



# Policy Statement on Leadership/Pastoral Offence Restoration Procedure

This procedure is presented as a guide for the leadership of the Associated Gospel Churches.

It is meant to establish in the broadest parameters possible the way by which discipline will be exercised in the case of doctrinal or moral error by pastors and leaders of the AGC, and the provisions for restoration to ministry. While it is written with the church pastor or credential holder in view, it presents a model to be applied in the local churches with all who presume to leadership and ministry.

a. Doctrinal Error. Pastors or leaders of the Associated Gospel Churches are expected to maintain accuracy in doctrinal teachings according to the Statement of Faith of the AGC. Where there is evidence of a variance from this position, the following procedures will be followed.

i. A charge against a pastor or a leader of the AGC cannot be investigated without the report of two credible witnesses. However, if sufficient accusation has been received by the Doctrine and Credentials Committee, in the case of a pastor, or by the pastor of a local church in the case of an offending church leader, the accused will be duly notified of the details of the charge laid against him.

ii. The investigation will be conducted by the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee, in the case of a pastor, or by a committee of the elders in the case of a local church leader. The accused will be invited to attend the investigation meeting at which the charges are to be considered.

iii. When the accused person or pastor affirms sound doctrine and his desire to teach accordingly, the action will conclude and no further steps need be taken.

iv. When the accused confirms belief in a questionable doctrine or variance from the stated position of the AGC, appropriate steps will be taken to provide the necessary instruction.

v. No further steps are required if after instruction, the accused affirms sound doctrine and his desire to teach accordingly.

vi. When an accused pastor is not willing to receive instruction, or if he remains in error following a time of instruction, the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee may take action against him according to the Constitution of the AGC (see Constitution, V.D.1, pages 11,12). In the case of a local church leader who continues in error, the board of elders will be guided in their action by the local church Constitution, or by a recognized authority of the Associated Gospel Churches (e.g. Regional Superintendent or Regional Doctrine and Credentials Chairman).

b. Moral or Ethical Failure. Strict standards in personal, moral and ethical details for all pastors and approved church staff are carefully outlined in the AGC Ministry Handbook and the Policies and Procedures Manual (see page 14).

Any deviation from these standards on the part of one holding recognized standing with the Associated Gospel Churches will be dealt with according to the following procedures.

i. Charges against a servant of Christ are to be handled carefully and prayerfully and only after they have been sufficiently verified by known facts and reputable witnesses.

ii. The charges may relate to sexual immorality of any kind, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, fraud (I Corinthians 5:11), divisiveness (Titus 3:10), and an unruly life (II Thessalonians 3:6). Consideration must always be given to the duration and public aspect of the alleged infraction, its apparent intentionality and the circumstances under which the accusation was made.

iii. An accusation against a pastor or credential holder of the AGC which does not violate the standards of employment of the Associated Gospel Churches should be handled by the Board of Elders of the local church or a Committee of the Board of Elders. In such matters the Regional Superintendent may be

consulted for counsel or assistance. All other allegations must be brought to the attention of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee of the Associated Gospel Churches.

iv. In the case of charges which are dealt with by the local Board of Elders or a Committee of the Board of Elders, and sincere confession and repentance is evident, the Board or Committee will determine what corrective discipline is required. Reference should be made to the AGC paper entitled, Privileges, Rights, Duties and Discipline of Employees and Members.

v. When confession and repentance on the part of the accused person is not evident at the time of the confrontation by the Board of Elders or the Committee of the Board of Elders, the matter must be referred to the Regional Superintendent or the Chairman of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee of the AGC.

vi. When charges are laid against a pastor or credential holder of a church of the AGC which are with reference to the Constitution or employment policies and standards of the Associated Gospel A. 13 Churches, and the charges are verified as in i. (above), the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee will become involved.

vii. The Doctrine and Credentials Committee will be called into special session to handle the accusation. The accused will have the right to be present to hear and answer the charges that are laid against him. The matter will be considered with reference to the facts presented, duration of the offense, its public aspect and the evidence of premeditation. Biblical standards and directives will be critical considerations in all judgments.

