.** A majority of the Conferences duly represented shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 6. Officers.** The General Assembly shall have the following officers who shall also serve as such in the National Council;

- a) Chairperson;
- b) Vice Chairperson;
- c) General Secretary;
- d) Bishops;
- e) National Treasurer;
- f) National Auditor; and,
- g) other officers as may be designated by the General Assembly, **without vote.** ( As Amended by GA 2002-67 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)

***The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, General Secretary, incumbent Bishops, National Treasurer and National Auditor are hereby constituted as the Executive Council that shall act, decide or resolve any matter or issue that may arise in between sessions of the National Council, and its actions, decisions and resolutions shall be subject to review and confirmation of the National Council or the General Assembly. It shall also serve as the preparatory committee for the next session or special meetings of the National Council or the General Assembly.***

**Section 7. Term, Election, Qualification, Duties of Officers.** The Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and the National Auditor shall be elected from among the members of the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years without re-election. ***Except for the General Secretary and Bishops of the Church, all other officers of the General Assembly shall be lay persons, not otherwise church workers*** The General Secretary and the National Treasurer shall be elected for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) **possible** re-election. Their qualifications, duties and responsibilities shall be provided for in the By-Laws ( As Amended by GA 2002-68 & 69 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002).

**Section 8. Bishops and Bishops Emeritus: Qualifications, Term and Election.** The Bishops shall act as the collegial shepherds of the Church.

To be qualified for election as Bishop, one should at least be forty-five (45) years old and not more than sixty-one (61) years old at the time of assumption of office; provided, that he/she is theologically trained in a UCCP-approved and accredited theological seminary; must have been an ordained minister in good standing for at least ten (10) years, and with at least ten (10) years of active service in a UCCP Local Church prior to his/her election.

They shall be elected by the General Assembly for a term of four (4) years, with one (1) re-election.

Bishops Emeritus are all elected Bishops of the Church whose terms have ended and who have served at least one (1) term.

**Section 9. The Council of Bishops.** There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of incumbent Bishops and Bishops Emeritus whose duties and functions are as follows:

- a) attend to matters of faith, life, mission, and welfare of the Church;
- b) in consultation with the Faith and Order Commission, issue pastoral letters and public statements on various questions and concerns reflecting the life and mission of the Church;
- c) settle issues and conflicts relating to faith and doctrine; and
- d) supervise the clergy formation program of the Church.

**Section 10. The National Council: Composition.** There shall be a National Council which shall serve as the interim body of the General Assembly composed of:

- a) officers of the General Assembly;
- b) Bishops Emeritus (*As Amended by GA 2002-70 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- c) one (1) representative each from duly recognized national organizations;
- d) one (1) representative each from the national aggrupation of church-owned and -related schools, health-care institutions, and other service agencies;
- e) one (1) official representative from each Conference to be elected from among the members of the Conference in session, with an alternate **representative** in case the official representative cannot attend; and (*As Amended by GA 2002-71 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)
- f) others as may be co-opted by the National Council, *without vote*.

**Section 11. Duties and Functions of the National Council.** The National Council, which shall also serve as the Board of Trustees, shall have the following duties and functions;

- a) devise mechanisms for the implementation of the program thrusts, policies and priorities of the Church;
- b) adopt an annual program and budget;
- c) appoint members of programs and project committees upon the recommendation of the General Secretary;
- d) act on matters referred to it affecting the life and witness of the Church, except those reserved exclusively to the General Assembly in session; and
- e) constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and representative from the Conferences, which shall receive and screen nominees for all officers of the Church.
- f) **in case of vacancy in any of the positions of the National Officers, to elect persons who shall fill up the said vacancy, provided that the person or persons so elected shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term.** (*As Amended by GA 2002-72 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 12. Meetings.** The National Council shall meet annually. Special meetings may be called in accordance with the provisions of the By-Laws.

**Section 13. Quorum.** A majority of the members of the National Council shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 14. General Secretary.** The General Secretary, who shall be a Bishop, shall be the spiritual head and executive officer of the Church.

**Section 15. The National Secretariat.** There shall be a National Secretariat, the members of which shall be appointed by the General Secretary in accordance with the administrative structure of the UCCP. (*As Amended by GA 2002-73 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 16. *The National Treasurer.*** The National Treasurer, who shall act as the corporate treasurer, shall be the custodian of all funds and properties of the Church.

**Section 17. *The National Auditor.*** The National Auditor shall act as the corporate auditor.

**Section 18. *Jurisdictional Area Cabinet.*** There shall be a Jurisdictional Area Cabinet for each of jurisdictional areas designated by the General Assembly. It shall be composed of the following:

a) Bishop of the Church assigned to the jurisdictional area, who shall serve as the presiding officer;

b) Conference Ministers;

**c) Conference Chairpersons;** (*As Amended by GA 2002-74 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**d) Presidents or representatives of jurisdictional CROs;** (*As Amended by GA 2002-74 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

e) program coordinators of the Jurisdiction; and

f) others who may be co-opted by the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet, without vote.

**Section 19. *Duties and Functions.*** The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall have the following duties and functions:

a) to coordinate and correlate the work of the Conferences and promote such programs, projects and activities as shall be undertaken jointly in the jurisdictional area, consistent with the program thrusts and priorities of the General Assembly; and

b) to provide spiritual care and nurture, fellowship and mutual support among leaders and church workers within the jurisdictional area;

**Section 20. *Meetings.*** The Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall meet as often as may be necessary.

**Section 21. *Faith and Order Commission.*** There shall be a Faith and Order Commission whose members shall be elected by the General Assembly or its National Council from among those members of the Church who have the required expertise and experience for the task of the Commission. (*As Amended by GA 2002-75 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 22. *Duties and Functions.*** The Faith and Order Commission shall;

a) establish norms and standards of doctrine, order and discipline in the Church; and

b) prepare theological statements pertaining to doctrinal and contemporary issues of public interest to be issued by the Council of Bishops. (*As Amended by GA 2002-76 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 23. *Commission for Church Unity and Union.*** There shall be a Commission for Church Unity and Union whose members shall be **elected** by the General Assembly from the membership of the Church **or its National Council** Its duties and functions shall be: (*As Amended by GA 2002-77 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

a) to dialogue with other denominations and communions in the interest of Christian Unity;

b) to negotiate with local, independent churches seeking affiliation with the UCCP; and

c) to represent the UCCP in negotiations for organic church union.

**Section 24. *Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development.*** There shall be a Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development whose members shall be elected by the General Assembly or its National Council from the membership of the Church. Its duties and functions consist of formulating and proposing for the approval of the General Assembly or National Council policies, programs and projects for: *( As Amended by GA 2002-78 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

- a) The formulation of plans and strategies that advocate vigorous Christian stewardship expressed in the cheerful giving of tithes, time, talents and possessions;
- b) The establishment of comprehensive and nationwide property and resource development programs and projects which shall be implemented and managed by a foundation, distinct from and independent of the Church administrative structure, but complementary to it, to generate income for the support of the total life and ministry of the Church, and which is hereby created. Its authority and functions are as defined in the By-Laws and statutes of the Church;
- c) The setting up of mechanisms for property and human resource utilization that shall enable the Church to be financially self-reliant and participate effectively in the mission of the Church. This entails the development of real properties of the Church, and the formulation of guidelines, for approval of the General Assembly or National Council, in the sharing and distribution of the proceeds from the same among the constituencies of the Church, maintaining always the promotion of ecological balance and integrity of God's creation; and
- d) The formation of cooperatives and the establishment of Church-owned or -related institutions that shall provide social benefits, such as but not limited to, insurance, housing, hospitalization, retirement and pension plans for church workers, as well as providing assistance to local churches in the establishment of housing projects, memorial plans and parks and similar facilities for its members.

**Article VIII**  
**INTERPRETATION OF**  
**LAWS AND RESOLUTION OF**  
**CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES**

**Section 1. System of Conflict Resolution.** A system of conflict resolution is hereby established for the authoritative interpretation of laws and statutes of the Church and the settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the Church itself, its instrumentalities and agencies, including church-owned and -related institutions, which are collectively referred to as constituencies.

**Section 2. Exhaustion of Intrachurch Remedies.** In all conflicts and disputes which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the rules of exhaustion of remedies [Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-6], including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration, as provided for in the By-Laws. These shall be availed of as a condition to the assumption of jurisdiction by the units in various church levels of the **National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution**. No member who is party to any dispute or conflict as these terms are defined in the By-Laws, may institute any suit or proceeding or apply for remedy before any civil courts, administrative tribunal, board or commission without first showing compliance with this procedure of exhausting all intrachurch remedies. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-79 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 3. Arbitration; Decision/Award Final and Non-appealable.** A procedure of arbitration shall be established at all levels of the Church, and for this purpose a pool of arbitrators at such levels shall be constituted in accordance with the By-Laws. The award or decision of the arbitrators shall, as a general rule, be final and unappealable.

**Section 4. National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution.** A National Commission on **Discipline** and Conflict Resolution (NCD CR) is hereby established to dispose **with finality** all requests for advisory opinions on the interpretation of the Constitution, By-Laws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church and its constituencies and likewise decide all justiciable cases brought to it in the exercise of its original or appellate jurisdiction. **Advisory opinions and decision of the NCD CR shall become final and executory in accordance with the By-Laws and Rules of Procedure adopted by the NCD CR. As the highest judicial body of the Church, the NCD CR shall be separate from, and independent of, the other church bodies and its final advisory opinions, orders, awards or decisions shall not be subject to any further appeal or proceedings before other Church bodies.**" ( *As Amended by GA 2002-80 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 5. Questions beyond the Jurisdiction of the Commission.** All questions of policy shall be referred to the appropriate policy-making bodies of the Church. Cases brought before the NCD CR involving matters clearly pertaining to faith and doctrine shall be referred to the Council of Bishops. All questions of state policies and those involving the public justice of the State are beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission. ( *As Amended by GA 2002-81 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002*)

**Section 6. Advisory Opinions and Decisions in Justiciable Cases.** Where the advisory opinion of the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution is requested by the General Assembly, the National Council, the Council of Bishops, or the Conferences, it shall be the duty of the Commission to render such opinion, after consultation and thorough deliberation.

In cases involving conflicts or disputes between and among church members and those involving the members and the Church itself or its constituencies, and there is a probability that the same may ripen into litigation, the local units of the **NCD CR** or the **NCD CR** itself may assume jurisdiction to decide such cases where the parties are unable to settle their

disputes through the use of good offices, mediation and conciliation and decide not to submit their case to arbitration. The procedural rules for this purpose shall be issued by the **NCDCCR** as provided in Section 11 thereof. *( As Amended by GA 2002-82 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 7. Composition and Election.** The National Commission on **Discipline and Conflict Resolution** shall be composed of seven (7) members, with all the jurisdictional areas represented. At least one (1) shall be a member of the Philippine Bar and another who shall be **not more than thirty (30) years old** at the time of election. All members shall be nominated by the Conferences, screened by the National Council, and elected by the General Assembly. *( As Amended by GA 2002-83 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 8. Qualifications.** With the exception of the youth representative in the National Commission on **Discipline and Conflict Resolution**, the rest shall not be less than **thirty-one (31) years of age**. They shall all be members of the Church in good standing, of unquestionable integrity, probity, competence, and independence of mind. *( As Amended by GA 2002-84-85 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 9. Term of Office; Vacancy.** With the exception of the youth representative who shall serve for only four (4) years, all members of the National Commission on **Discipline and Conflict Resolution** shall serve for a term of eight (8) years with no re-election. To provide for continuity, the three (3) nominees who shall obtain the highest number of votes in the first election after this Constitution takes effect, shall serve for a term of eight (8) years and the rest for four (4) years. Any vacancy shall be filled by the National Council, and the person so elected or appointed shall serve only the unexpired portion of the term. *( As Amended by GA 2002-86 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 10. Limitation.** No member of the National Commission on **Discipline and Conflict Resolution** shall be elected or appointed to any other office in the Church during his or her term. All members shall avoid any conflict of interest. *( As Amended by GA 2002-87 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 11. Creation of Other Units; Rules of Procedure.** **The Board of Elders, sitting as committee on discipline and conflict resolution, and the conference committee on discipline and conflict resolution shall be the units of the NCDCCR at the Local Church and Conference levels, respectively. The NCDCCR shall formulate and adopt Rules of Procedure to govern the interpretation of laws, the amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes, and adjudication of justiciable cases in the Church.** *( As Amended by GA 2002-88-89 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 12.** Together with the specific rules of law, the rules of evidence and procedures shall be taken into account by the arbitration bodies of the **NCDCCR**. *( As Amended by GA 2002-90 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 13. Enforcement of Decisions.** It shall be the duty of the appropriate officers to enforce and the members at all levels of the Church to respect all final and executory decisions and orders of the arbitrators and of the **NCDCCR**.

## **Article IX GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**Section 1.** All real properties may be held by the **Local Churches, church bodies, or church-owned institutions**, in trust for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. *( As Amended by GA 2002-91 Baguio City, May 20-26, 2002)*

**Section 2.** The ecclesial year of the Church shall be from June 1 to May 31 of the following year.

**Section 3.** The church shall have a logo, the design and color of which shall be decided upon by the General Assembly or its National Council.

**Section 4.** The official text of this Constitution and By-Laws shall be in English and Pilipino; however, in case of conflict in interpretation, every effort shall be exerted to harmonize and reconcile the English and Filipino versions. Translation into the various Philippine languages is encouraged, but the text must first be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

**Section 5.** No Local Church, Conference and other Church bodies may incorporate without the prior approval of the General Assembly or its National Council.

**Section 6.** Rules and regulations to implement, supplement or carry out the provisions of this Constitution shall be set forth in the By-Laws and statutes of the Church.

