THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN NEW ZEALAND INC

CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS

AS ADOPTED AT THE 63RD GENERAL COUNCIL OF JULY 2022

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Constitution of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand (Inc)

1. INTRODUCTION

The roots of the Assemblies of God Movement in New Zealand are both ancient and modern. Our current testimony to the power and person of the Holy Spirit reaches back over almost two thousand years of church history to the day of Pentecost when the Church was born. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th Century that the modern Pentecostal Movement was born when students at a Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, came to the conclusion that the biblical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was speaking in other tongues. From that point on there were outbreaks of spiritual revival accompanied by Pentecostal phenomena, as in the Welsh Revival of 1904 and at Azusa St, Los Angeles, in 1906. As the message of a new Pentecost spread far and wide it encountered such opposition from the Church of that day, that Pentecostals found it necessary to set up their own church structures, one of which is the Assemblies of God, now found in most countries throughout the world.

Interest in Pentecostal Christianity in New Zealand was evident before World War I, but it was the visits of evangelist Smith Wigglesworth to New Zealand between 1922 and 1924 that launched the Pentecostal Movement in this country. The Assemblies of God in New Zealand were organised following a meeting in Wellington on 29 March 1927.

2. OBJECTIVES

The fundamental philosophy of Assemblies of God Movements worldwide is one of cooperative fellowship between local churches. This is based upon mutual agreements voluntarily entered into by the members of those churches and with four principal aims in view:

(a) To encourage and promote the evangelisation of the world

(b) To provide a basis for the nurture, equipping and edifying of Christians who share the same precious faith

(c) To establish and maintain churches where God is worshipped in spirit and truth according to what the scriptures teach

(d) To approve all scriptural teachings, methods and conduct, and to disapprove of all unscriptural teachings, methods and conduct.

While recognising the right of a local church to govern itself in accordance with biblical principles, Assemblies of God Movements see clear evidence in the New Testament scriptures of churches in a particular area being linked together (1 Corinthians 16:1,19; 2 Corinthians 8:1). The Assemblies of God in New Zealand is thus an attempt to emulate the New Testament suggestion of self-governing churches working together in cooperative fellowship.

3. STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

This Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended simply as a basis of fellowship among us. No claim is made that it contains all biblical truth, only that it covers our present needs as to these fundamental truths.

3.1 The Inspiration of the Scriptures.

We believe that the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God and are the revelation of God to humanity; they are the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

3.2 The One True God

We believe that the one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent "I AM," the creator of heaven and earth and the redeemer of all people. He has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We speak of God as a Trinity or as one being of three persons. These three persons are coequal, coexistent, coeternal and consubstantial. The

Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are never identical as to person, nor confused as to relation, nor divided in respect to the Godhead, nor opposed as to cooperation. Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist in, with and through each other; united eternally in fellowship, love and common purpose. In their fellowship and community they share all they are and have in communion, openness and self-giving love. Hence, no person in the Godhead either exists or works separately or independently of the others.

3.3 The Lord Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is one, but He has two natures, the human and the divine. He is truly God and truly man, composed of body and rational soul. He is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His deity and consubstantial with humankind in His humanity, except for sin. In His deity He eternally proceeds from the Father, and in His humanity He was conceived by the Virgin Mary, through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. The distinction between the two natures is not diminished by their union, but the specific character of each nature is preserved and united in one person. Christ is not divided into two persons; He is one person, the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Scriptures declare His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His substitutionary work on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of God the Father.

3.4 The Fall of Humanity

We believe human beings were created good and upright, being made in the image of God. However, they became sinful by voluntary transgression of God's command and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God.

3.5 The Salvation of Humanity

We believe that a person's only hope of salvation is through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross that all may be saved. Salvation is received through repentance and faith. Being justified by grace through faith, we receive the righteousness of Christ, regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit and become heirs of God according to the hope of eternal life.

3.6 Sanctification

We believe that sanctification initially occurs at the time of salvation. It is not only a declaration that a believer is holy, but also a progressive lifelong process of separation from evil as believers continually draw closer to God and become more Christ-like. When Christ returns the Holy Spirit will complete the work of sanctification in our lives. In Christ we become a new creation, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

3.7 Christian Character

We believe that the work of sanctification in the life of a believer results in a life characterised by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This kind of life rejects pride and rebellion and all behaviour stemming from this, such as homosexuality, sexual immorality and sexual perversion, lust, incest, idolatry, envy, murder, strife, drunkenness, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, insolence, arrogance, boasting, promoting evil deeds, disobedience, greed, covetousness and all forms of moral depravity.

3.8 The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

We believe that all believers are entitled to, should eagerly expect and seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, according to the command of Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Church. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit received at the new birth. We give continuing emphasis to the New Testament pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. This experience:

(a) Enables them to evangelise in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs.

(b) Adds a necessary dimension to a worshipful relationship with God

(c) Enables them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the worship of God through Christ, the edifying of the Body of Christ and the evangelisation of the world.

3.9 The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

We believe that the baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is shown by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God enables them to do so.

3.10 The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the gifts of the Spirit continue to be experienced by the Church. They are given to empower the believer for life, ministry and witness. They are supernatural having their origin in God, but are also incarnational in that they operate in and through believers. They are intended to be part of the normal spiritual exercise of every believer.

3.11 The Ordinances of the Church

We believe in baptism by immersion in water following salvation. This ordinance is commanded in the Scriptures. All who repent and believe in Christ as Lord and Saviour are to be baptised. In this act we declare to the world that we have died with Christ and have been raised with Him to live a new life.

We believe in Holy Communion, also known as The Lord's Supper, consisting of bread and wine. These symbols express our sharing in the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are also a memorial of His suffering and death and a prophecy of His second coming. The observance of Holy Communion is to be celebrated by all believers until He returns.

