

Fellow Member Statutes

3rd edition

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For information:

email: family@thefamily.org

website: www.thefamily.org

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Contents

Preface	iv
Explanatory Notes.....	v

Responsibilities and Guidelines for Fellow Members

Responsibilities of an Individual Fellow Member.....	2
Fellow Member Guidelines	4

Fellow Member Rules

Governing Principles of the Fellow Membership Rules.....	7
Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member.....	8
Offenses Warranting the Revocation of a Fellow Member's Family Membership	9
Designations of Family Publications	10

Fellow Member Procedures

Procedure for a New Member Becoming a Fellow Member	12
Procedure for a Former Family Member Becoming a Fellow Member	13
Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Missionary Member Home.....	14
Procedure for a Fellow Member Becoming a Missionary Member Home.....	15
Procedure for a Fellow Member Becoming an Attached Missionary Member	17
Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Family Discipleship Home.....	18
Procedure for Placing a Fellow Member on Probationary Notice.....	20
Procedure for Revoking a Fellow Member's Family Membership	21
Procedure for Excommunicating a Fellow Member	22

Appendix

The Family International's Statement of Faith.....	24
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Preface

The Family International is a Christian fellowship of independent, self-governing missionary communities dedicated to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. There are several categories of membership in the Family International, making it possible for individuals to serve, worship, and fellowship according to their personal desires and abilities, within the guidelines of their membership.

This document deals specifically with the Fellow member circle of membership of the Family International.

Fellow members of the Family International affirm that they have been called by God to believe in and support the basic principles, doctrines, and goals of the Family. As associate members of the Family, the degree of dedication and adherence to these principles, doctrines, and goals is up to each individual Fellow member.

The primary function of Fellow membership is to provide a means and place of Christian service for many former fulltime Family disciples who are not able, or do not desire, to fulfill the requirements of either Family discipleship or Missionary membership. Fellow membership provides a place of Christian service, communication, and cooperation that is a less rigorous level of Family membership than is Family discipleship or Missionary membership.

Fellow members are encouraged to serve the Lord and preach the Gospel to the best of their ability, but the time they devote to Christian service is up to them. Some Fellow members work in cooperation with other Family members, while others maintain contact with the Family solely via their monthly report and tithe to World Services. As members and supporters of the Family International, Fellow members are encouraged to share of their material abundance with World Services and other Family members.

While we recommend and hope that Fellow members will apply the general counsel in our Family publications to the best of their ability according to their individual circumstances, Fellow members decide what counsel from Family publications they will apply to their lives. Consequently, Fellow members also bear sole responsibility for those decisions and their outcome. Fellow members are, however, required to adhere to the requirements and guidelines in these *Fellow Member Statutes* to retain their Family membership.

Explanatory Notes

The following explanations will help in the study of this document:

Format: these statutes are presented in two levels. The first, in **bold text**, are the root clauses, followed by the explanations in normal text. The root clauses carry more weight than the explanations because the clauses are the precisely worded laws that make up the core of the statutes. Explanations are included where needed to clarify and help to catch the spirit or intent of the root clauses.

Local laws: the *Fellow Member Statutes* cover the Family International's religious beliefs and policies for Fellow members worldwide. Since laws vary greatly from country to country it's not possible to ensure that all these policies strictly conform to the laws in every country in which Fellow members reside. Fellow members should be mindful of laws regarding their activities in the countries in which they reside.

Definitions and Explanation of Terms: The definitions of terms used or referred to in the *Fellow Member Statutes* are included in the *Family Discipleship Charter's* "[Definitions and Explanation of Terms](#)," which Fellow members are welcome to read or refer to.

Responsibilities and Guidelines for Fellow Members

The Family International is a Christian missionary movement dedicated to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Family members receive Jesus as their personal Savior and are baptized with the Holy Spirit. Additionally, Fellow members have chosen the Lord's call to serve Him in the Family International, and therefore have responsibilities to both God and the Family as articulated in the *Fellow Member Statutes*.

Responsibilities of an Individual Fellow Member

World Services acknowledges that Fellow members have the right to serve the Lord according to their faith as they see fit. They are not bound by the FD or MM standard of membership or counsel published in Family publications, though they are expected to adhere to the basic responsibilities and guidelines outlined in this document.

Fellow members may live alone, with other FMs, or with non-Family individuals, and Fellow members residing with other Fellow members may choose to report together.

A Fellow member should:

- A. Endeavor to maintain a close connection with God through personal communion with Jesus Christ and the reading of His Word, thus striving to manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" (Galatians 5:22–23).**
- B. Believe that David was God's Endtime prophet, that Maria is God's chosen and anointed successor, who has inherited David's mantle as God's prophetess, and that Peter was commissioned by David and anointed by the Lord to work alongside Maria.**
- C. Believe the Family's fundamental beliefs and doctrines, biblical and revealed, as published in ["The Family International's Statement of Faith."](#)**
- D. Conduct themselves as good Christians, interacting lovingly and harmoniously with all people as much as possible, refrain from causing dissension or discord among the brethren, show outgoing love and concern for others, and fulfill their obligations, both legal and otherwise.**
- E. Maintain a clean and presentable personal appearance and residence, and refrain from activities or behavior that would be a reproach to the cause of Christ and/or reflect negatively on the Family.**
- F. Raise his or her children in a godly manner and impart to them the knowledge of God through His Word. To love and care for his or her children to the best of his or her ability, and see that their spiritual, physical, medical, and emotional needs are supplied. This includes protecting their children from all forms of abuse, including sexual, physical, spiritual, mental, or psychological.**
 - 1. A Fellow member might share the parenting of his or her children with a non-Family parent and not have full control over decisions affecting his or her children's upbringing and training. Nevertheless, a Fellow member should attempt to raise his or her children in a godly manner as much as is within his or her ability to do so.**
- G. Ensure that his or her children, on an ongoing basis and by whatever means necessary, receive an adequate education to help them achieve a level of scholastic competence appropriate for their age and aptitude.**

Fellow members who are found to be grossly negligent in their duty of providing their children with a proper education will be in jeopardy of losing their Family membership.

- H. Present himself and his or her work in an honest and responsible manner in all business or financial dealings, provisioning, fundraising, product distribution, appeals for support, and other obligations related to legal entities, humanitarian aid, the receipt of government benefits, and in the handling of finances or business dealings with other Family members.**

The Lord has instructed us to "provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Romans 12:17), and it's important that our sample to others reflects that in every aspect of our lives. While it's acceptable to present the overall work of the Family International in their witness and dealings with others, Fellow members must not present other Homes' or members' works that they are not directly involved in as their own.

- I. Send a monthly report of his or her activities and witnessing statistics to World Services, and tithe 10% of his or her income as per the instructions received from the reporting office.**

Fellow members must tithe and appear on a TRF every month without exception.

In order to cover the cost of mailings and other services, World Services will continue to set a minimum figure for this monthly donation.

- J. Maintain a secure residential or business address at which he or she can receive printed World Services publications. Maintaining a working email address is strongly recommended.**

Fellow members should obtain Internet access and an email address for their Family communications and to receive Family notices and access the MO site.