### **Article X AMENDMENTS AND RATIFICATION**

**Section 1.** Amendments to this Constitution may be made through any of the following procedures:

a) A Conference may propose an amendment to the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.

b) An amendment may be proposed on the floor of the General Assembly. If the amendment is approved by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the General Assembly shall endorse it to all the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.

c) Where a Constitutional Convention is called by the General Assembly, the proposed Constitutional amendments shall be transmitted to the Conferences for ratification. The amendments shall become effective immediately upon ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences and duly proclaimed by the General Assembly or its National Council.

**Section 2.** This Constitution shall not be amended in any manner within seven (7) years from the date of its effectivity.

### **Article XI TRANSITORY PROVISIONS**

**Section 1.** The provisions of this Constitution, upon its effectivity as provided in Article XII, shall immediately bind all local churches, Conferences and other higher bodies of the Church. All other policies, actions, and procedures of the Church inconsistent with this Constitution shall be deemed rescinded, repealed and superseded.

**Section 2.** All elected officials of the Church prior to the effectivity of this Constitution shall remain in office until their successors shall have been elected under this Constitution. The General Assembly or the Executive Committee shall determine the date and shall conduct the election for this purpose.

**Section 3.** In the first election under this Constitution, incumbent Bishops adversely affected by the provision of age requirements, as set forth in Article VII, Section 8, may be allowed to run for reelection, if otherwise qualified.

**Section 4.** Cases pending in civil courts or administrative boards or commissions, as well as cases pending in the National Judicial Commission (NJC) at the time of the effectivity of this Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable means set forth in Article VIII. Church officials and members shall encourage them to do so.

***Article XII***  
**EFFECTIVITY**

**Section 1.** This Constitution shall take effect upon the ratification by three-fourths (3/4) vote of all the Conferences, upon proclamation by the General Assembly and upon its registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

## AMENDED UCCP-BY-LAWS

### *Article I* CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

**SECTION 1. *Membership.*** Members of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines are those who have been received as members of the local churches.

**SECTION 2. *Types of Membership.*** Membership may be regular *or* associate, affiliate, preparatory or honorary. *(As amended by NC 2002-11, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 3. *Regular Members.*** Regular membership shall be held in only one Local Church. The regular members are the following:

- a. ***Those baptized as infants and confirmed in the Local Church, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;***
- b. ***Those who are baptized as adults in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;***
- c. Those who are not yet baptized or who wish to be baptized, and who by public confession of faith and baptism, are accepted as such members; and,
- d. Those who are members of other denominations or communions whose baptism uses the Trinitarian formula, and
  - 1) who, upon having obtained a letter of transfer from their Local Church, are duly received by the Local Church;
  - 2) who, having officially resigned or withdrawn their membership from their former church, profess and are accepted as such members by the Local Church; or
  - 3) who, by marriage to members, profess to become such members of the Local Church. *(As amended by NC 2002-12, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 4. *Associate Members.*** Associate members are those members of another Local Church whose circumstances make it necessary to participate in the ministry of another Local Church and obtain associate membership in such Local Church. Except for the right to vote and be voted upon, associate members shall enjoy all the rights and privileges of regular members.

**SECTION 5. *Affiliate Members.*** Affiliate members are those members of other Christian communions who are temporarily absent from their home church and who, upon application, are received as affiliate members. Except the right to vote and be voted upon, affiliate members shall enjoy the rights and privileges of regular members in the Local Church they are affiliated.

**SECTION 6. *Preparatory Members.*** Preparatory members are the following:

- a. Those baptized or dedicated as infants; and,
- b. Adults who are seeking to be baptized.

**SECTION 7. *Honorary Members.*** Honorary membership may be granted to members of other Christian churches who have performed extraordinary service.

**SECTION 8. *Rights and Privileges of Members.*** Membership in the Local Church bestows the following rights and privileges:

- a. Continuing nurture in the faith and pastoral care;
- b. To be informed of, and participate in, all programs and other activities of the Church;

- c. To avail of the services of the Local Church; and,
- d. In the case of regular members, **who are at least twelve (12) years of age**, to vote and be voted upon in, or appointed to, any position in the Local Church. *(As amended by NC 2002-13, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 9. Commitments of Members.** Membership in the Local Church entails the following obligations and commitments:

- a. To proclaim the Gospel and bear personal witness in both word and service in the context of one's immediate community, the nation and the rest of humanity;
- b. To lead a peaceable and godly life worthy of one's Christian calling; and to endeavor to be a follower of Jesus Christ;
- c. To be diligent in prayer, the faithful practice of family worship and Bible study, and attendance at services of public worship of the Church;
- d. To exhort one another in the faith, and to strive in every way to strengthen the unity and fellowship of the Church;
- e. To study and practice the principles of Christian stewardship, cheerfully giving of one's tithes, pledges, time, talents and possessions;
- f. To protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of God's creation; and,
- g. To affirm and adhere to the historic Christian creeds, the UCCP Statement of Faith, and the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws.

**SECTION 10. Transfer, Loss and Restoration of Membership.**

- a. **Certificate of Transfer of Members.** Whenever a regular member moves from one Local Church to another, he/she shall obtain a certificate of transfer, signed by the Pastor and Secretary of the Church Council. In the absence of the Pastor, the Chairperson of the Church Council becomes a signatory.
- b. **Notice of Forwarding Certificate.** The Pastor who issues a certificate of transfer as provided for in the immediately preceding sub-section shall forward such certificate, with appropriate explanation to the Pastor of the Local Church to which the member bearing the certificate shall be received.
- c. **Notice of Reception of Members on Certificate.** Upon reception of a member bearing a certificate of transfer, the Local Church of origin shall be properly notified.
- d. **Limitations of Certificate.** A transfer certificate issued to a member as provided for in the preceding sections must be presented to a Local Church or returned to the church of origin within eighteen (18) months, beyond which time, it becomes null and void.
- e. **Loss of Membership.** Members shall be delisted from membership roll on account of:
  - 1) **resignation**; *(As amended by NC 2002-14, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
  - 2) absence from his/her home church for a period of three (3) consecutive years, and despite diligent efforts by the Local Church, his/her whereabouts remain unknown;
  - 3) expulsion, and
  - 4) death
- f. **Expulsion of Member.** A member may be expelled for committing any of the following offenses:
  - 1) Offense against the unity or integrity of the Church;
  - 2) Offense against accepted norms of morality;

- 3) Offense against religious worship and other sacred ceremonies and rituals of the Church;
- 4) Disrespect for the Church, its councils and officials, and fellow members; and,
- 5) Willful and flagrant violation of the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church, including decisions of the National Commission on **Discipline and** Conflict Resolution (**NCDCR**). *(As amended by NC 2002-15, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

g. **Admonition and Suspension.** In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order of the Church, admonition shall be given by the Pastor or a duly designated member of the Board of Elders upon such erring member; and, if there be acknowledgment of fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the member may retain his/her good standing.

On a second offense, the Pastor or duly designated member of the Board of Elders shall take with him/her one of the faithful members and strive to bring the offender to repentance.

On a third offense, and, if there be no satisfactory repentance of offender, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension for such period as the Board of Elders **may fix and confirmed by the Church Council.** *(As amended by NC 2002-16, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

h. **Restoration of Membership.** A regular member whose name has been delisted from the Local Church shall be restored as a regular member after giving satisfactory evidence of his/her conduct to the Board of Elders and reaffirming his/her faith before the congregation. He/She shall be restored to his/her original standing as member upon confirmation by the Church Council and acceptance by the congregation.

A member may not, earlier than one (1) year from date of his/her expulsion, apply to the Local Church from which he/she was expelled from restoration of his/her membership, and no other Local Church has authority to restore him/her to full membership after the period of his/her suspension.

As the penalty for expulsion is applied only in extreme cases, great care should be taken by the Board of Elders in recommending (a) the expulsion of a member; or (b) the restoration to full membership of one who has been expelled from the Local Church.

## **Article II**

### **THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

**SECTION 1. Ordained Minister.** An ordained minister is one who has been called and set apart for the ministry in accordance with the requirements of the Church.

**SECTION 2. SECTION 2. Qualifications for Ordination.** To qualify for ordination, one must:

a. **Be a graduate of a formal ministerial formation program in any of the approved ministerial theological seminaries and/or ministerial formation centers of the Church, and have previously obtained at least two consecutive years of full-time satisfactory pastoral work as a licentiate in a Local Church;**

b. **If a graduate of a four year theological program of other theological institution, not otherwise accredited by UCCP, (i) undergo probationary pastoral work for two (2) years under supervision of a UCCP pastor in a Local Church, (ii) submit himself/herself to a required orientation course under the direction of the Conference Examination Committee in coordination with the Office of the Clergy, (iii) affirm his/her acceptance of, and adherence to, the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the Church, and (iv) have previously obtained at least two (2) consecutive years of full-time satisfactory pastoral work as a licentiate in a Local Church;**

**c. If without formal theological training, have substantial pastoral experience as a licentiate for at least five (5) years and have undergone studies and instructions in the ministerial formation programs of the Church;**

d. Be certified through the examination process established by the Church as to his/her maturity, satisfactory preparation, growth in knowledge, experience and commitment to the ministry and mission of the Church. *(As amended by NC 2002-17, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 3. The Ordination Process.** The ordination to the ministry of men and women called for this purpose shall be standardized for the entire UCCP, as follows:

a. The Local Church, in which the candidate ministers, recommends the **ordination of the candidate to the Conference through a resolution of the Church Council;** *(As amended by NC 2002-18, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

b. The Conference Examination Committee receives the resolution of the sponsoring Local Church and requires the candidate to undergo the following:

- 1) psychological test prepared by the Office of the Clergy;
- 2) practical examination which shall include inquiry into the lifestyle, his/her standing among peers and in the community, as well as his/her performance as a Local Church worker; and,
- 3) theoretical review and examination conducted in an accredited ordination review center, the results of which include the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate; and,

c. Based on the results of the tests and examinations, the **Conference in Session upon the recommendation of** the Examination Committee, shall then decide whether or not the ordination of the candidate shall be approved, deferred, or denied. In the case of deferment or denial, the candidate shall be apprised of his/her weaknesses and deficiencies with the view of helping him/her overcome these within two (2) years. *(As amended by NC 2002-19, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**d. The Bishop assigned to the jurisdictional area or his/her duly authorized representative, also a Bishop, shall preside over the ordination** *(As amended by NC 2002-20, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002).*

**SECTION 4. Reception of Ministers from other Denominations.** Whenever an ordained minister from another church presents himself/herself to the Conference, the Conference may receive him/her provided he/she first fulfills all the requirements for ordination of the UCCP. An ordained minister from a member church of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) must present a certificate of transfer and clearance from the proper authority of his/her church, undergo the required orientation course under the Office of the Clergy, and affirm and adhere to the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

**SECTION 5. The classification of Ordained Ministers and Lay Church Workers of the Church shall be provided for in the Magna Carta for Church Workers.**

**SECTION 6. Admonition and Suspension of Church Workers.** In cases of flagrant neglect of duty, indulgence in sinful temper or word, or disobedience of any order or statute of the Church, the admonition upon the erring Church workers shall be given by the Conference Minister or a duly designated member of the Conference Committee on

Discipline **and Conflict Resolution**; and if there be acknowledgment of the fault, proper repentance and a promise to reform, the Church worker may retain his/her good standing.

On second offense, the Conference Minister or duly designated member of the Conference Committee on Discipline shall take with him/her the Jurisdictional Bishop and strive to bring the Church worker to repentance.

On a third offense and if there be no satisfactory repentance by the Church worker, the latter shall be subject to the penalty of suspension from his/her office

**SECTION 7. Termination of Status of Church Workers.** The status of being Church workers can be terminated only by death, separation and expulsion from the ministry.

a. **Separation from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be considered separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference, where he/she:

- 1) gives official notice to the Conference of his/her desire and decision to be separated from the ministerial roll of the Conference; or,
- 2) takes on secular employment for at least three (3) consecutive years and does not obtain a leave of absence or recognition for special ministry.

b. **Delistment from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be delisted from the ministerial roll of the Conference when he/she fails, without valid excuse, to attend at least three consecutive annual sessions of the Conference.

c. **Expulsion from the Ministry.** A Church worker shall be expelled from the ministerial roll upon any of the following grounds:

- 1) having actively worked against the interest, unity and integrity of the Church;
- 2) having intentionally violated the Constitution, By-Laws and other statutes of the Church;
- 3) having habitually committed acts which do not befit a minister as enunciated by the spiritual, moral and ethical standards of the Church; and,
- 4) having been convicted by final judgment of a crime involving moral turpitude.

**SECTION 8. Reinstatement of Church Workers.** A Church worker, who has voluntarily withdrawn from the ministerial roll and who wishes to be reinstated as Church worker in full standing, shall apply to his/her Conference for reinstatement. The Conference shall require of him/her a copy of the record of his/her original connection and status and if satisfied that he/she remains qualified in terms of integrity, competence and dedication, the Conference may reinstate him/her to full standing.