3.12 The Church and Mission

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Holy Spirit, with divine gifts and graces for the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Every believer is an integral part of the universal Church and should find a place of connection and belonging in a local church. Since God's purpose concerning humanity is to seek and to save those who are lost, to draw humanity into fellowship, and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, the primary reason for being of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand as part of the Church is:

(a) To be an agency of God for evangelising the world

(b) To be a corporate body in which people may worship God

(c) To be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of believers, who are being perfected in the image of His Son

3.13 Christian Ministry

We believe that a divinely called and biblically ordained body of ministers has been provided by Christ for the threefold purpose of leading the Church to evangelise the world, the worship of God and in building a body of believers, who are being perfected in the image of His Son. We also believe that every member of the body of Christ is called to active service.

3.14 Divine Healing

We believe that divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Healing, health and wholeness for the whole person is provided for in the atoning work of Christ.

3.15 The Kingdom of God

We believe that Christ came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is therefore already present but is not yet fully realised. It is seen wherever God's reign is extended and is a present reality in the hearts and lives of believers. The Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit as the agency by which the Kingdom is extended. The Kingdom will be seen in its fullness when Christ returns at the end of this age.

3.16 Marriage and Family

We believe that marriage was established by God and confirmed by Jesus Christ as a life-long relationship between one man and one woman. We believe that a Christian should marry within the community of faith. Christian marriage is a reflection of the love, purity and permanence between Christ and the Church. We therefore discourage divorce as a solution to marital difficulties and encourage husbands and wives to devote themselves to God and find nurture in the instruction of the body of Christ. Children are regarded as "a heritage of the Lord". Raising them is therefore considered as a sacred trust.

3.17 The Return of Christ

We believe in the physical and visible return of Christ. At this time those who have died believing in Christ will be resurrected. They will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, along with those believers who are alive at the time of His return. This is the hope of all believers, in all ages. We believe in the millennial reign of Christ.

3.18 Judgment

We believe that every person who has ever lived will face a day of final judgment. The righteous will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. The unbelievers will face eternal separation from God in hell.

3.19 The New Heavens and the New Earth

We believe in the promise of a new heavens and a new earth, the eternal home of the righteous.

4. NAME

The Corporate name shall be "Assemblies of God in New Zealand (Incorporated)'. This is subsequently called "A/G NZ" or "the Movement".

5. FUNCTIONS

(a) To promote the work of God principally in New Zealand, in accordance with the Statement of Fundamental Truths.

(b) To engage in and carry on educational, benevolent and charitable works; establish and carry on schools, homes for orphans and aged people; to publish and sell or otherwise distribute books, tracts, periodicals and other literature; to carry on general printing and publishing business in connection with any of these purposes; to fully participate in and utilise all opportunities provided by mass media and communications.

(c) To purchase, acquire by gift, demise or bequest, to own, sell, convey, mortgage, charge, encumber, lease or otherwise acquire, hold encumber and dispose of any real or personal property for the purposes set out or incidental to paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

6. STRUCTURE

(a) General

The structure of the Movement reflects the fact that it is a grouping of like-minded, self-governing churches, which have agreed to work in cooperation and fellowship with one another to fulfil the Great Commission of Christ.

(b) The Local Church

The basic unit is the local congregation, managing its own affairs, but subject to the jurisdiction of the General Council, to which the member churches have given authority in terms of this Constitution and By-Laws to make whatever decisions are necessary or advisable in the interests of the Movement as a whole.

(c) The General Council

This body, which meets at least once every two years, provides a forum for representatives of the local churches and recognised ministers to attend to the common business of the Movement.

(d) The Executive Presbytery

This body is appointed by the General Council to care for the Movement and its concerns between sessions of the General Council.

(e) Regional Fellowships

These have been established by the General Council to provide liaison and mutual encouragement for ministers of local churches. The leaders of Regional Fellowships serve as overseers to assist the Executive Presbytery in its care of the Movement between General Council sessions.

7. LOCAL CHURCHES

(a) General

Each local church has the right of self-government under Jesus Christ, its living head. It shall have the power to transact all business relating to its own affairs, and its local church trust deed, constitution and by-laws which should reflect the laws of the country in governance, but all this shall be subject to the General Council in all matters on which the Movement has made collective rulings according to the scriptures.

(b) Discipline

The maintenance of conduct and behaviour that honours Christ among its membership shall be the responsibility of the local church. Where there is a breakdown of this and the local church is unable to resolve the problem, the matter shall be referred to the Executive Presbytery, whose investigation and handling of the affair shall be in all good faith towards all parties involved in the dispute. The actions of the members of the Executive Presbytery who deal with the dispute shall be governed by the principles laid down in Matthew 18:15-35, Galatians 6:1 and Ephesians 5:21, with a view at all times to resolving the problem and reconciling the parties.

(c) Property

Each local church shall have the right to acquire, manage, and hold title to and dispose of property through an incorporated local Trust Board. The National Secretary shall advise local churches on the setting up of such boards.

The General Council may transfer any local church property and its contents over which the Council has jurisdiction to any approved local Property Trust Board, if it is satisfied that such Property Trust Board is properly constituted and incorporated and that such property or properties and their contents will be held and controlled by such Property Trust Board upon the same trusts and for the same objects and purposes (mutatis mutandis) as Movement property is directed to be held, managed and controlled under this Constitution. Any property so held by a local church that terminates its membership in the Movement shall continue to be administered by that church in terms of the trust declared in the local Property Trust Deed.

(d) Incorporation

1) Because each local church is a constituent part of the whole Movement, which has been registered with the Government as an incorporated society, local churches may not become an incorporated society in their own right.

2) However, they should make legal provision for the setting up of a local Property Trust Board so that they can acquire, manage and hold title to, and dispose of their buildings, other properties, vehicles, chattels and equipment, and obtain charitable registration with departments and agencies of Government, including the Department of Inland Revenue.