- K. Live and work in unity with Family discipleship and Missionary member Homes and other Family members.**

- 1. The frequency and amount of interaction and fellowship between a Fellow member and Family disciples or Missionary members is determined by the mutual agreement of the Fellow member and the Family discipleship or Missionary member Home.**

- L. Observe any restrictions pertaining to Family publications in accordance with "Designations of Family Publications."**

- M. Only write articles, letters, and rebuttals, and/or speak with the media in his or her capacity as a Fellow member, supporter, or associate of the Family International. In any such matters a Fellow member should state that he or she writes or speaks in that capacity.**

- N. Not engage in any verbal or written legal agreements in the name of the Family International or act as official representatives of the Family international without prior written authorization from his regional council.**

- 1. A Fellow member may act in an unofficial capacity as a distributor of Family publications and outreach materials unless this has been withdrawn by the regional desk.**

- O. Live in accordance with the agreed-upon goals of the area and the Family at large.**

These would include any region-wide, country-wide, or city-wide goals that have been voted in by the respective Homes. Some area goals may pertain only to the FD and/or MM Homes, others may pertain to all FD and MM Homes, as well as to FM members within an area. While FM members must abide by agreed-upon area goals that were presented to the FM members to vote on, they should not work against or hinder other goals set by the FD and MM Homes in their area.

- P. Purchase distribution materials from a local production center.**

Fellow Member Guidelines

A Fellow member may:

- A. Conduct outreach and distribute Family literature and multimedia materials to the general public in the city or metropolitan area in which they reside as long as they communicate with and work in unity with Family Homes and Fellow members in that city or metropolitan area.**
 - 1. Fellow members may not distribute Family literature and multimedia materials to the general public in a city or metropolitan area that they do not reside in and that has Family Homes, without first receiving permission to do so from those Homes.**
 - 2. Fellow members may not distribute Family literature and multimedia materials to the general public in another city or metropolitan area that their regional council has designated as closed.**
 - 3. The regional shepherds reserve the right to withdraw permission for a Fellow member to distribute Family literature, publications, or multimedia materials if they deem that the member is not working in unity with the other Family members in that city or metropolitan area, or is not maintaining a good example of a Family distributor.**

- B. Move from one country to another without jeopardizing their membership, providing they request and receive clearance from their regional desk at least 60 days in advance.**
 - 1. Within 15 days of receipt of a clearance request, the regional desk must respond, acknowledging that the clearance request was received and passed on to the regional shepherds. The response must include the date that the clearance application arrived, which date begins the 30-day processing period.**
 - a. Clearance is automatically granted if, after receiving a notice of receipt from the regional desk, the member does not receive further response to his request within the 30-day processing period.**
 - b. In the case of a clearance request to a sensitive country the member must wait to receive final notification of clearance before proceeding.**
 - 2. The regional desk maintains the right to request additional information from the Fellow member requesting clearance as well as to deny clearance. If clearance is denied, the regional desk must notify the Fellow member of the reasons he is being denied clearance.**
 - 3. The regional shepherds reserve the right to withdraw permission for a Fellow member to remain in a country if they deem that the member's activities might be deemed detrimental to the work or would endanger the safety and security of other Family individuals or Homes in the country.**

4. The regional desk cannot deny clearance to or withdraw permission for a Family member 16 years and older who wishes to return to or remain in the country for which he holds a passport.

a. If the member is a parent, his or her immediate family may also return to or remain in the country.

The regional desk cannot deny clearance to a member, nor his or her mate or children who want to return to the member's passport country. However, he or she should notify the RD by submitting his or her clearance request, which in this case serves as a notification of intent, and since he or she is automatically cleared, he or she does not need to wait for a response from the RD before moving.

A couple and their children would not be eligible for "automatic clearance" on the strength of a couple's child being a passport holder of that country.

C. Translate and duplicate World Services-produced tracts, *Reflections*, and *Family Activity Reports*.

All other Family distribution materials will be produced by or via an approved production center. FMs should first inquire with their RD whether the tract has been or will be translated.

D. Create any newsletters, appeal letters, flyers, pamphlets, or audio-visual promotional materials with limited local distribution, or designed for distribution to the individual's contacts.

1. Quotations and artwork from Family publications may be translated and/or included in these local publications without prior approval.

If an FM's newsletter, appeal letter, local pamphlet or audio/visual tool is only going to be sent to his or her personal contacts, will not be mass produced, and is used only for the member's local distribution, it does not need prior approval. This includes local advertisements for his or her local work, show group, or youth club, or testimony sheets the member sends to friends and contacts.

If he or she wishes to use quotations from the MLs in a letter ministering to someone, newsletter, appeal letter or other local pamphlet, he or she may do so.

2. Any other printed, electronic, audio, or visual products created by Fellow members which are partly or fully comprised of World Services- or other official Family-produced materials, contain excerpts from World Services-issued literature, or which bear the name "The Family" or "The Family International" on them, must be submitted to their regional desk for approval before distribution.

E. Apply to join a different circle of Family membership providing he conducts himself according to the appropriate governing rules.

F. Withdraw from Family membership at any time he desires.

Anyone is free to leave the Family at any time he wishes. No one is compelled to remain. In fact, if someone wants to depart from Family membership, we encourage him to do so. We do not pressure anyone to remain in the Family; on the contrary, Family membership can only be retained by those who have made a personal decision to be in the Family in whatever place of service he has chosen.

G. Initiate civil proceedings against another Family individual, if they wish to. The member involved in the legal action may be required by the regional shepherds to relinquish their Family membership to do so. Once the proceedings have concluded the member may reapply for Family membership.

We believe that ideally Family members should settle their personal differences by using other avenues available to them rather than initiating civil action against one another. (See 1 Corinthians 6:1, 5-7).

Nevertheless, if a Family member decides to pursue civil action against another Family member, he or she is free to do so. However, because of the ramifications the action could have on other Family members, ministries, or other Homes in the area, the Family member may be required to step outside of Family membership for the duration of the legal action. Once the issue has been concluded, he or she may reapply for membership.

Fellow Member Rules

Governing Principles of the Fellow Membership Rules

A. Fellow member responsibilities are to be fulfilled by all Fellow members to the best of their ability and the *Fellow Member Statutes* are to be adhered to by all Fellow members, except in unavoidable circumstances or with rare exception.

- 1. Members who flagrantly or continually break the rules or who persistently disregard their membership responsibilities will face disciplinary action in a manner appropriate and proportionate to the severity and/or frequency of the offense, up to and including the loss of their Family membership.**

The rules in the *Fellow Member Statutes* are to be followed by all Fellow members.

- 2. Rules in “[Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member](#)” are to be adhered to at all times by all Fellow members, with no exceptions.**

If you commit an excommunicable offense you will be excommunicated, and depending on the nature of the offense that excommunication will likely be permanent.

There may be the situation where—after a predetermined period of time, and depending on the nature of the offense committed—it may be possible for someone who was excommunicated to be reinstated and rejoin a circle of Family membership. The decision to reinstate someone who was excommunicated must be agreed to by at least a two-thirds majority of the RSs within that region, after prayerful consideration of both the request and the circumstances surrounding the individual’s original excommunication. The decision to allow an excommunicated member to rejoin a circle of Family membership, if it were to happen, would not be an arbitrary opinion on the part of the RSs. Their decision must be based on guidelines established specifically for this purpose by the Family Policy Council.