**SECTION 9. Conference Committees on the Ministry.** The Conference committees on the ministry are the following:

a. **Ministerial Formation Committee.** The Conference shall appoint upon nomination by the Conference Minister, a Ministerial Formation Committee composed of three (3) active ministers and two (2) lay persons who shall have oversight of the recruitment, apprenticeship and formation of ministerial students of the Conference. The Committee shall assist the students in their work and needs, and certify to their progress and standing to the Conference.

b. **Examination Committee.** The Conference **in Session or its Conference Council**, shall appoint, upon nomination by the Conference Minister, an Examination Committee composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom **must be** active **ordained** ministers, **and two (2) lay persons, not otherwise church workers**, whose duty is to examine all

candidates for certification, licensure or ordination, ***including renewal of recognition of local lay preachers***, and those transferring from other communions. (As amended by NC 2002-25, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

**SECTION 10. Settlement Committee.**

a. The assignment of Church workers shall rest with a Settlement Committee, composed of two (2) active ministers and three (3) lay persons, to be appointed by the Conference. The

Conference Minister and the president of the Church workers' organization shall be *ex officio*

members of the Settlement Committee, without vote. The Settlement Committee shall meet at least annually before the meeting of the Conference.

b. The Settlement Committee shall, as far as practicable, ensure that:

- 1) all Church workers shall have assignment in the local churches of the Conference and its recognized ministries;
- 2) every Local Church and worshipping congregation shall have at least one Church worker to take care of the life and work of the Church;
- 3) initiate arrangements for assignment in the absence of a call from the Local Church or congregation; and,
- 4) examine and confirm the arrangements on the call made by the Local Church or congregation.

c. Any minister shall have the right to appear before the Settlement Committee to present his/her case in regard to his/her appointment. Any pastoral charge may also appear through not more than two (2) representatives, properly authorized in writing and appointed from the members at a regular or special meeting of the Church Council.

**SECTION 11. Transfer to Another Conference or Church.** A Church worker desiring to transfer to another conference or church shall secure a written release from the Conference or its Conference Council to be signed by the Conference Minister and Conference Secretary.

**SECTION 12. Rights and Privileges of Church Workers.** Church Workers in good standing shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To participate in all Conference sessions;
- b. To avail of the pastoral care, continuing education and other developmental programs of the Conference for Church workers;
- c. To avail of the benefits granted by the Church to Church workers;
- d. To be given a Church assignment; and,
- e. To vote and be voted upon in the Conference.

**SECTION 13. Duties and Responsibilities of Church Workers.** Church workers shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. To strive for maturity in spirituality, rectitude, faithfulness and stewardship;
- b. As a learner, to learn humbly together with the congregation from the wisdom of the Scriptures, and the way the Spirit works through the individual lives of Church members and world events;
- c. As a teacher, to lead and enable others to grow into mature personhood after the manner of Jesus Christ and so together attain unity and oneness in Christ;

- d. As a counselor, to help Church members discern through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the deeper meaning and significance of crucial events in their lives and so allow healing and renewal to take place;
- e. As a leader, to guide the congregation to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to discover where the Church is, where it ought to be going and what it ought to be, and together move and act in faithfulness to God's will at each historical moment of their life;
- f. As a steward of God's creation, to care for and manage wisely together with the congregation, all that God sends into their lives as individuals and as a church in terms of material gifts and giftedness so that all may enjoy fullness of life to share with all who are in need;
- g. As a priest, to intercede for the people and to lead them in interceding before God for others and for all creation;
- h. As a prophet, to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever this is demanded in critical issues and human events and so help empower the people in their response; and,
- i. As a Church member, to be constantly aware that he/she is a part of the community of believers who seek earnestly to be with one another in faithfulness to God's purpose for all creation.

### ***Article III*** **THE LOCAL CHURCH**

**SECTION 1. *Rights and Privileges of the Local Church.*** The Local Church shall have the following rights and privileges:

- a. To conduct its worship life in light of the Gospel and in accordance with its witness and service to all of God's creation;
- b. To make a call for pastor and other Church workers in accordance with the procedure laid down by the UCCP; and,
- c. To elect delegates to, and be represented at, the Conference and other higher Church bodies.

**SECTION 2. *Annual Congregational Meeting.*** Unless otherwise set by the Church Council, the annual congregational meeting of the Local Church shall be held not later than the last Sunday of December of each year and shall be for the following purposes:

- a. To receive the written report of the Pastor, a copy of which shall be furnished the Conference;
- b. To review the actions of the Church Council;
- c. To approve plans and programs for the ensuing year;
- d. To adopt an annual budget to support its approved plans and programs for the ensuing year and which shall include the assessment and contribution to the Conference and the General Assembly;
- e. To elect the officers and delegates to the Conference and other Church bodies; and,
- f. To act on such other matters as may validly come before the body.

**SECTION 3. *Meetings of the Church Council.***

- a. The Church Council shall determine its regular meetings at least once every three months or as often as may be feasible; and,
- b. Whenever necessary, special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or in his/her absence, by the Vice-Chairperson, or at the request of the Pastor, or by at least two

members of the Church Council. Notice of special meetings shall be given to all the members of the Church Council before the meeting stating the purpose or purposes thereof.

**SECTION 4. Quorum.** A majority of the members of the Church Council shall constitute a quorum.

**SECTION 5. Church Council Officers and Members: Election, Term and Composition.** In addition to the head Pastor, the officers of the Church Council are:

- a. Chairperson;
- b. Vice-Chairperson;
- c. Secretary;
- d. Treasurer;
- e. Financial Secretary; and,
- f. Auditor.

The members are:

- a. Chairperson of the Board of Elders;
- b. Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- c. Chairperson of the Board of Christian Educators;
- d. Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, where applicable;
- e. heads or representatives of recognized organizations of the Church;
- f. other Church workers, without vote;
- g. representatives of Church-owned or related schools, health-care institutions and other institutions operating in the area, where applicable, without vote;
- h. such other officers as may be designated by the Church Council, without vote; and,
- i. Conference Minister, without vote.

Except for the Pastor, the officers shall serve for a term of one year and may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

Where a Local Church is composed of more than **fifty (50) families**, in the interest of equitable representation in the Church Council, no family shall be represented by more than one member during any term of the Church Council. The term "family" shall include all persons related within the **third** civil degree of consanguinity or affinity (These include parents and children, **brothers and sisters, aunts and nieces, uncles and nephews**). *(As amended by NC 2002-26, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

Election shall be by secret ballot and there shall be no campaigning.

**SECTION 6. Duties of the Chairperson.** The Chairperson of the Church Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To preside over the meetings of the Church Council;
- b. Unless otherwise decided by the congregation, to preside over the meetings of the congregation;
- c. To prepare, in consultation with the Pastor, the agenda for the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
- d. To vote in case of a tie;
- e. To represent the Local Church in contracts, instruments, or letter-agreements approved by the Church Council except those involving real properties which should be approved by the congregation and the proper Church authority; and,
- f. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.

**SECTION 7. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson.** The Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the position of the Chairperson when he/she is absent or when a vacancy occurs due to resignation or other causes; and,
- b. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council or the congregation.

**SECTION 8. The Pastor.** The Pastor, who should be an ordained minister or licentiate of the Church, must:

- a. Uphold and abide by the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws; and,
- b. Exercise pastoral leadership.

**SECTION 9. Term of the Pastor.** The term of the Pastor shall be for two (2) years but not to exceed four (4) years. He/She may be called for more than one term but not to exceed three (3) consecutive terms.

**SECTION 10. Procedure for the Call of Church Workers.** The call of **Church workers** shall, as a general rule, be as follows: *(As amended by NC 2002-27, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. The Church Council shall constitute a Church Workers Call Committee;
- b. The Committee shall send a request to the Conference Settlement Committee, for a Church worker stating the needs of the Local Church and the desired qualities of the said Church worker;
- c. The Conference Settlement Committee shall recommend a Church worker it deems appropriate for the Local Church making the request;
- d. Upon acceptance by the Committee of the recommendation, it shall submit the same to the Church Council for approval;
- e. Once approved, the Church Council shall endorse the recommendation to the congregation for confirmation;
- f. The confirmation shall be conducted in an appropriate time during the regular Sunday worship service; and,
- g. Upon confirmation by the congregation and acceptance of the call by the Church worker, the installation ceremony shall be held in consultation with the Conference.

**SECTION 11. Duties of the Church Secretary.** The Church Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep a full and complete record of all proceedings of the meetings of the congregation and the Church Council;
- b. To have custody of all records and documents of the Church, including the regular updating of the official record of members, indicating their names, dates of their admission, their category of membership and such other personal data as may be necessary, and the registration of marriages, baptisms and deaths;
- c. To issue notices of meetings of the congregation and the Church Council; and,

d. To perform such other duties and functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 12. *Duties of the Financial Secretary.*** The Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To act and serve as the Chairperson of the Board of Deacons;
- b. To implement such stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designed and adopted by the Board of Deacons;
- c. To keep and regularly update the record of the Local Church budget;
- d. Together with the Pastor, the Treasurer and the Board of Deacons, to prepare the annual budget of the Local Church based on the plans and programs for the ensuing year for submission to the Church Council;

e. To ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget;

f. To lead in the stewardship campaign for tithes, pledges and donations in support of the annual budget of the Local Church; and,

g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 13. *Duties of the Church Treasurer.*** The Church Treasurer shall have the following duties:

a. To receive all funds of the Local Church and deposit the same in such bank or banks as may be designated by the Church Council;

b. To disburse the funds of the Local Church in accordance with the budget, including the prompt remittance of the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies, under the direction of the Church Council, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the Church Council, and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the Chairperson and/or other duly authorized officer of the Local Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specially intended for any program, project, or activity of the Local Church. In respect to funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Local Church, such funds shall be disbursed strictly according to the specific instructions of such individuals or organizations;

c. To keep a complete record of all financial transactions, including, but not limited to, vouchers and official receipts;

d. To present financial reports to the Church Council quarterly or as often as it may require; and,

e. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 14. *Duties of the Church Auditor.*** The Church Auditor shall have the following duties:

a. To audit the books of the Local Church regularly and submit a report thereon to the Church Council and the congregation;

b. To formulate, devise and submit to the Church Council an integrated audit system and procedures;

c. To present audited financial statement to the Church Council and the congregation at least once a year; and,

d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 15. *Election, Composition and Term of Board of Elders.*** The members of the Board of Elders shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall at least be three Elders for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Elders to compose the Board of Elders.

**SECTION 16. *Qualifications of an Elder.*** To qualify for election of Elder, one must be a regular member of good standing for five years in any UCCP Local Church and in the Local Church for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election, a respected member of the community where he/she resides, of good moral character and with demonstrated maturity in faith and witness, commitment and support to the mission and ministry of the Church.

**SECTION 17. *Duties of the Board of Elders.*** The duties of the Board of Elders are the following:

- a. To serve as example of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness by the grace of God;
- b. To be responsible for the admission of persons into full membership, the grant of honorary memberships and approval of issuance of certificates of transfer and clearances;
- c. To assist the Pastor in the administration of the sacraments, including the preparation of the Lord's Supper;
- d. To supervise all services of public worship;
- e. To act as a Board of Christian Mission and, as such, formulate, design and carry out holistic evangelism and mission programs of the Local Church that shall include, among others, the establishment of outreach centers;
- f. To formulate, design and implement an integrated plan for membership growth and development, including the annual review of the Local Church membership and visitation;
- g. To oversee the conduct of, and, subject to the approval of the Church Council, exercise disciplinary powers over the members, ***including the amicable resolution of disputes and conflicts, with respect to which, its decision or order, as confirmed by the Church Council, may be appealed to the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution. The decision of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution shall be final and executory, except in cases of fraud, grave injustice or gross errors in the appreciation of the facts and application of the Church statutes, rules and regulations; and (As amended by NC 2002-28,, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)***
- h. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 18. *Board of Deacons.*** The members of the Board of Deacons shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregational meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall be at least three Deacons for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Deacons to compose the Board of Deacons.

**SECTION 19. *Qualifications of a Deacon.*** To qualify for election as Deacon, a regular member must have been such member of good standing for at least one year immediately preceding his/her election; a respected member of the community where he/she resides; of

good moral character; has working knowledge of finance, accounting and budget planning, and an exemplar of cheerful giving.

**SECTION 20. Duties of the Board of Deacons.** The Board of Deacons shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as responsible stewards in their personal, family and church life;
- b. To formulate, develop and adopt a vigorous stewardship practice that shall include the giving by members of their tithes, time, talents and possessions to ensure the financial and material support of the programs and activities of the Church;
- c. To act and serve as the financial planning arm of the Local Church, with the Financial Secretary as the Chairperson;
- d. To formulate, develop and design a stewardship education program for the Local Church;
- e. To act as a social concerns committee; *(As amended by NC 2002-29, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- f. To assist the Financial Secretary in the preparation of the annual budget and plan for its attainment for submission to the Church Council;
- g. To ensure that the assessment and other contribution due to wider Church bodies are included in the annual budget; and,
- h. To **perform** such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council. *(As amended by NC 2002-29, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 21. Board of Christian Educators.** The members of the Board of Christian Educators shall be elected by and from among the regular members during the annual congregation meeting for a term as may be decided by the Local Church which shall not, in any case, be more than three years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms. There shall be three Christian Educators for every seventy-five (75) members, but in no case shall there be more than twelve Christian Educators to compose the Board of Christian Educators.

**SECTION 22. Qualifications of a Christian Educator.** To qualify for election as Christian Educator, he/she must have the same qualifications as an Elder.

**SECTION 23. Duties of the Board of Christian Educators.** The Board of Christian Educators shall have the following duties:

- a. To serve as models of spirituality, moral rectitude and faithfulness to growth and development of persons;
- b. To develop and supervise the over-all Christian education and nurture program of the Local Church;
- c. To ensure that the education, nurture, discipleship and leadership development programs for all groups are carried out in the Local Church;
- d. To encourage and challenge the members, especially the youth, to a calling in the varied ministries and mission of the Church; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 24. Board of Trustees.** The Board of Trustees shall be established whose members are the officers of the Church Council, including the Administrative Pastor as *ex officio* member, without vote.

**SECTION 25. Duties of the Board of Trustees.** The Board of Trustees shall have the following duties:

- a. To oversee the acquisition, management, repair, maintenance and disposition of church buildings and other properties.
- b. To formulate, develop and design an integrated property development plan for the Local Church;
- c. To ensure that the acquisition by purchase, donation, bequests or any other means, and the registration of real properties should be in trust for the UCCP for the use of the Local Church;
- d. To recommend to the Church Council, for the approval of the congregation and the proper Church authority, the sale, lease and other disposition of real properties of the Local Church to undergird the integrated property development of the Local Church; and,
- e. To perform such acts or duties as may be assigned by the Church Council.