(e) Financial Contributions to the Movement

Each local church shall undertake the following financial responsibilities:

1) As part of its involvement in the cooperative work of the Movement, each local church shall pay each month a contribution of 3% of its tithes and general offerings to the General Council office, to meet the cost of administering the affairs of the Movement.

2) Local churches are also encouraged to make contributions to the Movement's evangelistic and missions work in New Zealand and overseas, by way of regular payments.

3) Local churches which default on 1) above will, along with the senior minister in charge, lose their voting rights at General Council sessions, until they resume financial support of the Movement, unless the Executive Presbytery has agreed in advance of any Council session to waive this provision in their case. The credential of the Senior Pastor will also not be renewed after its expiry date until the church resumes regular contributions.

These provisions apply to all categories of local churches.

(f) Pastors

Any person called to the pastorate of a church of the Movement must:

1) Be a credentialed minister of the Movement in good standing, or,

2) Be a credentialed minister in good standing with a sister Assemblies of God Fellowship overseas.

The local church must realise that if they call a person who does not satisfy the provisions of 1) or 2) above, the appointee must obtain the appropriate Movement credential within six months of assuming the pastorate. If application is not made and/or approval is not obtained, the appointee must forfeit the pastorate.

(g) Elders and Deacons

No persons shall be eligible for the offices of elder or deacon in a local church unless they have been filled with the Holy Spirit as taught by the Movement.

The appointment and removal of elders and deacons shall be in accordance with each local church's constitution or procedures.

(h) Are required to adopt the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Policy, which includes the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Procedures as a minimum standard within their local Church.

8. AUDIT

The books of account kept in the Office of the General Council shall be audited annually by competent auditors approved by the General Council. Copies of the audited accounts shall be available to the members of the General Council prior to each meeting of the General Council.

9. REGISTERED OFFICE

The registered office of the Movement shall be located in such place as may from time to time be determined by the Executive Presbytery.

10. AMENDMENTS

Amendments, alterations and additions to this Constitution may be made at any regularly called meeting of the General Council, so long as a remit proposing the changes has first been placed on the agenda for due consideration by members of the General Council and an appropriate resolution is carried by a three fourths (75%) majority of those present and voting at the meeting provided no alteration to the provisions of this constitution will ever change the religious or charitable status of the Movement.

11. WINDING UP

In the event of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand being wound up at any time, the surplus property and assets of the Movement after payment of all liabilities shall be disposed of in such manner as the members of the General Council at a meeting called for that purpose may determine, provided always that any disposition under this section must be for religious or charitable purposes within New Zealand.

By-Laws of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand (Inc)

(1) INTRODUCTION

The By-Laws cover matters that provide further information about how the provisions of the Constitution are given effect in the day to day work of each local church and the Movement as a cooperative body.

(2) MEMBERSHIP

(a) General

Any local church or group of believers in Christ within New Zealand may make written application to the Executive Presbytery to be accepted into membership. A primary condition for the approval of such an application will be acceptance by the applicants of the provisions of this Constitution and By-Laws. Applications for associate membership will not be entertained.

All applications for membership must be accompanied by a copy of the local church's registered property trust deed, and where possible, by a copy of the church's constitution.

A certificate of membership suitable for public display shall be issued by the National Secretary to each local church that is received into membership.

No member church of the Movement may also hold a certificate of membership with another organised body possessing a distinct constitution.

(b) Categories of Membership

There shall be two levels of membership and a third initial option of involvement:-

1) Full Membership Church
2) Limited Membership Church
3) Cooperating Church

1) Full Membership Churches

Local churches which enjoy Full Membership in the Movement:-

1. Must have over 20 persons aged 18 or more who subscribe to their local membership requirements.
2. Must have a Trust Deed (Trust Board) and Governance Rules.
3. Have entered a voluntary affiliation with the Assemblies of God in New Zealand Inc. upon acceptance of their Constitution and By-Laws.
4. Understand they are autonomous, self-governing, self-financing and self-determining.
5. Are contributing 3% of the church's tithes and general offerings to A/G NZ.
6. Have a spiritually qualified leadership to fill the offices of the church according to its Trust Deed and Governance Rules.
7. Are required to have a minister who holds an A/G NZ credential who is in good standing with the Movement.
8. Have the privilege of sending one delegate to vote on their behalf at the General Council.
9. Are required to adopt the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Policy, which includes the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Procedures as a minimum standard within their local Church.

2) Limited Membership Churches

There are two types of Limited Membership churches:-

a) A *new church* applying to be associated with the Assemblies of God in New Zealand Inc. The church shall:

i) Serve a probationary period of 12 months, even if the membership numbers are more than 20.
ii) Undergo an A/G NZ sub-committee evaluation, after their application has been submitted, with the final decision being made by the Executive Presbytery.
iii) Agree that voluntary association with the A/G NZ involves acceptance of the A/G NZ Constitution and By-Laws.
iv) Prepare and adopt a Local Church Trust Deed and Governance Rules before being granted Full Member church status.
v) Plan to appoint or process a minister for an A/G NZ credential before applying for Full Member church status.
vi) Understand there are privileges and responsibilities within the General Council and Movement.
vii) Are contributing 3% of the church's tithes and general offerings to A/G NZ.
viii) Are required to adopt the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Policy, which includes the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Procedures as a minimum standard within their local Church.

b) A *Full Member church that has fallen below 20 active members*, averaged by attendance over a previous six months
The Executive Presbytery can, through its own representative or appointee/s, decide to intervene and provide oversight and leadership of the church, until the church grows to over 20 active members and the following issues have been adequately addressed:

i) The church has a Trust Deed (with the full number of trustees) and Governance Rules.
ii) The church has a suitable pastor or a spiritually mature and permanent leadership team.
iii) The church (church, pastors and leadership) are free from criminal liability or civil actions.
iv) The church is meeting its financial obligations and paying the 3% contribution of tithes and general offerings to A/G NZ.
v) The church understands its privileges and responsibilities within the General Council and the Movement:
   - The credentialed minister (Full or Probationary) can vote at the General Council.
   - The church delegate to General Council loses their vote until reinstated as a Full Member church.
vi) The church will be reinstated to Full Member church status upon mutual agreement between the church and the Executive Presbytery.
vii) Are required to adopt the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Policy, which includes the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Procedures as a minimum standard within their local Church.