Individuals who have been excommunicated for abusive mistreatment of a child will not be eligible for reinstatement to any circle of Family membership at any time.

Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member

See the "[Governing Principles of the Fellow Membership Rules](#)" for a broader understanding of the application of a Missionary member's responsibilities and rules.

A Fellow member will be excommunicated by the regional shepherds for the following:

A. Abusive mistreatment of a child.

Family children have the right to grow up in a safe and secure environment, free from abuse of any kind—sexual, physical, spiritual, mental, or psychological. The Family has a zero tolerance policy towards child abuse. Abusive mistreatment of a child, whether through the excessive use of force when disciplining, sexual abuse, or any other abusive mistreatment will result in excommunication.

B. Those age 18 years and over engaging in a sexual act with minors under the age of 16 or the local age of consent, whichever is higher.

C. Committing intentionally endangering or life-threatening acts, other than the legally sanctioned use of reasonable force in defense of self, others, or property.

Family members should not commit intentionally endangering or life-threatening violent acts for any reason, except in the rare case of legally defending themselves, or others, or their property. For example, you may, of course, resort to the use of physical restraint or force if someone is about to hit you—or any innocent helpless person, for that matter—over the head with a bat or is trying to grab your children or set fire to your property. Dad stated, "When an unwelcome visitor invades your property and starts breaking down doors, windows, socking disciples, and ripping off your sheep, don't hesitate to defend yourselves until the police come. You may have to use a little force to prevent even greater violence. Try not to hurt anyone, but definitely, forcibly restrain them from further trespassing and violence with whatever force it takes to do so" (ML #143A:61,79).

D. Activities that foster schism within the Family, including the continual voicing of doubts, criticisms, or skepticism in a destructive manner designed to foster strife or doubts about David, Maria, Peter, the Word, or the Family.

- 1. Members are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification or counsel, as well as voice objections or raise concerns about matters they feel need to be changed or addressed. This should not be done in a way that results in spreading dissent or doubt, but to the appropriate shepherds.**

H. Engaging in male-with-male sexual acts.

It is our Bible-based belief that God strictly forbids male homosexuality. Male homosexuality or "men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:27) is forbidden. Those found guilty of male-with-male sexual interaction will receive probation, loss of Family membership, or excommunication, depending on the severity of the offense.

Offenses Warranting the Revocation of a Fellow Member's Family Membership

A. A Fellow member will be in jeopardy of having his Family membership revoked by the regional shepherds for no less than three months if it is determined that he has committed any of the following offenses:

1. Violent acts judged not worthy of excommunication, or determinedly or repeatedly threatening violence against others.

Committing acts of violence, except in the unavoidable case of legally defending themselves, others, or their property is not acceptable in the Family. Those found guilty of violence will receive punishment in the form of probation, loss of membership, or excommunication, depending on the severity of the act, or whether there is a reoccurrence.

If a mate was defending himself or herself from spousal violence, it could be judged self-defense and possibly not be grounds for disciplinary action.

Those found guilty of repeatedly threatening violence against others will receive probation, and if threats of violence continue the member will be in jeopardy of losing his or her Family membership or of being excommunicated.

2. Failing to report an excommunicable offense.

3. Substance abuse.

a. Depending on the severity of the substance abuse, or whether it was a repeat offense, the individual may be excommunicated instead.

"Substance abuse" covers the full range of both legal and illegal drugs and intoxicants. Some drugs and intoxicants are not illegal, but the use (or overuse) of them is considered abuse, for example, taking certain over-the-counter drugs for non-medical reasons. Even if not technically illegal, those activities could be considered substance abuse.

4. Engaging in male-with-male sexual interaction.

a. Depending on the severity of the sexual interaction, or whether it was a repeat offense, the individual will face excommunication.

5. Disregard for the restrictions on the distribution of Family literature as outlined in "Designations of Family Publications."

6. A sexual act or contact with a Family disciple.

Designations of Family Publications

A. Family publications are designated for specific readerships.

- 1. Family disciples, Missionary members, and Fellow members may receive publications designated as FD/MM/FM. They may also read or have all Family publications, subject to each publication's age designation and restrictions.**
 - a. Publications designated as FD/MM are sent only to Family discipleship and Missionary member Homes.**
- 2. Active members may receive publications designated as AM or GM. They may read or have FD/MM/FM publications, subject to each publication's age designation and restrictions, at the discretion of the Active member's Home.**
- 3. General members may receive publications designated as GM. They may read or have AM or FD/MM/FM publications, subject to each publication's age designation and restrictions, at the discretion of the General member's Home.**

A publication designated as FD/MM/FM will automatically be sent or made available to all FD, MM, and FM Homes. An FD/MM/FM publication will not be sent to or automatically be made available to AMs or GMs, but the publication may be given to an AM or GM, at the discretion of the Home and subject to the publication's age designation and restrictions.

B. Restrictions on the distribution of Family publications pertain to all Family members and are as follows:

- 1. FD/MM/FM/AM publications may not be posted online except by World Services Administration's permission.**

This restriction pertains to posting FD/MM/FM/AM publications anywhere online, including personal, area, or Home websites, blogs or social networking sites, as well as posting FD/MM/FM/AM publications on someone else's website, blog or social networking site.

- 2. FD/MM/FM/AM publications are for members and may not be distributed to the general public except with World Services Administration's permission.**
- 3. FD/MM/FM/AM publications may not be knowingly given to those who seek to hinder the Family.**

C. World Services Publications may change the designation or use of any Family publication, or make exceptions to any of the above rules.

Fellow Member Procedures

Procedure for a New Member Becoming a Fellow Member

- A. An individual who was not previously a Family disciple, Missionary member, or Fellow member may join an existing Fellow member and become a Fellow member after completing the following:**
- 1. Taking the *12 Foundation Stones* course.**
 - 2. Taking the *12 Bridges* course.**
 - 3. Prayerfully reading the *Fellow Member Statutes* and agreeing to abide by it.**
 - 4. Upon completion of the above, filling out the "Statement of Commitment for a New Fellow Member."**

Procedure for a Former Family Member Becoming a Fellow Member

- A. If a former Family member wishes to become a Fellow member, the applicant must write to the regional desk stating his desire to rejoin as a Fellow member. The letter must explain the circumstances of his former membership.**
- 1. The applicant should request a copy of the *Fellow Member Statutes* if he does not already have one.**
 - 2. If, after prayerful consideration, the applicant determines that he wants to meet the Fellow member standard, the applicant should notify the regional desk that he has read the *Fellow Member Statutes* and agrees to abide by it.**
 - a. The regional desk will acknowledge receipt of the application within 15 days.**
 - b. A decision will be made on the eligibility of the applicant for Fellow membership within 45 days of the receipt of the application request, unless the regional desk notifies the applicant that more time is needed to process the application.**
 - c. If the applicant is deemed ineligible for Fellow membership the regional desk will inform him of the reasons why the application was denied, otherwise approval will be granted.**
 - 3. Upon approval the new member must complete the "[Statement of Commitment for a New Fellow Member](#)."**
 - 4. Once the application process to become a Fellow member has been completed, the regional desk will supply the applicant with the necessary reporting instructions.**
 - a. The new Fellow member may begin reporting immediately and will begin receiving Fellow member mailings once the reporting office receives its first tithe and report.**
 - 5. During the first six months as a Fellow member, the member should read through the [12 Bridges](#) courses, unless he was a Family member in the year prior to the date of application for Fellow membership.**

Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Missionary Member Home

- A. A Fellow member who is in communication or fellowship with a Missionary member Home and would like to join the Home, must first read the *Missionary Member Statutes* and if, after prayerful consideration, he agrees to meet the Missionary member standard, two-thirds of the Home's adult members must agree to accept him as a prospective member.
- B. The Missionary member Home must check with the regional desk to verify whether the prospective member is eligible for Missionary membership.
 - 1. The regional desk must within 15 days of receipt acknowledge that the application was received and passed on to the regional shepherds. The response must include the date that the application arrived, which begins the 45-day processing period.
 - 2. If the application is denied, the shepherding desk will notify the prospective member within 45 days of receipt of the application that the application has been denied, and why. The prospective member may not reapply for Missionary membership for six months.
 - 3. If the application is approved the prospective member may move into the Home and begin his three-month period as a provisional Missionary member.
- C. The new provisional member should complete the "[Reading List for a Fellow Member Becoming a Family Disciple or Missionary Member](#)" during his first three months in the Home.
- D. If at any time the Home deems the provisional member is not living up to the *Missionary Member Statutes*, the Home is free to recommend that the provisional member return to Fellow membership. The decision of the Home will be final.
 - 1. The Home must notify the shepherding desk of such a decision.
 - 2. The provisional member may begin to look for another Missionary member Home to accept him, but he would need to start the joining process over again with the new Home.
- E. At the end of the three-month period as a provisional member, two-thirds of the Home's adult members must confirm whether the provisional member is living according to the *Missionary Member Statutes*, and if so, he will then become a full-fledged Missionary member with all the rights and responsibilities pertaining thereto.

Procedure for a Fellow Member Becoming a Missionary Member Home

- A. A Fellow member that wishes to become a Missionary member Home must read through the *Missionary Member Statutes* in order to determine whether he may be living the Missionary member standard before applying to the regional shepherds for Missionary membership.**
- B. The Fellow member should send a statement to the regional desk that he is living the Missionary member standard as outlined in the *Missionary Member Statutes* along with his application to become a Missionary member Home.**
 - 1. The regional desk must within 15 days of receipt acknowledge that the application and statement was received and passed on to the regional shepherds. The response must include the date that the application arrived, which begins the 45-day processing period.**
 - 2. The regional desk may ask for further information from Homes or others who know the Fellow member.**
 - 3. If the application is denied, the regional desk will notify the Fellow member of the reasons why the request was denied.**
 - a. The Fellow member will then be ineligible to reapply for Missionary membership for six months from receipt of the notice of denial.**
 - 4. If the regional desk does not respond within the 45-day period, the Fellow member may continue the process of becoming a Missionary member Home.**
- C. Having begun the process of becoming a Missionary member Home, the Fellow member must complete the Missionary member Home review and submit it to the regional shepherds.**
 - 1. If the Fellow member passes the Missionary member Home review, he will qualify as a provisional Missionary member Home.**
 - 2. If the Fellow member does not pass the Missionary member Home review, he will retain his Fellow membership and will not be eligible to reapply for Missionary membership for six months.**
 - 3. The regional shepherds must inform the Fellow member within 60 days of the end of the review month whether or not he was granted provisional Missionary membership.**
- D. Having become a provisional Missionary member Home, the Home will have all the rights and responsibilities pertaining to Missionary membership for the next six months.**
 - 1. If the Home must be placed on probationary notice during its time as a provisional Missionary member Home, the Home members will automatically revert to Fellow**

membership and will not be eligible to reapply for Missionary membership for six months.

- a. This does not apply when the Home is placed on automatic probationary notice by the reporting office for no, low, or late monthly report, tithe, 1% FAF, and/or 3% common pot contribution, as long as the matter is resolved within 60 days.**
- E. After the provisional Missionary member Home takes its second Missionary Membership Home review, the Home will become a full-fledged Missionary member Home.**
 - 1. If the provisional Missionary member Home does not pass the Missionary member Home review, the Home members will retain their Fellow membership and will not be eligible to reapply for Missionary membership for six months.**
 - 2. The regional shepherds must inform the Home within 60 days of the end of the review period whether or not the Home was granted full Missionary membership.**

Procedure for a Fellow Member Becoming an Attached Missionary Member

- A. A Fellow member wishing to report to a Family Discipleship or a Missionary member Home as an Attached Missionary member must first read the *Missionary Member Statutes*. If, after prayerful consideration, he determines that he wishes to apply for Attached Missionary membership he must find a Family discipleship or Missionary member Home that agrees to invite him to report to their Home as an Attached Missionary member.
- B. The Fellow member and the Home he is joining must write to the regional desk for permission for the Fellow member to join the Home as an Attached Missionary member.
 - 1. The regional desk must within 15 days of receipt acknowledge that the application was received and passed on to the regional shepherds. The response must include the date that the application arrived, which begins the 45-day processing period.
 - 2. The regional desk, if necessary, may ask for further information from others who know the Fellow member.
 - 3. If the Fellow member's application is denied, the regional desk will notify the member and the Home of the reasons within 45 days from the date the regional desk received the application. The Fellow member will then be ineligible to reapply for Attached Missionary membership for six months.
- C. If the Fellow member's application is accepted, or his application has not been denied within the 45-day processing period, the Fellow member must then fulfill the "[Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Family Discipleship Home](#)," clauses D–G in the *Charter*, or the "[Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Missionary Member Home](#)," clauses C–E in the *Missionary Member Statutes*, depending on which Home he may be joining.

Procedure for a Fellow Member Moving into a Family Discipleship Home

- A. A Fellow member who wishes to become a Family disciple by joining a Family discipleship Home must first read the *Charter* and if, after prayerful consideration, he determines that he still wishes to become a Family disciple, he must find a Family discipleship Home that agrees by a two-thirds majority of the Home council to invite the Fellow member to join the Home.
- B. The Family discipleship Home and the Fellow member must apply to the regional shepherds via the shepherding desk for permission for the Fellow member to join that Family discipleship Home.
 1. The shepherding desk must within 15 days of receipt acknowledge that the application and statement was received and passed on to the regional shepherds. The response must include the date that the application arrived, which begins the 45-day processing period.
 - a. During the 45-day processing period, the shepherding desk may ask for further information from Homes or others who know the Fellow member.
 2. If the application is denied, the shepherding desk will notify the Fellow member and the Family discipleship Home as to why the request was denied.
 - a. The Fellow member will then be ineligible to reapply for Family discipleship for six months from receipt of the notice of denial.
 3. If the shepherding desk does not respond within the 45-day period, the Fellow member may continue the process of joining the Family discipleship Home.
 - a. Within 90 days after the expiration of the 45-day processing period, the Fellow member must either join that Home, or if unable to do so, find another Family discipleship Home that will accept him and allow him to continue the joining process.
- C. Before moving into the Family discipleship Home the applicant must:
 1. Be free from contagious disease in accordance with the *Charter's* "Health and Hygiene Rules."
 2. Be free of debt, unless the Home agrees to assume the debt.
 3. Have no legal, marital, military, or other obligations that would prevent him from being a full-time member of a Family discipleship Home.