**SECTION 26. Provisions Common to the Boards.** The following provisions shall have common application to the Boards:

- a. The Boards shall function within the scope of their authority and, whenever necessary, in coordination with each other. Their action shall not become final and executory until affirmed by the Church Council or confirmed by the congregation;
- b. The Church Council may affirm, modify or alter the action of one Board which may be in conflict with the action of another Board, or when there is clear error, injustice, or deviation from existing policy. It shall also act on appeals brought to it by any of the Boards;
- c. The regular meetings of the Boards shall be held every month on such date as may be determined by the Board in consultation with the other Boards and the Church Council. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, or upon written request of the Pastor, or of at least two Board members. The purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the notice;
- d. The Pastor and the Chairperson of the Church Council are *ex officio* members of the Boards, without vote;
- e. In case of vacancy in the membership of any Board, the same shall be filled by the candidate who garnered the next highest number of votes in the immediately preceding election for the Board or, in default thereof, in any other manner as may be determined by the Church Council; and,
- f. Except when expressly given permission in writing by the Church Council, no Board member shall have financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any contract or transaction of the Local Church. No Board member shall participate in the Church Council or Board deliberation on such contract or transaction where he/she may have financial interest or on matters affecting the employment of his/her spouse, parents, children or other relatives by consanguinity or affinity within the fourth civil degree.

**SECTION 27. Service to the Church.** Service to the Church is voluntary and rendered out of love and commitment to Jesus Christ, through the mission and ministry of the Church, without remuneration, unless otherwise indicated by the appropriate Local Church authority in which case a reasonable allowance may be authorized for such engagement or activity.

**SECTION 28. Scope of Local Autonomy.** The primary locus of mission is the Local Church. Hence, the UCCP upholds the autonomy of the Local Church particularly as to its right and power to conduct its ministry free from outside control, provided the same is in line with the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church, thereby enabling the Local Church to become effective instrument in the ministry and mission of the Church and

ensuring its positive contribution to the unity and strengthening of the whole Church. Specifically, autonomy of the Local Church includes the authority to do the following:

- a. To call and support its Pastor and other Church workers, keeping in mind the basic policy of the Church to call to its ministry pastors and Church workers belonging to the UCCP, subscribing to the UCCP Statement of Faith and paying allegiance to the Constitution, By-Laws and statutes of the Church. Pastors, ministers and workers of other churches affiliated with the ***National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)*** may be requested to serve in the Local Church with the prior written permission of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary; *(As amended by NC 2002-30, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- b. To administer, maintain, encumber or dispose of its personal or real properties pursuant to a resolution of its Board of Trustees and approved by its Church Council and, where real properties are involved, with the written consent of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary;
- c. To invite pastors, ministers, workers and lay leaders of other churches to speak, preach or otherwise enter into fellowship with the Local Church, from time to time, in consonance with Article II, Section 6, of the Constitution, provided that the authority and integrity of the UCCP, as well as the unity of the Local Church, shall never be impaired or compromised;
- d. To nominate and elect its officers, in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws, and hold annual and such special meetings as it may deem necessary and proper;
- e. To admit qualified persons into the membership of the Local Church, help ensure their nurture and spiritual development, and promote and develop among them the idea of loving service, stewardship and missionary outreach;
- f. To celebrate its worship services that are orderly and solemn, yet joyful and meaningful, reflective of the faith and life of the Church and responsive to the needs of the community in terms of witness, service and prophetic ministry;
- g. To support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church and recruit, recommend and support candidates for the ministry.
- h. To adopt its own budget and financial program and fulfill its obligations to the wider bodies; and,
- i. To do all things as it may deem wise, necessary and proper, without encroaching on the prerogatives of, and interfering with, the wider Church bodies, ensuring at all times that its action contribute to the unity and strengthening of the whole UCCP.

#### **Article IV THE CONFERENCE**

**SECTION 1. Conference.** The Conference shall encompass a contiguous area, and all local churches and worshipping congregations within the area shall belong to such Conference.

**SECTION 2. Conference Sessions. -**

- a. The annual sessions of the Conference shall be set in consultation with the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet; and,
- b. In a special session of the Conference, where a vacancy occurs by reason of death, resignation, transfer or incapacity of an accredited delegate in the last regular session, the same shall be filled by the Local Church concerned.

**SECTION 3. Meetings of the Conference Council. -**

- a. The Conference Council shall hold three regular meetings every year on such dates and time as the Conference Council may set; and,
- b. Notice of special meetings shall be sent personally or by the most expeditious means available to all the members of the Conference Council at least one week before the special session, and shall state the purpose or purposes thereof.

**SECTION 4. *Conference Chairperson.*** The Conference Chairperson shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session, and shall serve a term of two years, without immediate reelection.

**SECTION 5. *Duties of the Conference Chairperson.*** The Conference Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To call and preside over the meetings of the Conference and its Conference Council;
- b. To jointly prepare with the Conference Minister the agenda of the meetings;
- c. To support the leadership of the Conference Minister in the faithful and effective implementation of Conference programs; and,

- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference Council.

**SECTION 6. *Conference Vice-Chairperson.*** The Conference Vice-Chairperson shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session and shall serve a term of two years, without immediate reelection.

**SECTION 7. *Duties of the Conference Vice-Chairperson.*** The Conference Vice-Chairperson shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the position of the Conference Chairperson when he/she is absent or when a vacancy occurs due to resignation or other causes; and,
- b. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or Conference Council.

**SECTION 8. *Duties of the Conference Minister.*** The Conference Minister, being the shepherd of the flock in the Conference, shall serve the Conference in a full time capacity and shall have the following duties:

- a. To promote the unity and cooperation of all the constituent units of the Conference;
- b. To plan Conference programs of action, together with the members of the Conference Council, consistent with the direction and orientation of the General Assembly program thrusts;
- c. To ensure effective implementation of Conference programs through teamwork and cooperation among Conference leaders and Church workers;
- d. To facilitate and enhance the continuing education and development of Church workers and leaders within the Conference Area;
- e. To promote Conference programs in the local churches through visitation and consultation with the Local Church workers and lay leaders;
- f. To support Local Church workers in assessing the needs of local churches in pursuing their mission and ministry with respect to specific local situations; and,

g. To perform other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

**SECTION 9. *Deputy Conference Minister.*** The Deputy Conference Minister shall be elected in the same manner and shall have the same qualifications as the Conference Minister.

**SECTION 10. *Duties of the Deputy Conference Minister.*** The Deputy Conference Minister shall have the following duties:

- a. To assume the duties of the Conference Minister in the event of the latter's absence, disability, resignation or inhibition; and,
- b. To perform such duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

**SECTION 11. *Other Conference Officers.***

a. The Conference Secretary, Conference Financial Secretary, Conference Treasurer and Conference Auditor shall be elected by and from among the members of the Conference during the annual session and shall serve for a term of two years. They may be reelected for another term but not to exceed three consecutive terms.

Members of the Conference Committees shall likewise serve for a term of two (2) years, without prejudice to reappointment.

b. The Conference, if it so desires, may appoint other officers as may be necessary for its efficient and effective management and administration. These officers, such as administrative officer, office manager and/or liaison officer, shall perform such duties and functions as the Conference may assign.

**SECTION 12. *Duties of the Conference Secretary.*** The Conference Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. To keep and maintain faithful record of all proceedings of the Conference and the Conference Council in a book specially provided for the purpose;
- b. To keep such other records of the Conference as may be entrusted to his/her custody;
- c. To issue certifications or certified copies of documents and records of the Conference; and,
- d. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

**SECTION 13. *Duties of the Conference Financial Secretary.*** The Conference Financial Secretary shall have the following duties:

- a. Together with the Conference Minister and Conference Treasurer, to prepare the Conference annual budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference;
- b. Together with the Conference Minister, Conference Treasurer and Conference Program Coordinators, to prepare and design a stewardship program to generate funds to support the Conference annual budget;
- c. To implement stewardship campaign for tithes, pledges and donations in support of the Conference budget;
- d. To lead in the stewardship practice, as may have been formulated, designed and adopted by the Conference or Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the financial secretaries of the local churches to ensure that the assessment and other contributions due to the wider Church bodies are included in the

annual budgets of the local churches and that the same are promptly remitted to the Conference;

- f. To keep and update financial records of the Conference; and,
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or Conference Council.

**SECTION 14. *Duties of the Conference Treasurer.*** The Conference Treasurer shall have the following duties:

- a. To have custody, for and on behalf of the Conference, of all funds, securities, titles, assets and other properties in the name of the Conference, which shall come to his/her possession;
- b. To receive and deposit, in the name of the Conference, all funds of the Conference in accredited bank or banks, as may be designated by the Conference Council;
- c. To disburse funds in accordance with the approved accounting procedures and the approved budget of the Conference;
- d. Together with the Conference Minister, to prepare the budget and a budget plan for submission to, and approval of, the Conference Council;
- e. To coordinate with the treasurers and boards of deacons of the local churches to ensure the inclusion in the annual budgets of the local churches the assessment and other contributions due to wider Church bodies, and the prompt remittance of such assessment and other contributions to the Conference;
- f. To submit quarterly financial report to the Conference Council and a yearly audited financial report to the Conference; and,
- g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

**SECTION 15. *Duties of the Conference Auditor.*** The Conference Auditor shall have the following duties:

- a. To audit the books of the Conference and submit an audit report to the Conference or the Conference Council;
- b. To formulate, design and implement a systematic and simplified audit systems and procedure; and,
- c. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Conference or the Conference Council.

**SECTION 16. *Duties of the Conference Council.*** As the interim body of the Conference, the Conference Council shall have the following duties:

- a. To act upon matters referred to it by the local churches, the Conference and the General Assembly or National Council;
- b. To recommend an integrated short and long range strategic plan and annual budget for approval by the Conference during the annual session;
- c. To meet not later than one month prior to the annual session of the Conference to finalize the agenda for the annual session;
- d. To make full report of its actions to the Conference during the annual session; and,
- e. To provide for an external audit of the Conference.

**SECTION 17. *Conference Program Committees.*** The Conference may create program committees to implement its program thrusts consonant with the program thrusts of the Church as defined by the General Assembly or National Council.

**Article V**  
**NATIONAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

**SECTION 1. General Assembly.** The General Assembly is the highest policy-making body of the Church. As provided in the Constitution, it has the following duties and functions:

- a. Proclaim the faith, determine the ministry and mission policies of the Church, provide for the conduct of mission and **make, issue, or** approve statements on important public issues and concerns; *(As amended by NC 2002-31, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- b. Formulate policies and determine program thrusts and priorities of the Church in consultation with the local churches, conferences and other constituencies;
- c. Elect and proclaim the Bishops of the Church and assign them to their respective jurisdictional areas, **except in cases of special elections where the National Council is authorized to elect**; *(As amended by NC 2002-32, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*
- d. Elect the other officers of the Church, **except in cases of special elections where the National Council is authorized to elect**;
- e. Set up the organizational and operational structure of the Church;
- f. Review the actions of the National Council;
- g. Dispose of matters referred to it with respect to worship, general welfare and government of the Church;
- h. Recognize new Church bodies, reorganize existing ones, and determine their geographical boundaries based on standards set by the Church;
- i. Foster union and/or partnership with churches and other bodies whose purposes and aims are consistent with that of the UCCP;
- j. Receive through the Conference other local churches which adhere to the UCCP Statement of Faith, its Constitution and statutes; and,
- k. Act on proposed amendments to the Constitution or call for a Constitutional Convention as stated in Article X of the Constitution.

**SECTION 2. National Council.** When the General Assembly is not in session, the National Council shall serve as its interim body. As provided in the Constitution, it has the following duties and functions:

- a. Devise mechanisms for the implementation of the program thrusts, policies and priorities of the Church;
- b. Adopt an annual program and budget;
- c. Appoint members of programs and project committees upon the recommendation of the General Secretary;
- d. Act on matters referred to it affecting the life and witness of the Church, except those reserved exclusively to the General Assembly in session, such as those provided in Article VII, Section 3 (c), (d), (f), (h) and (k) of the Constitution; and,
- e. Constitute a Nominating Committee, composed of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and representatives from the conferences, which shall receive and screen nominees for all the officers of the Church.

**SECTION 3. Constitutional and National Program Commissions, and Other National Church Bodies.** The Church shall plan, determine and implement its ministry and mission through the Constitutional Commissions and such program commissions and other Church bodies as the General Assembly or National Council may create. The General Assembly or National Council shall define the structure and composition of the program commissions and

other Church bodies, prescribe the qualifications of their members and term of office, appoint their members in accordance with Article II, Section 5, of the Constitution and approve their budget. These program commissions and other Church bodies shall elect their own officers. National Church organizations and Church-owned and related institutions shall be attached to the Office of the General Secretary for coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

**SECTION 4. *Special Sessions of the General Assembly.*** In addition to the regular sessions of the General Assembly as provided in Article VII, Section 4, of the Constitution, special sessions may be called in the following manner:

- a. By two-thirds vote of all the members of the National Council; or
- b. By vote of two-thirds of the total number of conferences. Any of the conferences or its Conference Council may, through a resolution, initiate the call for special session of the General Assembly. The resolution shall be circulated to all conferences for the purpose of obtaining the required vote for such call. When the two-thirds vote is obtained, notice of the special session of the General Assembly shall be sent by the Office of the General Secretary to all the members at least one month before the date of the special session. For this purpose, the expenses required shall be covered by a supplementary budget.

**SECTION 5. *Quorum.*** In determining the quorum pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5, of the Constitution, a majority of all the conferences should be duly represented and accredited.