3) Cooperating Churches

This category is available for established non-Assemblies of God in New Zealand Inc. churches who are seeking a more formal relationship.

Provision is made for a Cooperating church, who subscribes to the beliefs and rules of the Constitution and By-Laws of the A/G NZ, to enter a cooperative status with the General Council on a temporary basis – up to two years - before seeking official affiliation with the A/G NZ.

i) Such churches and ministers will be encouraged to build healthy relationships within the Movement through ministerial friendships and attendance of Regional Fellowships, National Conferences and General Councils.
ii) They will not be afforded membership or voting rights at the meeting of the General Council or hold any positions of governance within the General Council or Regional Fellowships.

As long as the Cooperating church has associated credibly with the A/G NZ for at least 12 months, according to requirements, they may apply for Full Member status upon Executive Presbytery evaluation and approval.

(c) Sponsored Churches

Where a group of believers which has formed as the result of an outreach from a church in full membership wishes to apply for membership, it is expected that such an application will be endorsed by the member church as sponsor.

(d) Loss of Membership

Where the conduct of a local church brings disrepute on the Movement, the Executive Presbytery shall deal with the situation as follows:

1) The membership of the church shall be suspended following the passing of a resolution to that effect by the Executive Presbytery

2) The Executive Presbytery shall promptly and thoroughly investigate all the facts of the case in a fair and impartial manner

3) Based on this investigation the Executive Presbytery shall determine whether or not the suspension should be lifted or the church expelled from the Movement.

Should any church so expelled desire a review of the Executive Presbytery's decision, it may appeal within 30 days to the Discipline Review Tribunal. If the church does not lodge an appeal within this time, or if any appeal it makes is not upheld by the Discipline Review Tribunal, the decision of the Executive Presbytery will be considered final. The church shall then return its certificate of membership to the National Secretary for cancellation.

(e) Withdrawal from Membership

Where a local church wishes to withdraw from membership in the Movement:

1) The oversight must give all the members of the church one months advanced notice in writing of a special members meeting to consider the step. Any such notice needs to be sent to the office of the General Council at the same time and the Senior Pastor or oversight shall invite a member of the Executive Presbytery to participate in the specially called members meeting for the express purpose of giving the Executive Presbyter the opportunity to present the case for continued membership in the Movement.

2) A two thirds majority of those present and voting at this special members' meeting must resolve to withdraw from membership in the Movement.

3) Any decision to withdraw must be communicated in writing to the Executive Presbytery of the Movement within one calendar month of being made, and the church's certificate of membership returned.

4) No resolution to withdraw may be placed before the members of a local church if that church is not free of debt/financial liability to the Movement.

5) No resolution to withdraw shall be valid unless it stipulates that the local church will continue to be recognised, or will belong to such other organisation that is recognised, as having religious or charitable status according to the laws of New Zealand.

6) The provisions of the church's trust deed must not be violated. If the two thirds majority required to withdraw from the Movement is not achieved, any property held under the trust will remain with those wanting to stay in the Movement. Those who do not wish to stay are free to leave.

(3) GENERAL COUNCIL

(a) General

This Council is the supreme governing body of the Movement. All other organs of the Movement are subject to its authority.

(b) Membership

This Council is made up of:

1. A properly appointed delegate from each local church of the movement with full membership status;
2. Ordained Ministers;
3. Probationary Ministers;
4. Retired Ministers;
5. Holders of a Specialised Workers Credential
6. Holders of a Chaplaincy Credential

Members of the Council, with the exception of Specialised Workers, and Chaplains are the only persons eligible to have voting rights.

Note: Members in categories 1) - 4) above have voting rights; those in category 5) do not have voting rights.

(c) Functions

1) To foster the maximum possibilities for cooperation and fellowship between local churches of the Movement.

2) To endorse and confirm those eligible for General Council membership at any particular session of the Council.

3) To endorse and confirm the list of member churches with due regard to changes to the list between sessions of the Council.

4) To carry out elections to office in accordance with constitutional procedure and to appoint committees for special work as occasion may require.

5) To receive and consider reports from the various bodies appointed to deal with the activities of the Movement, and where appropriate to give directions, take decisions and make recommendations in respect of their work.

6) To consider and decide upon any Constitutional or By-Laws matter that may arise.

(d) Sessions

1) These shall be held at least once every two years.

2) The General Council shall decide the time and place of sessions, but the Executive Presbytery by unanimous vote may make such alterations to that decision as are deemed necessary.

3) Observers may attend General Council sessions but their names must be submitted to the Executive Presbytery for approval not later than 10 days before such session.

4) The National Secretary shall send to all members of the Council a notice in writing and/or by an electronic copy not later than four months before the date for the session. All remits shall be in the hands of the National Secretary three months prior to the session. All reports, remits and agenda for the General Council Session and nominations for the Executive Presbytery shall be distributed to local churches at least one month prior to the session.

5) Special sessions of the General Council may be called by the Executive Presbytery at its discretion. Any ordained minister of the Movement shall also have the right of initiative in the matter of calling special sessions when occasion demands. A statement setting forth the reasons for a special session of the Council, signed by not less than 33% of ordained ministers, shall be considered sufficient reason for the calling together of a special session. Such a statement shall be submitted to the Executive Presbytery, who shall respond to the request and call for a special session to consider the matter raised, but no other business.