There are some legal situations, which might not interfere with Family discipleship, such as jury duty or obligatory public service for a traffic or misdemeanor violation. In some countries a term of military service is obligatory for certain ages, and a provisional disciple may still be able to attend to this requirement without

too much disruption in his service to the Lord, in which case the Home could agree to accept him according to the circumstances. Or perhaps a prospective member may be in the midst of a marital separation or child custody battle that should be settled before the prospective member moves into the Home.

In most cases, though, it would be best for the prospective member to discharge any obligations he may have, legal, military, marital, or otherwise, and join the Family once he is free from such obligations.

D. Once moved into the Family discipleship Home, the now provisional disciple becomes a non-voting member of the Home for six months.

- 1. The provisional disciple must list his personal possessions using the *Charter's* "Personal Possession Declaration for a New Family Disciple." The assets listed will remain his property to take with him should he decide to leave before completing six months in the Home, unless he decides to leave some of the assets with the Home.**
- 2. If at any time the Home deems that the provisional disciple is not living up to the *Charter* and the Family discipleship standard, the Home may decide by a two-thirds majority of Home council members that the provisional disciple returns to Fellow membership. The decision of the Home council will be final.**
 - a. The Home must notify the shepherding desk of such a decision.**
- 3. The provisional disciple may have access to the Home's library and the MO and other related Family websites, and should read through the "Reading List for a Fellow Member Becoming a Family Disciple or Missionary Member" and the board criteria GNs during his first six months in the Home.**

It'd be good for the now provisional disciple to read through the board criteria GNs (GN# 1099, 1104–1106) and get to know the *Charter* during his first six months in the FD Home. This should give him a well-rounded understanding of the FD standard.

- E. At the end of the six month period as a provisional disciple, the Home council will decide by a two-thirds majority to confirm whether the individual is living according to the *Charter* and discipleship standard. If so, he will become a full-fledged Family disciple with all the rights and responsibilities pertaining thereto, except the following:**
 - 1. He must refrain from sexual contact or acts with others, except with his mate, until cleared of contagious disease in accordance with the *Charter's* "Health and Hygiene Rules."**
- F. An agreement should be reached between the Home and the disciple, as to which of his possessions the disciple may take with him should he decide to leave the Home.**
 - 1. Acts 2:44–45 applies for the duration of the disciple's time in the Home. He should willingly share his possessions with the Home and other members according to the need and agreements of the Home.**

Procedure for Placing a Fellow Member on Probationary Notice

- A. A Fellow member will automatically be placed on probationary notice by the reporting office for no or late monthly TRF, as per the instructions received from their reporting office, or no, low, or late 10% tithe of the member's income to World Services.**
- B. If a regional shepherd or the regional desk determines that a Fellow member should be placed on probationary notice for contravening the *Fellow Member Statutes*:**
 - 1. The regional desk will write to the Fellow member specifying how he has contravened the *Fellow Member Statutes*, informing the member of the changes that must be made to come off probationary notice. The member must comply within 60 days or lose his Family membership.**
- C. Once the specified changes have been made and verified the regional desk will notify the member that he is no longer on probationary notice.**
 - 1. A Fellow member who has not made the required changes before his 60-day probationary period expires, loses his Family membership. The Fellow member will then be ineligible to reapply for Fellow membership for six months.**
 - 2. If probationary notice was due to an infraction listed in clause A above, then the Fellow member may immediately reapply for Fellow membership.**

Procedure for Revoking a Fellow Member's Family Membership

A Fellow member is expected to live the Fellow member standard as outlined in the *Fellow Member Statutes* to the best of his or her ability. If a member flagrantly violates or contravenes his or her membership requirements he or she may be in jeopardy of having his or her Family membership revoked.

This procedure would not apply if the member in question has committed an offense warranting excommunication. In that case the "[Procedure for Excommunicating a Fellow Member](#)" would apply.

This procedure is only to be used by the regional shepherds in extreme circumstances that warrant the revocation of an individual's Family membership.

- A. A Fellow member can have his Family membership revoked only by the regional shepherds for persistent or flagrant disregard of the "[Responsibilities of an Individual Fellow Member](#)" or for similar contravention of the *Fellow Member Statutes*.**
- B. If the regional shepherds determine that there may be grounds for revocation of a member's Family membership they must notify the member via the shepherding desk that they are initiating the procedure to withdraw the member's Family membership. They must at that time specify in writing how the member is or has been persistently or flagrantly disregarding the *Fellow Member Statutes* as outlined in clause A above.**
 - 1. If the member wishes to appeal the decision he or she may write the shepherding desk within 15 days, explaining why he disagrees or to explain any extenuating circumstances or reasons why certain of the above responsibilities and rules are not being fulfilled or are being contravened.**
 - 2. The shepherding desk must investigate the matter by communicating with the member in question and any others involved.**
 - a. The member may request to speak personally with a regional shepherd.**
 - i. The regional shepherd may appoint a designated representative to visit and report on the situation if the regional shepherd is not able to visit at that time.**
 - ii. If visitation is not possible or expedient the member will have to communicate via other means.**
 - 3. The shepherding desk must within 45 days inform the regional shepherds of its findings.**
 - 4. Upon receipt of the shepherding desk's assessment, the regional shepherds will within 15 days of the close of the investigation decide by a two-thirds majority whether revocation of Family membership is warranted.**
 - a. If revocation of Family membership is agreed to by the regional shepherds, the shepherding desk will inform the member that his membership has been revoked in accordance with the findings.**
- C. The departing member may keep any Family publications in his personal possession.**

Procedure for Excommunicating a Fellow Member

- A. A Fellow member can be excommunicated by the regional shepherds only upon committing one of the offenses listed in "Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member."**
- 1. For a Fellow member to be excommunicated, the shepherding desk must investigate the matter by communicating with the member in question and anyone else involved.**
 - a. The member in question may request to speak with a regional shepherd.**
 - i. A regional shepherd may appoint a designated representative to speak with the member in question and anyone else involved. The representative will report on the situation if the regional shepherd is not able to visit at that time.**
 - ii. If visitation is not possible or expedient the member will have to communicate via email, mail, or telephone.**
 - 2. After reviewing the evidence the regional shepherds will, by a two-thirds majority vote, determine whether the individual has committed one of the "Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member."**
 - 3. If it is determined by the regional shepherds that the individual has committed one of the offenses listed in "Offenses Warranting the Excommunication of a Fellow Member," the Fellow member will be excommunicated from Family membership.**
 - a. Family members may have contact with those who have been excommunicated, unless expressly forbidden by the regional shepherds, providing a majority of their Home agrees.**
 - i. If excommunicated from Family contact, the personal family of the excommunicated member may still have contact with him or her, though not in a Family Home or at gatherings of Family members.**
 - b. The regional shepherds may inform their Homes that the person has been excommunicated, and the terms of his or her excommunication.**

Appendices

The Family International's Statement of Faith

Doctrinal Statement from the Family International

1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God, given to us by God our Creator to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). We assert that the Scriptures are a sacred revelation, written by holy men of old who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), and that these writings are the divinely appointed standard and guide to our faith and practice. Holding fast to the truth that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), we strive to study, memorize, and obey it, that we may grow in faith, wisdom, and spiritual strength through our knowledge of and adherence to its tenets. God's Word as revealed in the Bible is the basis and cornerstone of all our beliefs and practices. It is the core of our spiritual strength and nourishment. Its principles are the foundation of the instruction we give our children, and its truth is the basis of the witness we give to others.

