General Assembly

Bylaws and Charter Review Committee 2014-2015

The General Assembly, meeting on Thursday, 26 June 2014, established a fourteen-member Bylaws and Charter Review Committee, comprised of: (a) the Assembly’s standing Bylaws and Organization Committee, (b) an additional five members elected by the Assembly from a competitive ballot, (c) one member appointed by the Ministries Council, and (d) the General Director. The fourteen members of this select committee then, as established by the Assembly, were:

Barry Callen (Anderson, IN)
Esther Cottrell (Marengo, OH)
Johnny Creasong (East Peoria, IL)
Ron Fowler (Akron, OH)
Jonathan Frymire (Grand Rapids, MI)
Mary Ann Hawkins (Anderson, IN)
Allan Hutchison (Morehead, KY)
Rica Kwentua (Greenwell Springs, LA), Bylaws and Organization Committee Chair
Jim Lyon (Anderson, IN), General Director and Convener
Howard Megill (Rolla, MO)
Larry Mobley (Camden, SC)
Cheryl Sanders (Washington, DC), Ministries Council representative and Assembly Vice-Chair
Joy Sherman (Springfield, OH)
Ann Smith (Anderson, IN)

Assembly and Ministries Council Chair Rebecca New-Edson also fully participated in the Committee’s meetings and work.

The Committee’s assignment was to review our charter documents (including the General Assembly Constitution and Bylaws and Church of God Ministries Bylaws), for the purpose of recommending changes that would harmonize them. The documents have each been amended separately over time; consequently they do not presently speak clearly and uniformly with one voice; varying interpretations and textual anomalies have led to confusion and controversy on some fronts. Suggesting changes that would align and define the documents in such a way as to provide clarity and harmony was the Committee’s object.

The Assembly’s resolution, establishing the Committee, set two calendar deadlines: (1) requiring the Committee to submit its proposals to the Ministries Council for its review by 31 March 2015, and (2) requiring the Ministries Council to subsequently forward to the General Assembly, for its consideration in June 2015, recommendations for amendment of the charter documents (based on the Committee’s work).

The Committee met for the first time at ChoG Crosspoint Fishers, IN, on 14-15 August 2014. The Committee met for extensive dialog at several other times in the months following, both in person (in the Indianapolis metro) and by conference call. The Committee delivered its proposals to the Ministries
Council (meeting at ChoG Meadow Park Columbus, OH), as requested by the Assembly, on 25 March 2015.

The Ministries Council on 26 March 2015 slightly adjusted some of the Committee’s recommended text, but, in the main, approved the recommendations altogether as presented by the Committee. The proposals attached for revision of the General Assembly Constitution and Bylaws and the Church of God Ministries Bylaws are presented now to the Assembly for its consideration, by the Ministries Council, standing on the work done by the Bylaws and Charter Review Committee. No changes to our third charter document, the Articles of Incorporation of Church of God Ministries, are proposed or recommended. All revisions suggested to the Constitution and Church of God Ministries Bylaws are consistent with the existing Articles of Incorporation. All documents and the recommended revisions presented to the Council by the Committee were first reviewed by Steve Justice (Dayton, OH), legal counsel.

As the Committee (and later, the Council) wrestled with the assignment, it became clear that redrafting the sequence of articles and, in some places, language of both the Assembly’s Constitution and Church of God Ministries Bylaws would be necessary to clarify and harmonize. Consequently, the flow of both documents has been altered, even as much of the original text has been preserved. New introductory articles defining terms used in the documents, for instance, have been added, to minimize confusion when reading through the whole. Whole passages from the Assembly’s Constitution have replaced competing text in the Church of God Ministries Bylaws (to guarantee common understanding).

Areas of potential conflict between documents (for instance, the present Constitution states that the Ministries Council shall be comprised of the three elected Assembly officers and twenty-one other ratified members; the existing Church of God Ministries Bylaws are not so clear and can be read to require that only sixteen of the remaining twenty-one Council members need to be ratified by the Assembly) have been restated to remove any misunderstanding; in the example given, the Church of God Ministries Bylaws revision proposed unambiguously states that twenty-one Council members must be ratified by the Assembly, preserving the Constitution’s original premise.

The existing charter documents prescribe terms of office in one, three, four, and five year increments. The revisions proposed, if enacted, would redefine all offices as four-year terms (with the exception of the Parliamentarian and Assembly Chair pro-tem, which would be changed from one to two year terms). This will vastly simplify the nomination, balloting, and management of Assembly and Ministries Council positions. A transition article has been added to both documents to make the necessary adjustments in term definitions, moving all incumbents and those-to-be-elected this year into four-year cycles.

The documents submitted with this cover have been line numbered, to provide for easy reference. Additionally, a Change Guide (highlighting many of the most substantive changes to the Constitution recommended by the Committee and Council) has been included; the Church of God Ministries Bylaws, under the proposed revisions, would be so similar to the Constitution (transferring much of the Constitution’s text directly into the Church of God Ministries Bylaws) that a separate Change Guide for those Bylaws has not been developed.
The Committee and Council, mindful of the parallel work being done by the Church of God Convention Committee (also elected by the General Assembly in its June 2014 meeting), have submitted, in these recommended revisions, language flexible enough to accommodate the Convention Committee’s recommendations, should the Assembly approve them. Should the Assembly fail to adopt the Convention Committee’s recommendations (forwarded by the Ministries Council to the Assembly, as well), the charter document revisions will still work to maintain the status quo.

Bylaws and Organization Committee Chair Rica Kwentua will present the recommendations on the Assembly floor, during the June 2015 meeting.