(e) Chairperson

The General Superintendent, or in his absence the Assistant Superintendent, shall preside over all meetings of the Council. In the event of both the General Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent being absent, the General Council shall be presided over by a member of the Executive Presbytery appointed by the General Council at that session.

(f) Business

1) Any local church desiring to place an item of business on the agenda shall convey the item to the National Secretary in writing no later than three months before the Council is scheduled to meet.

2) No items involving constitutional changes shall be brought before the General Council until they have been placed upon the provisional agenda for due consideration by members of the General Council.

3) The agenda shall be prepared by the Executive Presbytery and sent to all members of the Council one month in advance of every session.

4) Only matters of substance affecting the Movement at large will generally be accepted for inclusion on the agenda.

5) An item of business not on the agenda, except one involving changes to the Constitution and/or By-Laws may be included after the Council convenes if it is:

   i) Proposed by a member and two thirds of Council members present agree to its inclusion, OR

   ii) Put forward by the Executive Presbytery.

6) The quorum of the General Council shall consist of one third of the eligible voting members of the Council.

7) Members of the Council, with the exception of specialised workers credentials, are the only persons eligible to vote.

8) All resolutions shall be decided by a show of hands. However, a ballot may be taken if the chairperson so directs, or if desired by the General Council.

9) The chairperson shall be entitled to a casting vote in the event of an equal vote on any matter.

10) No proxy voting will be permitted.

(4) EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY

(a) General

The Executive Presbytery is appointed and empowered by the General Council to ensure that all decisions made by the General Council are duly carried out. The Executive Presbytery's interpretation and implementation of

General Council policy and decisions shall stand as final unless the General Council overturns them at its next session. The Executive Presbytery is required to provide vision to, care for and safeguard the welfare of the Movement, its local churches and its ministers between sessions of the General Council.

The Executive Presbytery has been given authority by the General Council to ensure that local churches and the individual members of the General Council observe the provisions of this Constitution.

(b) Membership

The Executive Presbytery shall consist of at least eight members - an elected General Superintendent, an elected Assistant Superintendent and six other elected members. The Executive Presbytery shall have the right to co-opt two other members to reflect the needs of the churches of the Movement.

All shall be ordained ministers of the General Council, persons of maturity, integrity, ability, experience and vision, capable of properly discharging the responsibility of caring for the Movement.

(c) Eligibility

The Executive Presbytery shall be chosen from among the Ordained Ministers of the General Council. Those nominated for the Executive Presbytery shall have resided in New Zealand for two years and intend remaining for at least two further years to enable them to serve their term.

(d) Elections

1) All nominations for the Executive Presbytery must be lodged at the office of the General Council three months before the General Council meets, so that the nominations can be circulated to all General Council members well in advance of the session. Where there are exceptional circumstances, either the Executive Presbytery or the General Council in session may permit nominations to go forward for consideration by the General Council, even though less than three months notice has been given.

2) Where persons nominated for any office are unopposed, the sole nominee will be declared elected when they receive a vote of endorsement from the General Council and meet the respective requirements for the position, set out under this section.

3) All nominations for the Executive Presbytery shall be accompanied by a brief biography of the nominee so that it can be circulated to General Council members one month in advance of the session.

4) All members of the Executive Presbytery shall be elected by secret ballot at regular sessions of the General Council. The General Superintendent shall be elected first, then the Assistant Superintendent, followed by the other six members.

5) The National Secretary will be appointed by the Executive Presbytery.

6) Nominees shall not be declared elected to the Executive Presbytery unless they obtain more than 50% of the votes cast.

Their term of office shall be from the General Council at which they were elected until the conclusion of the following General Council.

(e) Vacancies

The Executive Presbytery may appoint from among the membership of the General Council, persons to fill vacancies that occur between sessions in the following instances:

1) Resignation
2) Incapacity through illness or injury

3) Absence overseas for six months or more
4) Death
5) Loss of General Council membership.

Any person so appointed shall have stood for election at the previous General Council meeting, have polled next highest to those elected and be willing to serve.

(f) Meetings

1) The Executive Presbytery shall meet at least four times a year. Meetings shall be convened by the National Secretary at the request of the General Superintendent or any two of its members.

2) Five members personally present shall constitute a quorum. Quorums of the Executive Presbytery must exceed 50% of its membership at any given time.

(g) Duties and Powers

The Executive Presbytery is empowered by the General Council:

1) To purchase or acquire by gift, demise or bequest, to own, to sell, to convey, mortgage or charge or encumber, lease or otherwise acquire, hold encumber and dispose of any personal property or real property whether freehold or leasehold.

2) To borrow money for the purpose of the Movement and to give security therefore over any of the property of the Movement.

3) To act as a Board of Trustees for the Movement or any local church.

4) To control the collections and disbursements of the funds of the Movement and the investment of same in accordance with accepted business practices.

5) To interpret and make decisions in respect of the Movement's objectives and administration on a day to day basis between General Council sessions. These interpretations and decisions shall be fully recorded in the Executive Presbytery's Minutes, and shall be available for scrutiny by the General Council and its members as occasion demands.

6) To hold the Common Seal of the Movement and direct that this seal be affixed by the National Secretary to all such documents as the Executive Presbytery shall determine. The signatures of two members of the Executive Presbytery witnessing such affixation shall be sufficient evidence that it has been duly authorised.

7) To appoint and remove from office such employees as may from time to time be necessary for the effective carrying on of the work of the Movement.

8) To undertake the disciplining of any ordained minister, probationary minister, retired minister, person in charge of a local church, holder of a specialised workers credential or missionary, where their conduct is proven to be unbecoming for a minister and/or may bring reproach on the Movement. The person so disciplined shall have the right of appeal to the Discipline Review Tribunal.

9) To delegate part or all of its authority to committees.