- Matthew 24:35; Romans 15:4; John 8:31–32; 1 John 2:5; Romans 10:17; Psalm 119:99–100; Jeremiah 15:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15; 4:2; John 1:1,14¹

2. God and the Trinity

We believe in the one true, eternal God, who is the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, invisible Spirit of love who created and rules the universe and everything in it. We believe in the unity of the Godhead, that there are three distinguishable but inseparable Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- Isaiah 43:10–11; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 4:8; 5:7

3. Creation

We believe the biblical account of Creation as depicted in the book of Genesis, that it is to be accepted literally and not allegorically; that God, not chaos, created the heavens and the earth. We also believe that on the sixth day of Creation, God formed the first humans in His own image and after His own likeness. He formed Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, then later that day made Eve from Adam's rib; thus they became living souls by divine creation and not by random evolution. We also believe that God's visible creation provides clear testimony of His invisible existence. As our Creator, God deserves thanksgiving, reverence, and obedience from us as His creations.

- Genesis 1:1; Romans 1:20; Psalm 33:6–9; Jeremiah 32:17

4. The Fall of Man

We believe that the first man and woman were created innocent by their Maker, but through the temptation of Satan they voluntarily transgressed and fell from their sinless and happy state. As a result, all humankind are now sinners by nature, and are absolutely unable to attain righteousness without the saving power of Jesus Christ.

- Genesis chapter 3; Romans 5:12–21

¹ All Bible verses are taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted. Bulleted Bible references listed after each section are additional verses concerning that particular topic, whereas Bible references noted within the section refer to quoted text or provide background to the point made.

5. Jesus Christ, the Son of God

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who was miraculously conceived by divine intervention and born of the Virgin Mary, and was sinless throughout His life. He made a full atonement for the sins of the world by His death—the substitutionary sacrifice of the just for the unjust. We affirm that Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and humankind, and that He gave Himself as the only ransom for sinners. We believe in His physical resurrection and His bodily ascension into Heaven, His perpetual intercession for His people, and His soon coming personal visible return to the world in power and great glory, to set up His kingdom on Earth, and later to judge the living and the dead.

- 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:5–11; Hebrews 4:14–15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24–25; Romans 1:3–4; Matthew 28:18; Acts 1:9–11

6. Salvation by Grace

We believe that all people by nature are sinners, but that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). We believe, therefore, that anyone who personally accepts God’s pardon for sin through Jesus Christ will be forgiven of his or her sin, reconciled to God, and will be able to forever live in God’s presence.

We believe that the salvation of humankind is wholly by grace (God’s gift of love, mercy, and forgiveness), through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in infinite love for the lost, voluntarily accepted His Father’s will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb who alone can take away our sins (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). Salvation can only be acquired through Jesus Christ. “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

We are saved by believing in Jesus Christ and personally receiving Him into our hearts and lives, thus becoming spiritually regenerated or “born again.” “As many as received Him [Jesus], to them gave He the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Once saved, the believer is saved forever. We believe that it is the privilege of all who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ to be fully assured of their salvation from the very day that they receive Him as their Savior. Just as the believer is saved by grace, he or she is sustained by grace: “Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).²

- Romans 3:23; 6:23; 3:10; 1 John 1:8; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:12

7. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit came forth from the Father to teach, instruct, inspire, and empower believers for their God-given mission. A believer receives a measure of the Holy Spirit when he accepts Jesus, but he can be filled to overflowing if he asks and desires to give himself more fully to the Lord. “Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18).

We also believe the Holy Spirit is the personification of the feminine and maternal element of the Trinity of God and as such is the picture of a mother, the comforter, who loves, nurtures, comforts, and consoles the born-again child of God.

- Genesis 1:26–27; Proverbs 8:1,22–32; John 3:5–8; 14:15–18,26; 15:26; 16:7–11; Acts 1:8

8. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the baptism or complete filling of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of love, “for God is love” (1 John 4:8), and that it may be freely obtained by all believers who simply ask God for it, and that it is often given after the scriptural “laying on of hands” of other believers. The primary purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to empower the believer to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8).

² While we firmly believe that the soul that God has saved and granted His free gift of eternal life to can never be lost, this is not a license for the believer to willingly sin. Because God is a holy and righteous Father who cannot overlook the sins of His children, if the believer persistently sins, He will chasten and correct him. The apostle Paul explains, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. For what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:6-7).

Other ministrations of the Holy Spirit are to guide the believer into all truth, to comfort the believer, to bring all things that Jesus has said to the believer's remembrance, to assist the believer in prayer, and to help him or her understand God's Word.

- Luke 11:9–13; Acts 8:15–17; 1:8; Luke 4:18; Galatians 5:22–23; John 14:16,26; Romans 8:26–27

9. The Gifts of the Spirit

We believe that it is the privilege of the Spirit-baptized believer to enjoy the benefits of the spiritual gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, which include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, and prophecy. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:4–5,7). All of these gifts that are bestowed by the heavenly Father upon His children are to be used and freely exercised in the congregation by both male and female members, so that the body of believers may be strengthened, encouraged, and edified by them.

- Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18; Matthew 7:11

10. The Gift of Prophecy

We believe that prophecy is an important gift given to God's children through the Holy Spirit, and that prophecy should be an active part of our daily lives and ministry. As we acknowledge the Lord and ask Him to guide our paths, leaning not to our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6), we believe that He speaks to us personally with instruction, guidance, and encouragement. "He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (1 Corinthians 14:3). The gift of prophecy is available to all followers of Christ, as is any other gift of the Spirit.

It was foreseen in the Bible that prophecy would occupy a more important role in the Last Days³, the era we believe that we are living in now. "And it shall come to pass in the Last Days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17).

- Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:5; Revelation 19:10

11. Divine Healing

We believe that healing diseased and afflicted bodies was a major part of Jesus' ministry while on Earth, and that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He still desires to restore health to the afflicted that come to Him in faith. Through Christ's suffering on the cross, God has made provision not only for the salvation of the souls of all humankind, but also for the healing of physical infirmities, for "by His stripes [the wounds He received when He was beaten] we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Divine healing is a privilege available to all who believe.

Although we believe in God's power to heal illnesses, we believe that the decision as to whether to rely on prayer alone or to seek medical assistance in addition to prayer is a personal one, and members are free to avail themselves of medical assistance. As the Scripture says, "According to your faith it will be done to you" (Matthew 9:29 NIV).

- Matthew 4:23–24; 10:1; Mark 16:17–18; 1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 8:16–17; Psalm 103:3

12. Keys of the Kingdom

We believe that the spiritual gifts that Jesus gave to His original disciples are available to His followers today. When Jesus said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven" (Matthew 16:19), we believe that He was literally bequeathing the spiritual keys of the kingdom of Heaven, representing the full power of God, to His followers. Family members claim the keys of the Kingdom in prayer to release God's power to act in any given situation, in accordance with His will.

- Matthew 18:18; Luke 10:19; Revelation 1:18

13. The Fruits of the Spirit

We believe that Christians who are filled with the Holy Ghost should manifest the fruits of the Spirit as detailed in Scripture: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22–23 KJV).