**SECTION 6. *Election of General Assembly Officers.*** Except for the General Secretary, the Bishops, and the National Treasurer, the officers of the General Assembly shall be elected by and from among the members of the General Assembly.

**SECTION 7. *Removal of Elected Officers of the General Assembly.*** Elected officers of the General Assembly may be removed by two-thirds vote of the General Assembly in a special session called for the purpose, or by three-fourths vote of the National Council for loss of confidence.

**SECTION 8. *Manner of Nomination and Election of Bishops.*** The Bishops of the Church shall be elected in the following manner:

- a. Nomination for Bishop shall be made in writing and submitted to the Nominating Committee at anytime before the last session of the National Council;
- b. ***Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees; (As amended by NC 2002-34, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)***
- c. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- d. ***Based on its screening, the Nominating Committee shall submit the list of the qualified nominees to the General Assembly;***
- e. The election shall be conducted by an Election Committee, composed of three members, to be created and appointed by the General Assembly; and,
- f. The election shall be by secret ballot and the first nominees ***corresponding to the number of jurisdictional areas*** obtaining the highest majority vote shall be declared duly elected. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

**SECTION 9. *Manner of Nomination and Election of Other General Assembly Officers.*** The nomination and election of the General Assembly officers shall be in the following manner:

- a. Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;
- b. The nominees shall be notified of his/her nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing;
- c. Based on its screening, the Nominating Committee shall submit the list of the qualified nominees to the General Assembly;
- d. The Election Committee, created by the General Assembly under the immediately preceding section, shall conduct the election; and,
- e. The election shall be by secret ballot and the nominee obtaining the highest number of votes shall be declared elected, except that in the case of the General Secretary, a majority vote is required for his/her election. All forms of campaigning for election shall be prohibited.

**SECTION 10. *Qualifications and Duties of the Chairperson.*** (a) To qualify for election as chairperson of the General Assembly, one must be **[1]** a regular member of the church in good standing for **at least** five (5) years; **[2] not otherwise a church worker**, and **[3]** had some experience in the conduct of meetings. ***The person so elected must possess the foregoing qualifications at the time of his/her election.*** (b) ***The Chairperson*** shall have the following duties and functions: *(As amended by NC 2002-35, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. To preside over the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- b. To prepare with the General Secretary the agenda for the sessions of the General Assembly or the National Council;
- c. When so specifically authorized, to act as the spokesperson of the General Assembly in meetings, conventions, and the like; and,
- d. To perform such other functions as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

**SECTION 11. *Qualifications and Duties of the Vice-Chairperson.*** The Vice-Chairperson of the General Assembly shall have the same qualifications as the Chairperson and shall assume the Chairperson's duties and functions in his/her absence, disability, inhibition or resignation.

**SECTION 12. *Qualifications and Duties of the General Secretary.*** To qualify for General Secretary, one must possess all the qualifications for Bishop as provided in Article VII, Section 8 of the Constitution and shall have demonstrated spiritual and pastoral leadership, and executive and administrative ability; ***except that in the case of years of service at least five years of active service in a UCCP local church and at least five years of active service in the conference and other church judicatories/institutions shall be required.*** He/She shall have the following duties: *(As amended by NC 2002-36, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

- a. To serve as the spiritual leader, executive officer, and spokesperson of the Church;
- b. To head the National Secretariat;
- c. To have custody of all land titles, minutes and all other important documents of the Church;
- d. To preside over the meetings of the Council of Bishops; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

**SECTION 13. *Vacancy in the Office of the General Secretary.*** In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of the General Secretary, or inability to discharge ***the duties of*** his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops shall designate from among its

members a temporary General Secretary until the National Council shall have elected an acting General Secretary to serve the unexpired term. *(As amended by NC 2002-37, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 14. National Secretariat.** The National Secretariat shall serve as the administrative, coordinating and monitoring center of the Church in the overall implementation of its programs.

**SECTION 15. Qualifications and Duties of the National Treasurer.** To qualify for election as National Treasurer, one must be a regular member of a Local Church, **not otherwise a church worker**, of irreproachable moral character, preferably a certified public accountant, and with demonstrated ability in corporate financial planning. He/She shall have the following duties and functions: *(As amended by NC 2002-38, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

a. To serve as the custodian for and on behalf of the Church of all funds, securities, assets and other properties of the Church which shall come into his/her possession, keep regular books of account, and deposit all funds in the name of the Church in such bank or banks as may be designated by the National Council;

b. To disburse funds of the Church provided in accordance with the duly approved budget, in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the General Assembly or the National Council and upon properly accomplished documents duly countersigned by the General Secretary and/or other duly authorized officer of the Church. He/She shall ensure that disbursements shall not exceed the authorized funds allocated at a given period in the budget or specifically intended for any program, project, or activity of the Church. In respect of funds entrusted to his/her custody and care by individuals or any related or affiliated organization of the Church, such funds shall be disbursed according to the specific instructions of such individuals or organizations;

c. To submit his/her books for audit as may be ordered by the Church or when requested by the National Auditor and render audited statement as may, from time to time, be required by the General Assembly or the National Council, and present as may be required and at the end of the ecclesial year, an audited financial report to the General Assembly or the National Council;

d. In consultation with the General Secretary, to formulate and prepare long-term financial plans, including the annual budget or any supplemental budget as may be required of the Church for submission to, and approval by, the General Assembly or the National Council;

e. To coordinate with the treasurers of the conferences to ensure the prompt and faithful remittance of assessments, contributions, and other obligations;

f. To post such bond either in cash or by a reputable surety company acceptable to the National Council in such amount as may be fixed by it; and,

g. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

**SECTION 16. Qualifications and Duties of the National Auditor.** The National Auditor shall have the same qualifications as the National Treasurer, except that he/she must be a certified public accountant. He/She shall have the following duties:

a. To examine or authorize the examination of the books and records of the Church in order to ascertain and verify that the annual report of the National Treasurer regarding the financial position and operations of the entire Church is in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles and with the policies, statutes and procedures established by the Church;

- b. To formulate, devise and submit to the General Assembly or the National Council accounting and auditing systems and procedures for the entire Church;
- c. To recommend adequate and effective system of accounts, the proper recording of transactions and the safeguarding of the assets of the entire Church;
- d. To conduct, in coordination with the Conference Auditor, audit of funds allocated by, or coursed through the General Assembly, to the Conference, and submit report thereon to the National Treasurer; and,
- e. To perform such other duties as may be assigned by the General Assembly or the National Council.

**SECTION 17. *Vacancy in the Offices of National Treasurer and National Auditor.*** *In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of the National Treasurer or the National Auditor, or inability to discharge the duties of his/her office for any cause, the General Secretary, in consultation with the Executive Council, may appoint from among the members of the Church a temporary National Treasurer or National Auditor until the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term. (As amended by NC 2002-39, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 18. *External Auditor.*** There shall be an annual financial audit of the Church to be conducted by an external auditor who shall be appointed by the National Council upon the recommendation of the General Secretary.

**SECTION 19. *Faith and Order Commission.*** The Faith and Order Commission shall consist of five members, three of whom must be ordained ministers, and who shall serve for a term of four years. To qualify for **election** to the Commission, one must possess theological understanding, be committed to the doctrines and discipline of the Church, of unquestionable moral character, and awareness of the pressing social issues. *(As amended by NC 2002-40, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 20. *Commission for Church Unity and Union.*** The Commission for Church Unity and Union shall be composed of five members, who shall serve for a term of four years. To qualify for **election** to the Commission, one must possess familiarity with the UCCP's vision for Christian unity and ecumenicity and must be committed to the establishment of the "One Body of Christ". *(As amended by NC 2002-41, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 21. *Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development.*** *The Commission on Stewardship and Resource Development shall have five (5) members, consisting of a church worker, a business person, an engineer, a lawyer and a finance person, and shall serve a term of four (4) years. To qualify for election to the Commission one must be a regular member of a Local Church in good standing of a Local Church, of good moral character, has competence in material and human resource development, and an exemplar of generous giving. (As amended by NC 2002-42, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

The Commission shall establish comprehensive and nationwide property and resource development programs to generate income for the support of the Church.

Such programs shall include the establishment of mechanism for property and human resources utilization that shall make the Church financially self-reliant and enable it to participate in the mission of the Universal Church.

For this purpose, the Commission shall encourage the formation of cooperatives and endeavor to establish Church-related institutions that shall provide insurance, hospitalization, retirement and pension plans for its Church workers, and assist the local churches in the establishment of memorial plans and parks for the members.

Real properties of the Church shall be developed for the benefit of the entire Church. In this regard, all local churches and church institutions not otherwise separately incorporated, shall be allowed to use the incorporation papers of the UCCP for such purposes. Guidelines in the sharing and distribution of the proceeds from the development of Church properties shall be approved by the General Assembly or the National Council.

In the acquisition, utilization and development of Church properties, the UCCP shall strictly abide and comply with all the laws, statutes and accepted principles for the promotion of ecological balance and integrity of God's creation.

**SECTION 22. *The UCCP Resource Development Foundation.***

***a. The Church shall organize and establish a non-stock, non-profit foundation, which shall be wholly-owned and controlled by the UCCP. The foundation shall serve as the holding company of the Church and shall manage its investment ventures.***

***b. The foundation shall have a board of trustees, composed of the following:***

***b.1. General Secretary***

***b.2. General Assembly Chairperson***

***b.3. General Assembly Vice-Chairperson***

***b.4. National Treasurer***

***b.5. National Auditor***

***b.6. CSRD Chairperson***

***b.7 A representative from each of the Jurisdictional Areas designated by the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet on recommendation of the Bishop of the Church for the Jurisdictional Area. Except for the three (3) representatives from each of the Jurisdictional Areas, who shall serve for three (3) renewable for another term, all the aforementioned members of the board of trustees shall at all times be the incumbent officers of the church (As amended by NC 2002-43, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002).***

**SECTION 23. *Procedure for the Election of Commission Members.*** Members of the various Commissions shall be elected in accordance with the following procedure:

***a. Nominations shall be made through the Nominating Committee, which shall screen the qualifications of the nominees;***

***b. The nominee shall be notified of the nomination and shall indicate his/her acceptance thereof in writing; and,***

***c. The General Assembly or National Council, as the case may be, shall appoint the members of the various Commissions from the corresponding list of qualified nominees submitted and certified by the Nominating Committee.***

**SECTION 24. *Vacancy in the Offices of the Commission Members. In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of any Commission member, or inability to discharge the duties of his/her office for any cause, the Executive Council shall designate from among the qualified members of the Church temporary Commission Members until the General Assembly or the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term. However, the Executive Council shall not make such appointment if the vacancy occurs within three (3) months from the General Assembly or National Council meeting immediately following such vacancy. (As amended by NC 2002-44, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)***

**SECTION 25. *Jurisdictional Area.*** A Jurisdictional Area shall consist of at least five (5) contiguous conferences, with no less than 150 local churches and at least 50 ordained ministers with pastoral assignments, ***and 50 unordained church workers with ecclesial assignments.*** (As amended by NC 2002-45, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

**SECTION 26. Jurisdictional Area Cabinet.** A Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall be established by the General Assembly or the National Council for each Jurisdictional Area with the following duties:

- a. Coordinate the promotion and implementation of the programs, projects and other undertakings of the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area consistent with the program thrusts of the General Assembly;
- b. Monitor, assess and evaluate the results of the implementation of Conference programs and submit recommendations thereon to the General Assembly or the National Council;
- c. Design a comprehensive human resources development program for the conferences within its Jurisdictional Area; and,
- d. Design and implement a promotional program aimed at disseminating and popularizing the thrusts of the Church and generating support for its programs.

**SECTION 27. Vacancy in the Office of the Bishop. In the event of death, incapacity, resignation or removal of a Bishop assigned to the Jurisdictional Area, or inability to discharge his/her office for any cause, the Council of Bishops may designate from among its members a temporary Bishop assigned to the Jurisdictional Area until the National Council shall have elected a successor to serve the unexpired term. (As amended by NC 2002-46, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)**

**SECTION 28. Bishops of the Church assigned to the Jurisdictional Area. The Bishops of the Church assigned to the Jurisdictional Area shall have the following duties.**

- a. To serve as the pastor of pastors by exercising pastoral care and responsibility with the Church workers of his/her Jurisdictional area;
- b. To call and preside over the meetings of the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet, **at which, as Chairperson thereof, he/she in the spirit of collegiality leads in the supervision, monitoring and assessment/evaluation of the promotion and implementation of the General assembly programs, projects and undertakings of the Church within his/her Jurisdictional Area;** provided, that in his/her absence or incapacity, the Jurisdictional Area Cabinet shall elect from among the Conference Ministers a temporary presiding officer;
- c. To implement a systematic program of visitation, consultation and promotion of programs of the General Assembly in the conferences.
- d. In consultation with the Conference Ministers, coordinate scheduling of, and attend, the annual sessions of the conferences within his/her Jurisdictional Area;
- e. To officiate the ordination of candidates for the ministry **during the conference in session;** and, (As amended by NC 2002-47, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)
- f. In the absence of the Conference Minister and Deputy Conference Minister, to perform their duties and functions until one has been duly elected.

**SECTION 29. Board of Trustees of the Church.** For the purpose of complying with the requirements of the Corporation Code of the Philippines, the National Council shall serve as the Board of Trustees of the Church, pursuant to Article VII, Section 11, of the Constitution.

**SECTION 30. Incorporation of Church Bodies.** Henceforth, a Local Church or Conference may be incorporated only upon prior approval of the General Assembly or the National Council, provided that its constitution and by-laws are consistent with the

Constitution and By-Laws of the Church. All local churches and conferences, which are separately incorporated, shall be subject to periodic review by the General Assembly or the National Council in regard to their incorporation. In the event of dissolution, all the properties and other assets of the Local Church and Conference shall be ceded back to the UCCP.