10) To consider changes of pastorate and from time to time recommend ministers for the call to a local church.

11) To initiate and submit remits for General Council sessions.

12) To act as a Credentials Committee. In this capacity the Executive Presbytery shall:

i) Receive applications for, consider, grant or decline, extend, suspend or terminate appropriate credentials to ministers, missionaries and workers.

ii) Receive, consider and grant or decline applications from groups or local churches applying to become members of the Movement.

iii) Submit up-to-date lists of both ministers and churches to General Council in session for approval or otherwise.

iv) Review from time to time the policies, forms and procedures in which credentials are issued.

(5) OFFICE HOLDERS

(a) Duties of the General Superintendent

1) To represent and generally oversee all the work and interests of the Movement in New Zealand and overseas.

2) To preside over all meetings of the General Council and Executive Presbytery at which they are present.

3) To be ex-officio chairperson of all committees and boards that may from time to time be appointed by the General Council and Executive Presbyters.

4) To direct the work of the General Council Office and act as chief executive officer of the Movement in all legal matters and to sign on its behalf. The General Superintendent is able to delegate and/or authorise another Executive Presbytery member in their stead to handle such duties of a legal nature that are required.

5) i) To lead and generate ongoing vision for the Movement
ii) To give national leadership so as to inspire local pastors and churches in the fulfilment of their vision.

(b) Duties of the Assistant Superintendent

1) To assist the General Superintendent in every reasonable way possible.

2) To substitute for the General Superintendent where required and to succeed the General Superintendent should they be unable for any reason to complete their term of office.

(6) THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The work and duties of this Office shall be supervised by the National Secretary and shall include:

To supervise, provide and carry out the following functions;

1) Ensure that the work of the General Council Office employs accepted business methods and functions efficiently on behalf of the Movement.

2) Receive funds on behalf of the General Council and to disburse them as the Executive Presbytery shall direct.

3) Provide accurate recording of all receipts and disbursements, maintaining proper financial records and producing annual financial statements for audit.

4) Provide a Minute Secretary as appointed by the Executive Presbytery for the keeping of proper minutes of sessions of the General Council and of the meetings of the Executive Presbytery and the Credentials Committee.

5) Provide secretarial services to the Credentials Committee.

6) Generally perform such other functions as are customary for a central office, or as directed by the General Council or Executive Presbytery.

(7) REGIONAL FELLOWSHIPS

(a) General

The Movement shall establish Regional Fellowships to assist the Executive Presbytery in its work of caring for the member churches and ministers of the General Council.

(b) Membership

Regional Fellowships are composed of credential holders and recognised workers of local churches in:

1) A particular area designated by the Executive Presbytery.

(c) Functions

Regional Fellowships are not legislative bodies. Their primary function is to help the Executive Presbytery outwork the vision and objectives of the Movement and to provide ministers and workers with regular opportunities for fellowship and mutual encouragement. This will be at a level and in a way that their members feel is appropriate for both the national and local situation. They may, however, transact local business that affects them, and make recommendations to the Executive Presbytery if they so wish.

(d) Leadership

The leaders of Regional Fellowships shall be known as Regional Overseers. Regional Overseers will be appointed by the Executive Presbytery at General Council meetings following recommendations received from Regional Pastors. They shall serve for a period of two years unless they resign earlier in which case a new leader will be appointed by the Executive Presbytery.

Apart from coordinating regular regional meetings of ministers and workers and fostering fellowship and cooperation between the churches in their particular region, the Overseers shall represent and assist the Executive Presbytery in its care of the Movement between meetings of the General Council.

(e) Ethnic Communities

Complementing the Regional Fellowships, and in recognition of the Movement's diversity, shall be where needed, Ethnic communities. These are not seen as an alternative choice to attending a Regional Fellowship, but exist as a voluntary and additional support, that grows and cares for ministers and leaders of ethnic heritage. Their leaders shall be appointed by their own peers, in consultation and, with the approval of the Executive Presbytery.

(8) CHRISTIAN EDUCATION and TRAINING

(a) General

The Movement shall at all times recognise the need for Christian education and training, and encourage its member churches to train and develop people for leadership and service. The Movement shall actively encourage a culture of lifelong learning for everyone involved in leadership within the Movement.

(b) National Bible College

The Movement shall have the authority to endorse and support a particular training institution as the 'National Bible College'. Such endorsement shall be contingent on the Assemblies of God in NZ being an active shareholder in the college and having representation at governance level within the college. The Executive Presbytery shall review the endorsement of a National Bible College every six years.

(9) MISSIONS

The Church exists to worship God, help believers to become more like Christ and to fulfil the "Great Commission" which is to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person."

Because we can accomplish this priority task more effectively together than we can as individuals, the Assemblies of God in New Zealand Inc. is committed to encouraging and helping its member churches to prioritise the fulfilling of this Great Commission.

Current missions working policies are described in the "Overseas Ministries Policy Guidelines" document. This document shall be developed and reviewed by the Missions Council in consultation with The Executive Presbytery and Regional Fellowships.

Because of the diversity of missions opportunities and endeavours each credentialed missionary should have a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the expectations and responsibilities of the sending church, the sending organisation and the missionary. This memorandum shall cover such areas as finances, pastoral care, strategic decision making, support and emergency contingencies.

(10) MINISTRY

(a) General

The Movement regards the selection of its ministers as of the highest importance for the well-being of the Movement and its effectiveness in discharging the Great Commission of Christ.

(b) Recognition

Guiding principles in recognising those called to the ministry in terms of Ephesians 4:10-13 are as follows:

1) **Character** - They must be blameless in character and of good reputation. If married, their marriage should demonstrate faithfulness, harmony and permanence.

2) **Doctrine** - They must be sound in the faith and loyal to those fundamentals that form the doctrinal basis of the Movement.