viii. It is the sole right of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee to determine what action, if any, should be taken in response to the allegations made, the evidence of guilt or innocence and the extenuating circumstances, if any, etc.

ix. In the case of innocence, the accused will be exonerated and the local church informed accordingly. Counsel will be provided to the accused and to the local church to restore confidence and normal working relationships.

x. When the offense is of such a nature that the accused need not be removed from ministry, he and his wife will be required to submit to the authority of an accountability group, composed of at least one AGC pastor (outside the local church in question) and at least one church member. The details of the accountability relationship will be established by the Committee:

- a) Frequency of meeting and period of time required.
- b) Areas of Scripture to be studied.

- c) Guidance with respect to the need for a public confession.
- d) Recommendation for specific counselling.
- e) Counselling and consideration will be offered to other family members as required.
- f) Requirement (if necessary) for suspension from ministry responsibilities.
- g) Details of how improvement in the areas of weakness will be observed.

xi. Any pastor or credential holder of the AGC who is found not in compliance with the personal standards for pastors of the Associated Gospel Churches will be suspended from ministry and his or her name will be taken from any list of available candidates. The National Doctrine and Credentials Committee will be consulted in such matters and will act with the approval of the National Board (see Constitution, V.D.1, page 12). Should he desire to enter a restoration process, and an accountability group, conditions will be established as (x.) above.

xii. When the above has been followed, and one previously accused is restored to fellowship with the Lord and with His people, he or she may subsequently be restored to ministry. Other conditions of restoration will be established by the National Doctrine and Credentials Committee according to their determination, based on the characteristics of the A. 14 infraction, the time and the report from the accountability group of the probation period, and the recommendation of the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee. The Regional Committee will apply and monitor the recommendations of the National Committee.

xiii. If an accountability group is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of the fruit of repentance, and if an appropriate time for restoration has passed, the Regional Committee may make recommendation to the National Doctrine and Credentials Committee that credentials be restored and all accusations removed against an offending pastor or credentials holder.

xiv. In cases of grave offense which affect the public testimony of the Lord and seriously hinder the progress of the gospel in the community, or where repentance and sorrow for sin is not evident, the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee will recommend that the offender be removed from membership in his local church (I Timothy 5:20; I Corinthians 5:13; Matthew 18:17). The Committee will also recommend to the National Committee the permanent removal of credentials, an action requiring the approval of the National Board. Such action will also include the removal of all financial and insurance benefits. Notification of this action will be made to the offending person by registered mail to the last known address. All pastors and churches of the AGC will be notified of the action and reasons for the action.

In certain cases where there is grave offense requiring the above action, there may be a request of the Committee and/or the accused for an accountability

group as outlined in item x. (above). While restoration to ministry may not be possible, every step should be taken to minister redemptively and therapeutically to willing participants, in the love of Jesus Christ.

c. Summary of Restoration Process. When the accountability group or person is satisfied that all conditions for restoration have been achieved, the following should occur:

i. A request for restoration should be made to the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee from the accountability group leader.

ii. An in-depth interview by the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee will take place with all appropriate prior input from the local church and/or offended parties.

iii. If approval to restore is deemed appropriate by the Regional Doctrine and Credentials Committee, notification with supportive rationale shall be given to all parties concerned (National Doctrine and Credentials Committee, National Board, churches and individuals). When necessary, the approval of the National Doctrine and Credentials Committee and National Board will be requested before final notification is made.

iv. Restoration to ministry shall have a minimum of two phases:

a) Restoration to membership in good standing to the local church of attendance.

b) Restoration to various degrees of ministry if this is deemed appropriate taking into account the affects on the subject's family, the church and the AGC.

v. After restoration, a) a minimum of three follow-up contacts at six month intervals shall be the responsibility of the Regional Superintendent; b) all records of the offense and process shall be forwarded to and retained by the National Office to be held in the strictest confidence.

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