All local churches and conferences already incorporated before the effectivity of the Constitution and By-Laws shall be persuaded, when they encumber, convey or dispose of their real properties, to seek the approval of the National Council, through the General Secretary.

**SECTION 31. *National Church Organizations.*** In addition to the existing and duly recognized national organizations representing youth, women and men, the Church shall encourage the formation and establishment of voluntary church organizations based on sectoral, gender or to meet specific or particular needs or other interests of the Church and the community, and promote the ministry and mission of the Church. These voluntary church organizations may seek recognition by, and representation in, the different levels of the Church. To be recognized by, and represented in, the General Assembly or the National Council as a national organization of the church, a voluntary church organization must be organized in at least two-thirds of all the conferences, have a base membership of at least two thousand members and adhere to the Constitution and By-Laws, including all statutes and ordinances, of the Church.

**SECTION 32. *Church-Owned and -Related Institutions.*** As part of its ministry of teaching, healing and service, the Church shall continue its participation in the ownership of schools, hospitals and other service institutions. The administration, operation and maintenance of schools, hospitals and other service institutions wholly or partially-owned by the Church shall be subject to annual review by the National Council to ensure the quality of their service and their contribution to the mission of the Church. The Church shall take steps to ensure their continued viability.

***As regards to Church related institutions, the National Council may consult with the said institutions for the purpose of determining whether they continue to contribute to the mission and ministry of the Church and suggest measures to strengthen the relationship.*** (As amended by NC 2002-48, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

#### **Article VI**

### **AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LAWS**

**SECTION 1. *System of Conflict Resolution.*** Realizing that litigations in courts and administrative tribunals between and among members of the Church, or those involving the Church itself and its constituencies, are unseemly in God's sight and do not reflect well on the Church itself and its members, apart from being expensive in many instances and disruptive of cordial relationships within the Church fellowship, a system of conflict resolution is hereby established at all levels of the UCCP.

**SECTION 2. *Definition of Terms.*** The terms "conflicts" and "disputes" are often used interchangeably in this Article. Technically, however, a *conflict* exists where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between the various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the proper interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, By-Laws, statutes, rules and procedures of the Church. A *dispute* arises where a serious legal disagreement between and among Church officials or members, or between a member of the Church itself, or its constituencies, has reached a point where the parties have formulated claims and counterclaims sufficiently definite as to

ripen anytime into a litigation before a court or administrative tribunal, board or commission established by the State.

Justiciable cases are those controversies that may be tried or heard before courts of justice or administrative tribunals. As a general rule, disputes are justiciable.

**SECTION 3. *Amicable Settlement.*** As the fundamental values of truth, justice and love are the distinguishing marks of Christian discipleship, the amicable settlement of conflicts and disputes between and among members and those involving the members and the Church itself shall be encouraged (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-17) and every effort shall be exerted to discourage litigation before the civil courts, boards, or commissions established by the State (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). This is part of every member's witness to the outside world. Apart from the fact that litigation may involve much expense and delay, its adversarial character also tends to exacerbate the strained relations between and among church members who are parties to a controversy.

**SECTION 4. *Exhaustion of all remedies within the Church in Justiciable Cases.*** In all disputes and conflicts which may ripen into litigation, the Church adheres to the *rule of exhaustion of remedies* including, but not limited to, good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and the traditional method of adjudication through the National Commission ***on Discipline and Conflict Resolution*** (formerly National Judicial Commission). *(As amended by NC 2002-49, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

No member of the Church who is party to any controversy with another member or with the Church may institute any suit or proceeding or apply for remedy before any civil court, administrative tribunal, board or commission without first showing compliance with this requirement of exhausting all intrachurch remedies.

Such intrachurch remedies may include, among other things, acknowledgment of error or mistake, repentance, contrition and restitution, or reparation of damage, on the one hand, and forgiveness and pardon, on the other.

**SECTION 5. *Binding effect of the rule.*** To insure the binding effect of the rule of exhaustion of intrachurch remedies, all members of all local churches, conferences and all other bodies of the UCCP, 18 years or over, shall manifest, in a form prescribed for the purpose, their individual conformity to the rule. The Church, at all levels, shall keep a separate register of the said manifestations of conformity. At the local level, members who reach 18 years of age and those adults who are scheduled to be received into the fellowship of the Church, shall be similarly enjoined to manifest their conformity to the said rule, as part of their Christian witness.

The form, entitled "Manifestation of Conformity," is found at the end of these By-Laws as APPENDIX I.

**Section 6. *Questions within and beyond the system of Conflict resolution.*** Questions involving misunderstandings or disputes between relatives on matters of personal and property relations, inheritance rights, ownership of properties, disagreements between and among Church members involving alleged violations of contracts, non-payment of loans, the conduct or outcome of elections in Church and Church organizations, the relations between Church authorities and members, and the like, are all included in the system of Conflict resolution and are subject to this Article, provided the parties to the controversy are members of the Church.

But all questions of Church policy, such as whether to send delegates to certain international conferences, or whether the Church should support the Government's family planning program, its peace initiatives, its socio-economic plan and the like, and those questions that involve the public justice of the State — for instance, such criminal cases as

arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like — are beyond the system of conflict resolution.

Special proceedings, as the term is known in the Rules of Court, which do not involve conflicts and disputes, such as adoption, change of name, voluntary dissolution of corporations, declaration of absence and death, and similar proceedings, such as naturalization, all of which require judicial or government action, are not, as a general rule, included in the system of conflict resolution.

However, criminal cases involving light felonies, as this term is defined in the Revised Penal Code, such as slight physical injuries, malicious mischief and the like, for which the penalty imposed is from 1 day to 30 days, public censure or a fine of less than 200 pesos, and such other criminal cases involving other penalties which, in the best judgment and discretion of the Church Council, may be amicably settled in the interest of the Church fellowship and of the parties themselves, may be included in the system of conflict resolution, provided such amicable settlement will not be in violation of law, morals or public policy.

**SECTION 7. *Methods of settling conflicts and disputes.*** The parties to a controversy are expected to settle their conflict or dispute through direct exchange of views between themselves. But where their relations have become so strained as to rule out direct negotiation, the following methods as herein defined shall be resorted to:

- a. ***Good offices.*** The pastor, or an Elder, or a respected member of the Church, shall bring the parties together or provide the occasion for negotiations to take place between them so they can work out a settlement between themselves. For example, the Pastor (or Elder or a respected member of the Church) may invite the parties to the controversy to his office or residence for the said purpose. At the Conference level and that of the General Assembly, the tender of good offices may be initiated or done by the Conference Minister, the Officers of the Conference, the General Secretary, and other officers of the General Assembly, or by any respected lay leader of the Church.
- b. ***Mediation.*** Where the one tendering his/her good office actively participates by proposing a solution and offering his/her advise to the parties to the controversy, he/she plays the role of a mediator. Good offices and mediation may take place on the same occasion. The mediator does not concern himself/herself with the merits of a dispute: his/her task is to encourage compromise rather than advise adherence to legal technicalities.
- c. ***Conciliation.*** This is the process of settling a controversy about disputed facts by referring the same to a person or persons, designated by agreement of the parties to the conflict of dispute, for the purpose of clarifying and elucidating the facts in issue between the parties in the hope of bringing them to a compromise settlement.
- d. ***Arbitration.*** This is a quasi-judicial, informal procedure for the settlement of a controversy between the parties by referring the conflict or dispute to one or more impartial persons for final and binding determination. The arbitrator or board of arbitrators, not more than three (3) in number, shall be freely chosen by the parties themselves from a pool of Church arbitrators. In arbitration there is a legal obligation on the part of the parties to the controversy to comply with the award or decision.

Arbitration shall be resorted to by the parties where there is a failure or inability to arrive at a settlement through such means as good offices, mediation, or conciliation and there is a strong probability that litigation may ensue between or among Church members who are parties to a controversy. In such a situation, the Church Council, in case of a controversy at the level of the Local Church, shall adopt a detailed procedure of arbitration, in accordance with the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws and in line with such rules as may be issued from time to time by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDRCR). For this purpose, said Council shall immediately constitute a pool of

arbitrators, not more than five (5) in number, who are known for their moral integrity, competence, impartiality, and independence of mind. Where the controversy occurs at the level of the National Church, the Conference Council or the National Council, as the case may be, shall do likewise.

An example of an Arbitration Agreement, which may be modified to suit the requirements of a particular case, is found at the end of these By-Laws as APPENDIX II.

The decision or award of the arbitration or arbitrators freely chosen by the parties to a controversy, shall, as a general rule, be final, binding and unappealable, in accordance with law.

For the purpose of insuring that said decision of award shall be recognized and enforced by the courts, boards or commissions established by the State, the NCDRC shall promulgate the procedural rules that shall serve as guide to the Local Churches, the various Conferences and the National Church, on the basis of the **Manual of Arbitration** appended to these By-Laws as APPENDIX III, particularly with respect to such matters as qualifications of arbitrators, manner of effecting arbitration, procedure of arbitration, the decision or award and the compliance therewith by the parties. The Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III) shall apply in toto as the procedural rules to all cases submitted for arbitration pending promulgation of said procedural rules or in case of inability or failure of the NCDRC to promulgate the same.

In case the present Arbitration Law is amended, the NCDRC shall make the necessary modification or adjustment in its procedural rules.

e. **Traditional method of adjudication.** Those church members who are involved in a justiciable case and wish to waive or forego arbitration, after having failed to settle their dispute through the use of good offices, mediation or conciliation, may entrust the resolution of their controversy through the traditional method of adjudication. If and when such a situation arises, the Church Council shall establish a local unit of the NCDRC (formerly the Local Judicial Commission), in accordance with the procedural rules that shall be adopted and promulgated by the NCDRC.

In drafting and promulgating said procedural rules, the NCDRC shall take into account applicable provisions of the 1974 By-Laws concerning the Local Judicial Commission, with provision for appeal to the higher bodies in the context of the system of Conflict Resolution under the present Constitution, always keeping in mind that controversies involving church members, officers, and the Church itself shall be resolved in a non-adversarial, non-combative way and in light of the fundamental values of truth, justice and love.

In line with Article XI, Section 4 of the UCCP Constitution, "cases pending in the National Judicial Commission at the time of the effectivity of the present Constitution may be settled, if the parties so desire, through any of the amicable methods set forth in Article VIII", namely, good offices, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. In the absence of such a desire, the cases, if any, will be resolved in accordance with the rules of procedure prevailing before the effectivity of the present Constitution.

**SECTION 8. Advisory Opinions.** Where there is a difference of opinion between and among Church officials or members or between various bodies or agencies of the Church regarding the correct interpretation of the provisions of the UCCP Constitution, By-Laws, or statutes of the Church, there being no disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, an appropriate request for advisory opinion by the NCDRC may be made by such officials, members, bodies or agencies in accordance with the Rules of Procedure which shall be promulgated by the NCDRC in accordance with Article VIII, Section 11, of the UCCP Constitution.

Where there is a disagreement with respect to the relevant facts, the NCDCCR shall authorize the establishment of units at various levels of the Church to hear and decide the conflict, with provision for appeal to the higher bodies, including the NCDCCR itself, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure.

It shall be the duty of the NCDCCR to render its Advisory Opinion, after due consultation and thorough deliberation, within the period of thirty (30) days, counted from the date the case is duly submitted by all the parties for opinion. As the conflict involves only the interpretation of ecclesiastical laws, there shall be no appeal from said Advisory Opinions to the courts, commissions or boards established by the State.

**SECTION 9. *Finality of Opinion, Award, Order or Decision.*** *As a general rule, the opinion, award, order or decision of the NCDCCR after the lapse of fifteen (15) days from receipt by the parties of the said opinion, award, order or decision, shall become final and executory.* (As amended by NC 2002-50, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

*In cases decided by the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (CCDCR) where the decision is expulsion of a church worker, the case shall be subject to automatic review by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDCCR).* (As amended by NC 2002-51, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

**SECTION 10. *Election of NCDCCR members.*** NCDCCR members shall be elected by the General Assembly from among the nominees of the Conference only. No nomination from the floor during the General Assembly in session shall be allowed, save in exceptional cases.

**SECTION 11. *Filling of vacancy.*** In case of vacancy in the NCDCCR, by reason of resignation, death, incapacity and other causes, the same may be filled by appointment of the National Council or the General Assembly if in session. The one appointed by the National Council or General Assembly shall serve only the unexpired term of the member he/she is filling.

**SECTION 12. *Disqualification.*** In case of resignation of any member of the NCDCCR, he/she shall be disqualified from holding any elective or appointive office in the National Church for the remaining period of his/her term. The disqualification shall continue in spite of his/her resignation.

## **Article VII CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

**SECTION 1. *Discipline.*** Discipline is the prevention and correction of offenses for the purpose of maintaining the unity and integrity of the Church.

**SECTION 2. *Board of Elders.*** Pursuant to Article V, Section 9 of the Constitution, the Board of Elders, ***sitting as committee on discipline and conflict resolution***, shall be the disciplinary body in the Local Church, ***whose orders, judgments and decisions as confirmed by the Church Council may be appealed, in appropriate cases as defined by the NCDCCR, to the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution.***

**SECTION 3. *Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution.*** A Conference Committee on Discipline ***and Conflict Resolution***, composed of five (5) members, three (3) of whom shall be active ministers of the Conference and two of whom shall be laypersons, shall be appointed by the Conference ***in session or the Conference Council*** as its disciplinary body. The Jurisdictional Bishop and the Conference Minister shall sit as *ex-officio* members of the Conference Committee on Discipline ***and Conflict***

**Resolution**, without vote. **The Committee shall exercise judicial functions and, as such shall be an independent body, whose orders, judgments and decisions may be appealed only to the NCDCCR.** (As amended by NC 2002-53, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

The Committee shall elect its own chairperson. No member of the Conference Council shall be a member of the Committee.