³ The term "Last Days" refers to a period of time at the end of history as we know it, culminating in Jesus' Second Coming. This time is also known as the "time of the End," or the "Endtime."

- Ephesians 5:9; James 3:17–18; Matthew 7:16–20

14. Angels

We believe that God created an innumerable company of spiritual beings known as angels (literally, "messengers"). Angels are powerful immortal beings whom the Lord has assigned to watch over humankind, especially to protect and to minister to God's people. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). Although angels are usually invisible in the physical realm, they can materialize and appear in human form and even walk amongst us without our being aware of them, which is why God's Word tells us, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2).

- Psalm 34:7; 91:11–12; 2 Kings 6:15–18; Genesis 19:1–2; Judges 6:11–22; 13:2–21

15. Departed Saints

We believe that in addition to angelic ministering spirits, God also uses the spirits of departed believers to minister to and deliver messages to His people. Scriptural evidence of this is found in the account of the spirits of the departed prophets, Moses and Elijah, appearing and conferring with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; and Saint John's account in the book of Revelation of his conversation with a heavenly messenger sent by God to reveal to him mysteries of the future: "And when I heard and saw these things, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God'" (Revelation 22:8–9).

- Luke 9:28–33; Revelation 19:10; Hebrews 12:1,22–24

16. Satan and His Demons

We believe that one of God's mightiest archangels, "Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12), sinned and fell through his pride, jealousy of God, and ambition. He then became Satan [the Devil], the infernal foe of all righteousness. A third of the angels followed him in his rebellion against God, and thus became demons, evil spirits, which are presently active as his agents and associates in his malignant and God-defying activities. Satan's evil spirits now influence many people, and are largely responsible for the rampant crime, violence, wickedness, and disease flooding the world. We hold Satan to be the open and avowed enemy of God and humankind, who, as a usurper, now rules as the unholy "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4 KJV). He will be defeated at the apocalyptic Battle of Armageddon after the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 20:1–3).

- Isaiah 14:12–15; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:7–9; Ezekiel 28:11–19

17. Spiritual Warfare

We believe that we are engaged in a relentless spiritual warfare. As we strive to obey God's commands and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all whom we can, "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18), our adversary the Devil does all that he possibly can to try to thwart our efforts. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Soldiers in the Lord's Army must therefore "put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11), and learn to skillfully wield the powerful spiritual weapons that God has entrusted us with, particularly the "shield of faith" and the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:16,17). We are confident of victory, because God's Word has promised us that "He [Jesus] who is in you is greater than he [the Devil] who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

18. Prayer

We believe that prayer, the communication between every child of God and his or her heavenly Father, is vital to our spiritual well-being. Through prayer, we declare our love for God and manifest our dependence on Him. Far from merely being a religious ritual or a spiritual exercise, prayer can release God's power, in accordance with His will, and bring about change, supply, healing, and miracles. Jesus said, "Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).

We believe that interceding fervently in prayer for the needs of others is an important duty of every Christian: "Praying always ... with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

- Jeremiah 33:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 11:6; James 5:16; 1 Samuel 12:23; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Ephesians 6:18

19. The Lord's Supper—Communion

We believe that the Lord's Supper, called "communion," was instituted by Christ as a means for us to commemorate His death on the cross for our sins, and that partaking of its elements (the bread and wine) is a profession of the believer's faith. Communion is a simple ceremony whereby a group of believers partake of bread, which is broken, representing how Jesus' body was broken for the healing of our bodies; and wine, which represents how Christ's blood was shed for the remission of our sins. Scripture enjoins the believer to partake of the Lord's Supper with other believers until His return; therefore it is the privilege of all who know and believe in Him to commemorate His sacrifice on Calvary "till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- Matthew 26:26–28; John 6:51; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30

20. The Church: The Fellowship of Believers

We believe that the Church is the collective body of believers. The Church is referred to as "the body of Christ" as well as "the bride of Christ." Thus, it is not merely an ecclesiastical institution or organization—and certainly not a religious edifice or place of worship. "The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48). "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5 KJV). "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). We believe that the Church is the spiritual entity composed of those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, regardless of any affiliation with Christian organizations or denominations.

We believe that great spiritual benefit can be derived from fellowship with other like-minded believers, to engage in prayer, the reading of God's word, and fellowship meetings. Scripture also exhorts us not to abandon "the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). Thus, we should endeavor to follow the example of the Early Church, whose members "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

- Acts 2:46; Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; 1 John 1:3,7a

21. The Great Commission

We believe in the Great Commission that Jesus has given to His Church to evangelize the world: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). As such, every believer is commissioned to make Christ's love known to the world and to seek to win others into God's heavenly kingdom. We believe that a formal ordination into the Gospel ministry from a denomination or institution is not necessary, as all Christians are ordained by God to preach His Gospel and win others to Christ. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit" (John 15:16).

- Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15; Proverbs 14:25; Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 9:16

22. Consecration

We believe that the Christian's life should be consecrated to the Lord; that is, to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1), so that He may work through us and in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Because our bodies belong to the Lord and are the temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells, we believe that Christians should strive to maintain a healthy lifestyle, in respect to diet, exercise, and rest. We do not believe in abusing our bodies with illicit drugs, tobacco, or harmful substances, or overindulging in the consumption of alcohol, or unhealthy food and beverages. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). "You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

23. Non-conformity to the World

We believe that Christians are called by God to "be not conformed to this world, but [to] be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind" (Romans 12:2). We adhere to the scriptural admonition to "love not the world or the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). We understand this to mean that the believer should avoid pursuits and practices of secular society that are incompatible with Christianity, as well as conformity to worldly attitudes and values contrary to God's teachings.

However, while we believe that Scripture bids God's people to "come out from among [unbelievers] and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17), we believe that this separation is primarily spiritual, as Jesus said that His disciples were to be "in the world" but not "of the world" (John 17:15–18). Christians should not isolate themselves, but should reach out to people in all strata of society, following the footsteps of Him who came to this world "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

24. Discipleship

We believe that it is a high privilege for a believer to respond to Christ's challenge to follow Him as a full-time disciple.⁴ We also believe that Jesus' call to such full-time service remains essentially unchanged from His invitation to the fishermen on the shores of Galilee long ago: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

It is our conviction from Scripture that the ideal of such discipleship entails a commitment to devote one's life to winning others to Christ, and to teaching and training others to follow Jesus as His disciples. "Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit [others won to Christ]; so will you be My disciples" (John 15:8).

Full-time discipleship also entails a renouncement and forsaking of the pursuit of material wealth, as well as worldly and materialistic ambitions and endeavors. "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4). Christ plainly set forth the rigorous terms of the high standard of discipleship when He said, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

- Matthew 6:19–34; Mark 10:21; Hebrews 11:13; Luke 16:13

25. Cooperative Communal Living

We believe that the New Testament's account of the lifestyle of the Early Church offers us not only a historical narrative, but an exemplary pattern and model, which God intended succeeding generations of believers to follow. The Early Church's unselfish, cooperative lifestyle, in which "all who believed were together, and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44), proved to be exceptionally beneficial for the fledgling movement in terms of practical and economic concerns. Even more importantly, the close fellowship and spiritual unity fostered by this lifestyle provided the early disciples with needed support, fellowship, encouragement, and a spiritual haven. It was an example to nonbelievers that Jesus' followers could live together in harmony and cooperation—further proof of the love that they professed. Likewise, we today have found both the practical and spiritual benefits of cooperative communal living to be extremely advantageous in helping us achieve our goal of reaching all whom we can with the Gospel of Christ.