3) **Ability** - They should possess an ability for service beyond that expected in all Christians, especially in preaching and/or pastoral work. This marked ability ought to be evidenced by fruit from their labours. They should exercise spiritual gifts.

4) **Experience** - They must have received a personal baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by the scriptural evidence of speaking in tongues. They should have had experience of distinctive Pentecostal Ministry. They shall have a personal conviction as to their divine calling. They shall have reached an age of reasonable maturity, and they shall be required to undergo a minimum probationary period of two years as proof of their calling before being fully ordained into the Movement with full ministerial status.

5) **Transfer** - Ministers already holding credentials with other Christian bodies, but who are now seeking recognition by the Movement, shall undergo an appropriate probationary period before being accepted. During this period they shall attend meetings of Regional Fellowships.

6) **Educational Requirements** - They must have successfully completed an advanced course of study/training in a recognised Christian education programme. This may be in a Bible School, a local church, or by correspondence. Where candidates are prevented from undertaking advanced training as above, or this option is not appropriate, they must be able to show evidence that they have equipped themselves by private reading and study to undertake the duties of a minister with confidence. They must have completed the Safer Churches training as outlined in the A/G NZ Safer Churches Child Protection Procedures.

(c) Categories

In terms of maturity and experience, six categories of ministry are recognised by the Credentials Committee:

1) The Ordained Minister

2) The Probationary Minister

3) The Retired Minister

4) The Specialised Worker

5) The Chaplain

6) The Overseas Associate Ministers Credential

(11) CREDENTIALS

(a) General

Ministerial credentials and specialised workers credentials shall be issued by the Credentials Committee, signed by the General Superintendent and National Secretary, and shall be valid until the next renewal date.

Elderly ministers who have given meritorious service and ceased regular active ministry will receive "Retired Ministers" status with credentials having no expiry date and marked "Retired". Their credentials shall be reviewed in the same way as for Ordained Ministers.

No minister of the Movement resident in New Zealand shall also hold a ministerial credential with another organised body possessing a distinct constitution, whether issued overseas or not.

The granting of a credential by the Credentials Committee is not to be taken by the holder as a guarantee of employment in a local church of the Movement or the General Council office.

(b) Ordained Ministers

A full credential shall be granted by the Credentials Committee to proven ministers who have served a number of years in public ministry and have demonstrated their calling and gifting in God for the ministry. They will generally have progressed through a probationary period before being set aside for the ministry.

Their names shall be forwarded to the Registrar General to enable them to perform marriages.

(c) Probationary Ministers

A Probationary Credential shall be granted by the Credentials Committee to properly qualified applicants.

The term of probation shall be for at least two years. The expiration of the probationary period shall be decided by the Credentials Committee in consultation with the supervising minister where appropriate.

A probationer must be actively engaged in the work of God as a pastor, assistant pastor, evangelist or in a specialised field of ministry approved by the Credentials Committee, and shall be under the supervision of a mature minister or ministers.

The names of probationary ministers may be forwarded to the Registrar General where appropriate, to enable them to perform marriages.

(d) Specialised Workers

A Specialised Workers Credential may be issued by the Credentials Committee to properly qualified applicants.

This credential is issued to persons who neither need nor qualify for a probationary or ordained minister's credential, yet have a specialised ministry role which is worthy of recognition, for example a full-time Christian worker, church administrator, youth leader, music director, or a lay preacher who ministers outside the local church.

Although they are members of the General Council, persons who hold this credential have no voting rights at General Council sessions. The granting of this credential is not regarded as a stepping stone to becoming an ordained minister.

(e) Missionaries

The Credentials Committee may grant credentials with regard to overseas service to properly qualified applicants as follows:

Category		**Endorsement**
1)	Ordained	"Missionary"
2)	Probationary	"Missionary"
3)	Specialised workers	"Overseas"

(f) Chaplaincy

"The Chaplaincy credential shall be granted by the credentials committee to properly qualified applicants. Chaplains are welcome to attend both Regional and General Council meetings, but this credential comes without voting or speaking rights at the General Council meetings. The credential is valid until next renewal date."

(g) Overseas Associate Ministers Credential

The Overseas Associate Ministers Credential will be issued to those New Zealanders who:

1. Reside outside of New Zealand,
2. Have significant ministries,
3. Have clear and strong connectedness with the A/G NZ.

An "Overseas Associate Minister' is one who is living and ministering outside New Zealand and holds a credential with an accrediting body within their nation of residence, but has, in the opinion of the New Zealand Executive, a significant ministry and clear connectedness with the Movement that makes the maintenance of the relationship advantageous. The Minister's primary accountability rests with the accrediting body in their nation of residence. An Overseas Associate Minister's Credential will not be issued without the approval of the accrediting body within the Minister's nation of residence.

If a Minister does not hold a credential in his/her nation of residence but has a significant ministry and a close connection with the A/G NZ Movement, the New Zealand Executive may grant him/her and OAMC if it believes there is compelling reason to do so provided always that the candidates fulfils the qualifications as set out in the Constitution for a Minister of the A/G NZ.

(h) Retired Ministers

Active ordained ministers can apply for Retired Minister status provided they are:

(i) At least 65 years old; and
(ii) Have served for at least 15 consecutive years as Ordained Ministers within A/G NZ; and
(iii) Are no longer employed as senior pastors or pastors of any church; and
(iv) Are in good standing with the A/G NZ and in the local church they attend

(12) LOSS OF MINISTERIAL STATUS

(a) Active Ministry

Active ministry is defined as follows:

1) Ministers having oversight of a recognised assembly, missionaries and those in specialised ministry.

2) Those ministering as recognised associate or assistant pastors endorsed by a local church.

3) Recognised itinerant preachers, evangelists and pioneer workers.