**SECTION 4. National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution as the Highest Disciplinary Body.** In addition to the powers and responsibilities vested upon it under Article VIII of the Constitution, the NCCR shall be the highest disciplinary body of the Church. It shall have the following functions and duties:

a. To adopt such rules of procedure as it may deem necessary and proper for the purpose of implementing these By-Laws, ensuring at all times that due process and fair play are observed;

b. To administer and maintain Church discipline in appropriate cases involving officers and members of the General Assembly or the National Council, Conference Minister and other elected Conference officers; and,

c. To see to it that there is no overlapping of duties, responsibilities and functions in administering and maintaining discipline at the various units and agencies of the UCCP; and

**d. To act as the final judicial body of the Church and, as such, its orders, judgments and decisions shall be final and executory, and not subject to any further appeal or review by any other body or bodies of the Church.** (As amended by NC 2002-54, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

**SECTION 5. Classification of Cases.** There are three classes of cases which may involve the imposition of disciplinary measures of the Church:

a. Direct Misbehavior, obstruction or interruption of religious worship, sacred ceremonies, or official proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, or flagrant disrespect toward the Church or its officers and/or members in the course of or immediately before or after said proceedings, meetings or sessions.

b. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging **immoral**, unethical or improper conduct and an admission of culpability on the part of the offender who is an officer or member of the Church. (As amended by NC 2002-55, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)

c. Cases where there is a written complaint by the offended party alleging immoral, unethical or improper conduct on the part of an officer, or member of the church, but there is no admission by the respondent and the facts are in dispute or in doubt.

In the first class of cases, the Board of Elders may summarily deal with the offense by causing and effecting the physical exclusion or removal of the offender from the Church premises or from the venue of the proceedings, meetings or sessions of the Church, with the assistance, should this become necessary, of law enforcement authorities and other members of the Church. In addition, the Board of Elders may cause the prosecution of the offender in accordance with the Revised Penal Code (Articles 131-133; 153). Where the offender is a Church member, the Board of Elders may, after due deliberation, impose the penalty of expulsion in very serious cases, or the suspension of the offender from membership for such length of time as may be considered proportionate to the gravity of the offense. At the Conference level, the imposition of the penalty shall be the function and duty of the Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution; but where the said Committee has not yet been organized or its Chairperson and members are not present for any reason whatever, the appropriate disciplinary measure as set forth above shall be imposed by the Conference, or in default thereof, by the Conference Council; at the General

Assembly level or that of the National Council, the imposition of the proper penalty shall be the function and duty of the NCDRC; but where the NCDRC has not yet been organized or its Chairperson or members are not present for any reason whatever, the appropriate disciplinary measure shall be imposed by the General Assembly or the National Council, as the case may be.

The procedure as set forth in Section 7 and 8 hereof shall be observed with respect to the second and third classes of cases.

**SECTION 6. *Anonymous complaints and rumors.*** Anonymous complaints, gossips, and rumors shall be discouraged by the officers and disciplinary bodies of the Church since these are unseemly in a fellowship based on love, fairness, and truth. Any member found responsible for circulating the same, after his/her attention shall have been called to such practice, shall be subjected to the appropriate disciplinary measures, including admonition, suspension and, in extreme cases, expulsion.

**SECTION 7. *Written complaint.*** For the purpose of the second and third classes of cases, where a verbal complaint has been presented to the Pastor or other officers of the Church, the Conference, or the National Council, as the case may be, and the same involves immoral, unethical or improper conduct on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, the pastor or other officers of the Church, the Conference or the National Church, as the case may be, shall ask the complainant or offended party, who may or may not be a Church member, to reduce the same to writing, with particulars as to time, place and persons, so that the complaint may be presented to, and discussed by, the Board of Elders, the Conference Committee on **Discipline** and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDRC, as the case may be, for its proper disposition. *(As amended by NC 2002-56, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 8. *Action on the written complaint.*** Where the written complaint is sufficient in content in that it names the parties (the offended and the alleged offender), with enough details as to time, place and circumstances constituting the alleged immoral, unethical or improper conduct, the Pastor or an Elder or a respected member of the Church may seek a private meeting or conference with the alleged offender to inform the latter of the charge or charges in as tactful a manner as possible and ascertain his or her reaction or attitude. In case of an admission of the truth of the charge or charges or of the essential facts constituting the offense, the matter shall be reported to the whole Board of Elders or Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDRC, as the case may be, for the imposition of the appropriate penalty, taking into account the mitigating circumstances of the offender's admission of the truth. In every case, the offended party shall be informed of the steps being taken by the Church or by the Board of Elders in acting on his/her complaint.

Where, however, there is no admission of culpability on the part of the alleged offender who is an officer or member of the Church, or there is an admission of some facts but with the invocation of certain justifying or extenuating circumstances, the Board of Elders, in the exercise of its discretion, may resort to the processes of mediation or conciliation, as defined in Article VI, Section 7 or these By-Laws, which is in accordance with the teaching of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:15-17). Where these are clearly inappropriate or have failed, it shall ask the parties to enter into an Arbitration Agreement for a prompt, fair, and decisive settlement of the dispute in accordance with these By-Laws, the Manual of Arbitration (Appendix III), and such rules as may be promulgated from time to time by the NCDRC.

Where the complaint, however, alleges a serious or grave offense and the initial or preliminary proceedings of the Board of Elders and/or the Arbitration Panel indicate a *prima*

*facie* violation of the laws of the land — such as in cases of arson, homicide, kidnapping, murder, robbery, and the like, including rape, adultery, and other sexual assaults — the proceedings may be suspended so as to allow the complainant and officials of the State, whenever appropriate, to proceed unhampered with the prosecution of the offense, before the proper authorities of the State, without prejudice to the resumption of the proceedings before said Board as soon as circumstances permit and only for the purpose of administering and maintaining the system of discipline in the Church.

**SECTION 9. *Report of the Result of the Arbitration proceedings.*** The Arbitration body, preferably composed of three (3) arbitrators in serious cases, shall conduct its proceedings at the earliest possible time, resolve the facts in dispute, either acquitting or convicting the Respondent, in whole or in part, but always leaving it to the proper disciplinary body of the Church — the Board of Elders, Conference Committee on Discipline and Conflict Resolution, or the NCDCCR, as the case may be — to impose the proper penalty in case of conviction. Nothing herein contained shall authorize said disciplinary bodies to alter the findings of fact and applicable law of the Arbitrator or Arbitrators.

**SECTION 10. *Interim orders.*** The following twin principles shall guide the disciplinary bodies of the Church in the performance of their duties and functions:

1. No Church organization can long endure without order and harmony in the Church. The maintenance of a sound system of discipline is a necessary condition to the integrity and growth of the Church.
2. But order and harmony may not last unless based on truth, justice and the willingness to reconcile and forgive. Reconciliation shall be encouraged but without sacrificing truth and justice. In case guilt or culpability exists, contrition and repentance, including restitution where proper, are pre-conditions to genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. Always, our example is the great teacher, Jesus Christ.

### **Article VIII GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**SECTION 1. *Property Ownership.*** Upon effectivity of the Constitution, in all cases of ownership of real properties, the phrase “held in trust for the UCCP” shall always be annotated in the document of title with the conformity of the Local Church or the Conference as the case may be.

With respect to real properties already held and owned by incorporated local churches, Conferences, and Church-owned institutions at the time of the effectivity of the Constitution, these entities shall be persuaded to comply with Article IX, Section 1, of the Constitution.

**SECTION 2. *Effectivity.*** These By-Laws shall be effective upon ratification and proclamation in the same manner as provided in Article XII, Section 1, of the Constitution.

**SECTION 3. *Manual of Operation.*** The General Assembly or the National Council shall set forth in a Manual of Operation further details on the operations of various commissions or other Church bodies not otherwise provided for in these By-Laws.

### **Article IX TRANSITORY PROVISIONS**

**SECTION 1.** Upon the proclamation of the new Constitution, the 1994 General Assembly shall set the date for the convening of the first regular General Assembly under the new Constitution, which shall be held later than **May 1998**, and the the present Executive Committee shall act as the Nominating Committee for the purpose of electing the officers of the General Assembly. *(As amended by NC 2002-57, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 2.** All Bishops elected prior to the effectivity of the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall serve until the new Bishops shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these By-Laws.

**SECTION 3.** The present national officers of the Church shall serve in “hold-over” capacity until the new national officers shall have been elected and qualified under the new Constitution and these By-Laws.

**SECTION 4.** The first set of national officers elected under the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall serve starting the month of **June 1, 1998** immediately following their election. *(As amended by NC 2002-58, Condora, Damortis La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002)*

**SECTION 5.** The Conference Areas existing prior to the ratification of the new Constitution and these By-Laws shall continue to exist until such time that the General Assembly shall exercise its prerogative under Article VII, Section 3 (h), of the new Constitution.

### **Article X AMENDMENT**

**SECTION 1.** These By-Laws may be amended by majority vote of the General Assembly or by three-fourths vote of the National Council, subject to approval by the majority votes of all the Conferences.

**Appendix I****MANIFESTATION OF CONFORMITY**

As a full member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby state:

1. That I have read and reviewed Article VI of the UCCP By-Laws, entitled "AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES AND THE INTERPRETATION OF LAWS", and I agree that as a sign of our love for one another, conflicts and disputes between and among Church members should be amicably settled on the basis of truth, justice and love, and by availing of all remedies within the Church fellowship, in accordance with the Holy Bible.
2. That I manifest my wholehearted conformity to Article VI, particularly Section 4, which embodies the rule of exhaustion of all remedies within the Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name in Block Letters)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Address)

Signed on \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Church)

**ARBITRATION AGREEMENT  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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(Name of Church)

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(Address of Church)

The undersigned parties, after having made use of the other modes of settling our conflict or dispute (good offices, mediation, and conciliation), hereby agree to submit the following controversy and/or specific issue to arbitration:

Complainant states that she loaned P10,000 (payable in 12 months) in June, 1992 to Respondent, both members of the UCCP at the above address. Respondent states that she has already paid the above amount in five (5) installments but that she lost or mislaid the receipts of payment signed by the complainant. The specific issue is whether the loan has actually been paid. Complainant asks that she be paid P10,000 plus interest at the rate of 20% per annum.

The parties agree:

(1) That Mr. Juan Martinez, Chairperson of the Board of Elders, shall be the sole arbitrator (In more serious or complicated cases, they may agree on a Board of Three (3) Arbitrators, in accordance with Article 1, par. 4 of the Manual of Arbitration);

(2) That it is their desire that the hearings be scheduled on the following date or dates and time: \_\_\_\_\_;

(3) That the award or decision should be rendered not later than fifteen (15) days after the last hearing;

(4) That they shall abide by and comply in good faith with the award or decision of the sole arbitrator;

(5) That any court of competent jurisdiction shall have the power to enforce this Arbitration Agreement, confirm the award or decision and execute the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have hereunto signed this Arbitration Agreement this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ in the Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_, Province of \_\_\_\_\_.

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In the presence of:

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**MANUAL OF ARBITRATION**

In accordance with the UCCP By-Laws, this Manual of Arbitration shall be the basis of the procedural rules that shall serve as guide to the Local Churches, the various Conferences and the Church in all cases duly submitted for arbitration. Pending the promulgation of said Procedural Rules by the National Commission on Discipline and Conflict Resolution (NCDCCR) or in case of inability or failure to promulgate the same, this Manual of Arbitration shall apply to all cases duly submitted for arbitration.

**ARTICLE 1. Definition and Nature.** Arbitration is a quasi-judicial, informal procedure for the settlement of a controversy between the parties by a binding award or decision of an arbitrator or board of arbitrators, not more than three (3) in number, freely chosen by the parties themselves from a pool of Church arbitrators. In arbitration there is a legal obligation on the part of the parties to the controversy to comply with the award or decision.

Arbitration shall be resorted to by the parties where there is a failure or inability to arrive at a settlement through such means as good offices, mediation, or conciliation.

In the event of a conflict or dispute between and among Church members and there is a strong probability that the controversy may ripen into litigation, a detailed procedure of arbitration shall be adopted by the Church Council in the case of a Local Church, the Conference Council at the Conference level, or the National Council at the highest level, in accordance with the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws. For this purpose, a pool of arbitrators, not more than five (5) in number, shall be appointed by said Council. The parties may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators to be chosen from the pool of Church arbitrators as provided in the next article.

The submission to arbitration shall be effected by written agreement of the parties, who may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators, all of whom shall come from the Church's pool of arbitrators, the first to be selected by the complainant or complainants, the second to be appointed by the respondent or respondents; the two arbitrators shall agree upon the third arbitrator. The making of such an agreement to submit the controversy to arbitration shall be deemed a consent of the parties to the authority of the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction, under the Arbitration Law (RA 876), to enforce the agreement and confirm the award. Said agreement shall be filed with the Clerk of the Regional Trial Court having jurisdiction over the case.

An example of an Arbitration Agreement, which may be modified to suit the requirements of a particular case, is marked as Appendix II at the end of the UCCP By-Laws.

**ARTICLE 2. Qualifications of arbitrators.** Any person appointed as arbitrator must be at least 25 years of age, in full enjoyment of his civil rights, a college graduate or its equivalent in terms of training and experience as may be considered adequate by the Church Council, in the case of a Local Church. The arbitrator must be a full member of the Church, known for his/her moral integrity, competence, impartiality and independence of mind.

No person appointed to serve as arbitrator shall be related by blood or marriage within the 6th degree of any party to the controversy. The same disqualification shall apply to the *compadre* or *comadre* of any of the parties. No person shall serve as an arbitrator in any proceedings if he/she has or has had financial, fiduciary or other interest in the controversy or cause to be decided or in the result of the proceeding or has any personal bias, which might prejudice the right of any party to a fair and impartial award or decision.