- Mark 10:29–30; Acts 2:44–45; 4:34–35; Psalm 133:1

26. Marriage and Children

We believe that God created and ordained the marriage union of man and woman and that marriage is the ideal relationship for the parenting of children and the forming of stable families.

We also believe that children are a wonderful gift of God with which He blesses and entrusts us, for "children are a heritage from the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3). Therefore, it is our conviction that the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of children should be amply and competently met. We consider the care of the children God has given us to be a very important responsibility and a fundamental component of our daily lives and service to God, for which reason all members of our communities are encouraged to do their utmost to ensure that their children are reared in as healthy, loving, safe, and godly an environment as is possible.

We believe that it is the God-given responsibility of every Christian parent to impart to their children a deep appreciation, respect, and love for God and His Word, and the sacred principles contained in it, bringing them up "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

- Psalm 127:3–5; 2 Timothy 3:15; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Psalm 34:11; 1 Samuel 1:28

27. The Sanctity of Life

We believe that human life is sacred, and that it is the right of each person to be treated as an individual created in the image of God. It is our belief that as Christians our duty is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31) by sharing the news of God's love and salvation for humanity, regardless of race, gender, color, creed, nationality, religious affiliation, or social status. We are exhorted to love and respect others without partiality (1 Timothy 5:21). We oppose acts of prejudice and violence.

⁴ "Disciple" is defined as "one who believes and follows the teachings of a master, and assists in the spreading of such teachings." While the Gospels exemplify the life of Jesus and His closest 12 disciples who renounced worldly pursuits, they also acknowledge that there are varying degrees of "following the teachings," which must be recognized and appreciated. We believe that the degree to which one commits his or her life to Christ is a matter of personal faith and conviction.

We are opposed to abortion. Scripture makes it clear that God esteems the unborn as a person with an identity, not merely as a mass of fetal tissue. The Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Modern fetology makes a strong case that human life begins at conception, which means that the developing child deserves all the protection and safeguards that any of us enjoy.

We believe that neither suicide nor euthanasia are acceptable in the eyes of God. We maintain that life is a valued gift from God, and as the sole giver of life, God is likewise the only appropriate taker of life.

- Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Psalm 139:14–16; Jeremiah 2:34–35; Acts 7:19

28. Civil Government and Religious Liberty

We believe in the Scripture's teaching that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and order of human society. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13). "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the powers that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1).

The only exception to this would be in matters of faith, where obedience to a law of man would mean disobedience to the law of God. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, and in such cases where the laws or ordinances would violate our faith or duty to worship God or witness our faith to others, our position is the same as the apostles': "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

- Romans 12:18; 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:17; Matthew 22:21; Proverbs 8:15–16; Revelation 19:16

29. Jesus' Law of Love

We believe that Jesus' Law of Love as explained in Matthew 22:35–40 should govern every aspect of a Christian's life. An expert in the Mosaic law tested Jesus with this question: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Jesus expressed it again in His famous "golden rule": "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12 NIV).

We therefore believe that if a person's actions are motivated by unselfish, sacrificial love—the love of God for our fellow man—and are not intentionally hurtful to others, such actions are in accordance with Scripture and are thus lawful in the eyes of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23).

It is also our belief that the Law of Love comprises the ultimate fulfillment and completion of biblical law, including the Ten Commandments, as it fulfills the spirit of all the Mosaic law. Saint Paul affirmed this when he said: "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). We therefore believe that through the Lord's salvation and His Law of Love, Christians are released from the hundreds of rules under the Mosaic laws in the Old Testament and are no longer required to observe them. They are, however, held to a higher law—Christ's Law of Love, which should guide all our interactions with others.

- Romans 13:8,10; James 2:8; Galatians 2:16

30. Perspective on Sexuality

We believe that God created human sexuality, and we consider it a natural emotional and physical need. As evidenced by Genesis 1:28, sexual relationships between men and women were designed, ordained, and commanded by God. Long before Adam and Eve sinned, God told them, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." Later in verse 31 of the same chapter it says that God "saw everything that He had made"—which clearly included the first man and woman as well as their bodies and sexuality—"and behold, it was very good."

Thus, it is our belief that heterosexual relations, when practiced as God ordained, designed, and intended between consenting adults of legal age, is a pure and natural wonder of God's creation, and permissible according to Scripture.

- Titus 1:15; Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14,22–23

31. The Bride of Christ

We believe that it is evident throughout the Bible that the relationship between God and His people and Christ and His Church is akin to that of a bridegroom to his bride. The Scripture tells us, "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name" (Isaiah 54:5), and that we are "married to Him who was raised from the dead [Jesus], that we should bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4).

The marital metaphor is frequently used to describe the intimate spiritual unity between Christ and His people, and the fervency of the loving union of heart, mind, and spirit that accompanies this relationship. The book of Revelation describes the reunion of Christ with His Church in Heaven as His marriage: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper" (Revelation 19:9). It is our understanding of the Scriptures that the followers of Christ are His bride, called to love and serve Him with the fervor of a wife. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25). He has promised to betroth us to Him forever (Hosea 2:19–20).

32. The Time of the End

We believe in the fulfillment of the Scriptures foretelling the end of this world as we know it. It is our belief that we are now living in the time period known in the Bible as the "Last Days" or the "Time of the End," which is the era immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:1). His Second Coming will fulfill the Scripture, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

Seven years before Jesus' return, a powerful world leader known in Scripture as the "beast," "man of sin," "son of perdition," and "Antichrist" will rise to power (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4). Three and a half years into his reign, he will declare that he alone is God, and demand the world's veneration and worship (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13:4,7). A mandatory universal financial system will be instituted during this time, permitting no one to legally buy or sell essential goods, except those who bear this demagogue's mark, name, or number (called the "mark of the beast") in their right hand or forehead (Revelation 13:16–17). The progression of these events will plunge the entire world into an unprecedented time of social chaos and religious persecution known in the Bible as the "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21).

It is our belief that born-again Christians will remain on Earth during the time of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15–31). Multitudes of Christians will survive the Antichrist's onslaughts, boldly preaching the gospel of salvation until the Lord's return (Daniel 11:32–35). Many adherents of other religions will also rebel against this One World regime (Daniel 8:23–25).

The three-and-a-half-year period of Great Tribulation will climax in the return of Jesus Christ to the Earth (Matthew 24:29–30). All of the born-again believers will then be supernaturally delivered from their persecutors at the Rapture, the miraculous event when their mortal bodies will be gloriously changed and made like Jesus' own immortal resurrection body, as they rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–52)

The Antichrist's forces will then be annihilated by Jesus and His heavenly armies, in the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16–21). This will usher in a thousand-year rule of Christ on Earth, with peace, justice, and equity for all mankind (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 20:1–3). After this period, God will re-create a beautiful new Earth and atmospheric heavens (2 Peter 3:10–13). God's Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, will then descend like a stupendous jewel from above to the paradisiacal New Earth. "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3–4).