4) Any minister who withdraws from active ministry in a local church or is not active in a recognised ministerial capacity in a church, that minister or the senior pastor or the church oversight/elders must inform the Credentials Committee.

(b) Inactive Ministers

All inactive ministers who are no longer part of a local church shall have one year to become active again by being recognised by another A/G NZ ministry, mission, or specialised ministry. If such inactivity goes beyond one year their names shall be deleted from the Ministerial List and their credentials shall lapse. This shall not apply to those whose inactivity has been caused by the infirmity of old age or ill health, or those engaged in other aspects of full time ministry.

(c) Ministers Absent Overseas

Ministers who leave New Zealand with the intention of taking up residence in another country for a period of not less than one year shall automatically lose their ministerial credential unless this has been endorsed for overseas ministry.

(d) Ministers Under Discipline

The Executive Presbytery shall initiate the process of investigating and disciplining any credentialed person, where there is good reason to believe that person's behaviour is likely to damage the biblical standing or reputation of the person, a local church and/or the Movement as a whole. The process of discipline can include suspension of the ministerial credential of the person concerned.

Grounds for discipline shall include abuse of authority extending over a period of time, sexual immorality, serious financial mismanagement, inappropriate behaviour, departure from the Statement of Fundamental Truths and any other good and sufficient reasons.

The Executive Presbytery may decide to remove the credential after all aspects of the case have been thoroughly investigated and tested according to the Scriptures and the understanding of them in the Statement of Fundamental Truths. In such a case, the person disciplined has the right to appeal the Executive Presbytery's decision to the Discipline Review Tribunal within fourteen (14) days, if they consider they have been treated unjustly.

The process of discipline is aimed at restoration if this is necessary and possible.

Ministers whose credentials are revoked shall cease forthwith to exercise all or any functions of their office within the Movement.

(e) Ministers Resuming Active Ministry

Ministers returning to active ministry after a period of inactivity may apply to the Credentials Committee who shall determine whether or not their name shall be restored to the active list.

Ministers whose credential has lapsed due to absence overseas may likewise apply to the Credentials Committee to have their credential renewed upon return to New Zealand.

Ministers who have completed a period of discipline and restoration may also apply to the Credentials Committee to be admitted to active ministry again with an appropriate credential.

(13) DISCIPLINE REVIEW TRIBUNAL

(a) General

A local church or credential holder who has been disciplined by the Executive Presbytery may make application to this Tribunal for a review of the discipline imposed.

(b) Aim of the Review

To ascertain that there was good and sufficient reason for the discipline and/or that the discipline imposed was appropriate in the circumstances.

To then uphold the action of the Executive Presbytery or make recommendations to it concerning the case.

(c) Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

These two positions shall be filled by senior ministers of the Movement, of proven maturity and wisdom and experienced in the affairs of the Movement.

The Executive Presbytery will recommend to the General Council in session, two (2) suitably qualified ministers for endorsement by the General Council to this position until the next meeting of the General Council. Two other suitably qualified ministers will be recommended for endorsement by the General Council, to serve as substitutes for the Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson should they be unavailable or resign at any time.

Where the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson find themselves in a conflict of interests, they must stand down for that particular appeal.

(d) Membership

When a hearing is required the Tribunal will consist of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and one other senior minister who has been appointed by the General Council. At all hearings there will be three members.

If either the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson is unavailable or declines to sit on a hearing then one of the substitutes will be called in by the Executive Presbytery.

(e) Establishing the Right of Review

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson shall decide whether an appeal is frivolous or bona fide. If the latter is the case they may call for a Tribunal hearing.

In order for this decision to be made the appellant will submit in writing to the Executive Presbytery and the Chairperson why he/she believes the review is necessary. The Chairperson will then pass the written appeal to the Deputy Chairperson for a speedy decision as to whether or not the Tribunal will be called together for a hearing.

(f) Duties and Powers

The Tribunal will promptly consider any appeals that appear to require a hearing.

The Executive Presbytery will supply whatever evidence it feels is appropriate to the Tribunal members before they meet for the hearing. Any such material must be kept confidential by the Tribunal members.

The appellant will make a written submission which will be read at the hearing. At the Chairperson's discretion, oral submissions may be made by the local church or minister that is appealing.

The supporting testimony of other witnesses in the first instance will be by written testimony, submitted when the appellant's submission is read to the Tribunal.

Where a local church appeals, three (3) key persons from that church, together with another minister of the Movement may present that church's case.

Where a minister appeals, he/she may have up to two (2) ministers of the Movement to help present his/her case.

The Chairperson, after consultation with the Tribunal members, may call any witnesses to give oral testimony.

Since the Tribunal's goal is to establish that there is good and sufficient reason for the discipline and/or that the discipline is appropriate, Tribunal members may ask questions of the appellant and witnesses.

At all times Christian love must be shown in the proceedings.

(g) Final Decision

A final decision will be made by the Tribunal.

1) If the Tribunal upholds the original decision of the Executive Presbytery, then they and the Appellant will be advised.

2) If the Tribunal decides an adjustment or change to the discipline is called for, then the Tribunal will enter into a dialogue with the Executive Presbyters to achieve a mutually acceptable adjustment or change.

The Tribunal will put its recommendations in writing, and advise whether it is a majority decision. Any dissenting member to a majority decision may also give a written dissent.

Copies of the recommendations will then be given to the Executive Presbytery and the appellant. All evidence will be given to the Executive Presbytery for safekeeping.

If fresh and new evidence emerges on any situation at any stage, the whole discipline process may be reopened.

(14) AMENDMENTS

Amendments, alterations and additions to these By-Laws may be made at any regularly called meeting of the General Council, so long as a remit proposing the changes has first been placed on the agenda for due consideration by members of the General Council and an appropriate resolution is carried by a two thirds (66%) majority of those present and voting at the session provided no alteration to the provisions of this By-laws will ever change the religious or charitable status of the Movement.