No party shall select as an arbitrator any person to act as his/her champion or to advocate his/her cause, it being understood that an arbitrator shall be an impartial, neutral judge.

If after appointment but before or during a hearing, an arbitrator shall discover any circumstances likely to create a presumption of bias, or which he/she believes might disqualify him/her as an impartial arbitrator, he/she shall immediately disclose such information to the parties. Thereafter the parties may agree in writing:

- a) to waive the presumptive disqualifying circumstances; or
- b) to declare the office of such arbitrator vacant. Any such vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment was made.

The arbitrator or arbitrators may be challenged by any party for which the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph which may have arisen after the arbitration agreement or were unknown at the time of arbitration. The challenge may be made before the arbitrators. If the arbitrator yields to the challenge, the arbitrator that will replace him/her shall be chosen in the same manner as that of the original arbitrator. If the arbitrator does not yield to the challenge, the Church Council in the case of the Local Church, the Conference Council in the case of the Conference, and the National Council in the case of the Church shall decide, as soon as possible, the merit or lack of merit of the challenge.

In remote areas where all or almost all the Church members are related to one another by blood or marriage, or as *compadre* or *comadre*, so as to render it difficult or impossible to choose impartial arbitrator/s, the pastor and/or the Church Council shall immediately inform the Conference Minister who shall then request the Conference Council to appoint a pool of five (5) arbitrators with the qualifications above-mentioned and without any of the disqualifications that may preclude them to act as arbitrators. The parties may thereafter agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators as provided in the next subsection.

**ARTICLE 3. How arbitration is effected.** The submission to arbitration shall be effected by the written agreement of the parties. The agreement shall set forth the nature of the controversy, the amount involved, and the relief sought. The parties may agree to a single arbitrator or to a board of three (3) arbitrators, all of whom shall come from the Church's pool of arbitrators, the first to be selected by the complainant/s or plaintiff/s, the second to be selected by the respondent/s or defendant/s; the two arbitrators shall agree upon the third arbitrator. A form for this purpose entitled Arbitration Agreement is found in Appendix II.

The making of such an agreement to submit the controversy to arbitration shall be deemed a consent of the parties to the authority of the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction, under the Arbitration Law (RA876), to enforce the agreement and confirm the award or decision.

**ARTICLE 4. Procedure of arbitration.**

a. **Date of hearing: adjournment.** If the dates of the hearing are not specified in the arbitration agreement, the arbitrator/s shall set the dates of hearing, indicating the hour and the place, and shall cause notice thereof to be given to the parties.

The hearing may proceed in the absence of any party who, after due notice, fails to be present at such hearing or fails to obtain an adjournment thereof.

An adjournment may be ordered by the arbitrator/s at their own discretion, for good and sufficient cause. But no adjournment shall extend the hearing beyond the date fixed in the arbitration agreement for rendering the award of decision unless the same is extended by written agreement of the parties.

b. **Who may be present.** No one other than a party of said arbitration, or a person duly authorized in writing by said party, shall be permitted by the arbitrator/s to be present during the hearing. Any party desiring to be represented by a lawyer shall notify the other party or

parties of such intention at least 5 days prior to the hearing, so that the latter may, if he desires, be represented also by a lawyer. However, it is not necessary or obligatory for any party to be represented by a lawyer, since the case shall be resolved not on the basis of legal technicalities but on the basis of truth and substantial justice.

Where a party is to be represented by a lawyer, the former shall make sure that said lawyer is a member of the Church (UCCP) or of churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) or the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). Said lawyer shall be advised by the arbitrator/s that the proceedings shall not be considered adversarial, that the dispute or conflict shall be resolved not on the basis of legal technicalities but in light of the fundamental values of truth, justice and love, and that arbitration is intended to resolve the dispute or conflict with finality, for which reason the parties are under the moral and legal obligation to comply with the award or decision.

c. ***Amicable settlement during the arbitration.*** At any time during the arbitration and before the award or decision is rendered, the parties may decide to settle the case amicably with the assistance of the pastor, Conference minister, bishop, an elder, or a respected leader of the Church. In such a case, the terms and conditions of the settlement shall be embodied in the award or decision which shall be signed by the arbitrator or arbitrators as the case may be.

But no arbitrator shall act as a mediator or as a member of a conciliation committee in any proceedings in which he/she is acting as a mediator. All negotiations toward settlement of the dispute or conflict must take place without the intervention or presence of the arbitrator/s.

The reason for the rule is that involvement in the talks for settlement may effect the arbitrator's impartiality, in the event negotiations for settlement break down. Hence, where it has become apparent that the parties desire to settle their dispute amicably, the arbitrator/s shall immediately inform the pastor, Conference minister, bishop, elder or respected leader of the Church of said development so the latter can assist the parties reach an amicable settlement.

d. ***Oath of arbitrator/s.*** Before hearing any testimony, the arbitrator/s shall take the required oath before the Church Council, or Conference Council, or National Council to hear and examine the matters in controversy before them, with utmost fairness and impartiality, and to make a just award or decision according to the best of their ability and understanding.

e. ***Stenographic record of testimony.*** If feasible, the arbitrator/s shall arrange for the taking of stenographic record of the testimony of witnesses when such a record is requested by one or more parties, and when payment of the cost thereof is assumed by such party or parties. Where not feasible in some areas due to unavailability of a competent, trustworthy stenographer, the record of the testimony may be done in longhand, subscribed to by the person making the testimony and duly attested by the arbitrator/s.

f. ***Power to administer oaths and to require attendance and testimony of witnesses.*** Arbitrator/s shall have the power to administer the oaths to all witnesses requiring them to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, in any testimony which they may give in any arbitration hearing. This oath shall be required of every witness before any of his testimony is heard.

Arbitrator/s shall have the power to request any person whose testimony may be necessary or helpful to attend a hearing as a witness or to produce at such hearing such document or documents as will shed light on the matters in dispute and, if necessary, testify thereon.

The party or parties, in whose behalf a witness is requested to testify or produce a document and testify thereon, shall exert every effort to see to it that such a witness is present at the hearing. The continuous non-appearance of said witness who is in the Philippines and is not suffering from any disability to testify, if he so desires, but who, despite repeated requests, does not attend the hearing

may be construed by the arbitrator/s as an unwillingness to get involved in the dispute or to support the position of the party or parties in whose behalf said person has been requested to testify.

**g. Hearing.** At any time before or at the commencement of the hearing, the arbitrator/s may ask both parties to submit an agreed statement of facts, which shall be in writing and shall contain a concise, itemized summary of the facts admitted by the parties to be true and correct, leaving the presentation of evidence only to such effects that are still in dispute. The parties may be asked to give a brief statement of the issue or issues in controversy.

The arbitrator/s shall ascertain and rule on the relevancy and materiality of the evidence offered or produced by the parties. However, they shall not be bound by the technical rules of evidence but shall make every effort to see to it that the whole truth emerges from the hearing. Evidence that is obviously the product of gossip, rumor-mongering, pure speculation, or mere opinion not based on the facts shall be ruled out, or if admitted, shall not be taken into account in deciding the case.

Arbitrator/s shall receive as exhibits in evidence any document which the parties may wish to submit and the exhibits shall be properly identified at the time of submission, beginning with the Exhibits "A", "B" and "C" and so forth for the plaintiff or complainant, or Exhibits "1", "2", and "3" and so forth for the defendant or respondent, as the case may be.

All exhibits shall be safeguarded by the arbitrator/s, and their photocopying (by xerox machine or any similar copier) may be authorized as soon as possible to make sure that each arbitrator and the Church Secretary, shall have a photocopy, signed on the back thereof by the parties, and the witness who identified or produced the same, indicating the date and the time of their signing or authentication. The originals of the exhibits, once photocopied, may be returned to the parties or to the lawful owners of said documents.

The arbitrator/s may make an ocular inspection of any article, material, machine, site, place or premises in dispute, in the presence of all the parties, unless any party who shall have received notice thereof fails to appear in which event such inspection shall be made in the absence of such party.

**h. Proceeding in lieu of hearing.** The parties to arbitration may, by written agreement, dispense with the oral hearing by submitting an agreed statement of all the essential facts, together with all the documentary evidence and the cause or causes of their disagreement or differences. Notwithstanding said written agreement, the arbitrator/s may decide to call the parties to clarify certain facts or submit evidence on certain points to assist the arbitrator/s in rendering the decision or award. The parties shall submit, within the time that shall be allowed by the arbitrator/s — which shall not be later than 15 days from the date of receipt of the order of the arbitrator/s — their respective memoranda which shall contain their analysis of the facts of their respective arguments, and a closing paragraph setting forth their willingness to abide by the award or decisions of the arbitrator/s with their genuine signature.

Each party shall provide all the other parties to the conflict or dispute a copy of all statements, documents and memoranda of argument submitted to the arbitrator/s. Each party shall have an opportunity to make a written reply to any other's statements and proofs, but if such party fails to do so within seven (7) days after receipt of said statements, documents and memoranda, he/she shall be deemed to have waived his/her reply. Upon the delivery to the arbitrator/s of all statements and documents, together with the reply statements, if any, copies of which shall be furnished the Church Secretary for filing in the Church records, the arbitrator/s shall declare the proceeding in lieu of hearing closed.

Where only questions of law are involved and there is no disagreement with respect to the facts, the arbitrator/s shall render the award or decision in accordance with the next section. But where the

legal questions are difficult, novel, or complicated, the arbitrator/s may with the written consent of the parties, refer the dispute or conflict to the NCDRC for an authoritative and final determination of the whole controversy. From the date the NCDRC receives all the records, statements, documents and memoranda of argument of the parties, the NCDRC deems it necessary to call the parties to a hearing for the purpose of clarifying certain facts or points, in which case the 30-day period shall begin as of the date the case is submitted for award or decision by the parties.

**ARTICLE 5. *Time for rendering award or decision.*** Except when there is a reference of the controversy to the NCDRC or unless the parties shall have stipulated by written agreement the time within which the arbitrators must render their award or decision, the written award or decision of the arbitrator/s shall be rendered within fifteen (15) days after closing of the hearings, or if the oral hearings shall have been waived, within fifteen (15) days after the arbitrator/s shall have declared such proceedings in lieu of hearing closed.

**ARTICLE 6. *Form and contents of the award or decision.*** The award must be made in writing, signed and acknowledged by a majority of the arbitrators, if more than one, and by the sole arbitrator, if there is only one. The award or decision must state in clear, concise and definite terms and facts and the basis upon which it is based. Each party shall be furnished a copy of the award or decision. The arbitrator/s in the award or decision may grant any remedy or relief which they deem just and equitable and within the scope of the agreement of the parties. In cases arising out of failure to fulfill a contractual obligation, the relief may include the specific performance of the contract.

The disposition may take the form of granting the relief sought by the plaintiff or complainant, in which case it is called an *award*. Where the disposition is to dismiss the case for lack of merit or for insufficiency of *evidence*, it is called a decision. But where the disposition is to grant the relief in part and to dismiss the case in part it is called an *award and decision*.

The arbitrator/s shall have the power to decide only those matters which have been submitted to them. The terms of the award or decision shall, as a general rule, be confined to such matters.

The arbitrator/s shall have the power to assess in their award or decision the expenses of any party against another party, when such assessment shall be deemed necessary.

**ARTICLE 7. *Fees of arbitration.*** Arbitrator/s render their services as part of their religious obligation and as a form of witness to the outside world. There shall be no fees paid to them. The only exception is in unusually long or difficult cases, where the parties agree to such fees, the arbitrator/s make no objection and said agreement is approved by the Church council, as the case may be.

**ARTICLE 8. *Finality of the award or decision.*** As a general rule, the award or decision of the arbitrator/s after the lapse of fifteen (15) days from the receipt of the award or decision, is final and unappealable. The only exception under the canons of Church discipline is where the award or decision was procured by corruption, fraud, intimidation or duress.

The arbitrator/s may, however, issue an order modifying or correcting the award or decision, within forty eight (48) hours after receipt of the same, upon the application of any party to the conflict or dispute which had been arbitrated and with due notice to all the parties to the conflict or dispute so they may have the opportunity to file their objection, if any. Such modification or correction may be granted only in three (3) cases namely: (1) where there is a typographical or clerical error which materially affects the rights of said party; or (2) where there is an evident mistake in the computation of figures which prejudices in a substantial way the rights of said party; or (3) where there is an unintentional mistake in the description of any person, thing or property referred to in the award or decision. In such a case, the period of 15 days shall be counted from the date of receipt of the modification or correction of the award of decision.

**ARTICLE 9. *Compliance with the award or decision.*** At any time within fifteen (15) days after the award or decision has become final, the losing party shall comply with the award or decision in accordance with his/her formal commitment. Where it is necessary to grant him/her more time for good and sufficient reason, the arbitrator/s may, in their discretion, allow him an extension of fifteen (15) days, or thirty (30) days all in all, to comply with the award or decision. Where after the lapse of said period, the losing party has not shown any desire to comply with the award or decision, and despite reminders by the arbitrator/s and the Church Council the winning party may apply to the appropriate regional trial court having jurisdiction, for an order confirming the award of decision, copy furnished the other party or parties, in accordance with the Arbitration Law (RA876), with the power to enforce the same on the basis of the manifestation and agreement of the parties. In addition, the winning party and/or the Church may avail of the remedies available under the UCCP By-Laws so that the appropriate disciplinary measure may be meted out to the losing party who has not shown any desire to comply with the award or decision.

**Apostles' Creed\***

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day He rose again;  
He ascended into heaven,  
He is seated at the right hand of the God  
and He will come again  
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints:  
the forgiveness of sins:  
the Resurrection of the body:  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*\*From the New Century Hymnal, United Church of Christ in the United States of America,  
The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1995.*

**Nicene Creed\***

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God; eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.