

Discipline and Restoration Policy for Members of Local Churches of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

A Policy of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

Preamble

Discipline is an exercise of Scriptural authority for which the Church is responsible. The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (the “C&MA”) believes the Scriptures establish standards of conduct and belief by which believers are to live. The goals of discipline are to honour God, to protect the purity of the Church, to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed; and to bring fallen Christians to repentance. Discipline is administered to achieve restoration, while also providing for the spiritual welfare of the local church. Discipline is to be corrective and redemptive. It is to be exercised with mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

The Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal (“the Policy”) and the disciplinary proceedings contained herein are ecclesiastical in nature, founded on the teachings of the Christian faith. The policy and proceedings seek to apply Scriptural teachings concerning conduct and belief to members of C&MA churches. Unless otherwise provided for in the policy, in a case of disagreement or dispute concerning the interpretation or application of the policy, such matters may be appealed to the District Executive Committee.

This Policy is not meant to replace civil process for allegations that are criminal in nature. When an allegation comes to the ecclesiastical authority that may be criminal in nature, the ecclesiastical authority will retain legal counsel. The ecclesiastical authority will seek counsel as to their responsibility to notify the civil authorities. The ecclesiastical authority will advise all parties that their situation may be criminal in nature and advise them to seek their own legal advice.

Article 1 – Biblical Basis for Discipline

1.1. Growth in Faith

Discipline serves to encourage growth and development in faith. Rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in faith... (Titus 1:13).

1.2. Redemption and Restoration

Discipline serves to spiritually redeem and restore those who have fallen into immoral or otherwise unChristlike ways. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently (Galatians 6:1).

1.3. Bearing One Another’s Burdens

Discipline benefits the Church because it teaches the Church to be redemptive by carrying the burden of seeking to restore fallen believers. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

1.4. Forgiveness, Comfort, Love

Discipline involves compassion, even for those who have committed sinful acts and espoused beliefs contrary to Scripture. ...you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:5-7).

1.5. Warning to the Divisive

Discipline serves to deter and instruct against beliefs and conduct contrary to Scripture. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him (Titus 3:10).

1.6. Judgment and Expulsion

Discipline may lead to judgment, including expulsion from the church. ...Are you not to judge those inside [the church]? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

Article 2 – Scope of the Policy**2.1. Persons Subject to the Policy**

This policy applies to each member¹ in every C&MA church, other than those members of C&MA churches who are official workers of the C&MA².

2.2. Ecclesiastical Authority

Disciplinary proceedings will normally be initiated and administered by the Board.

2.3. Basis of discipline

This Policy is intended to address issues other than those of sexual misconduct where a real or perceived differential in power or authority is deemed to be involved. The Policy and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct for Official Workers and Churches is applicable in such cases.

Matters that may give rise to disciplinary proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- 2.3.1. Holding to and/or promulgating doctrines contrary to the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith as stated in the C&MA statement of faith.
- 2.3.2. Defiance or failure to submit to constituted authority.
- 2.3.3. Violation of Scriptural moral standards including, but not limited to, sexual activity outside of a monogamous heterosexual marriage, sexual harassment, homosexual behaviour, substance abuse, theft, misappropriation of funds or property, and other financial transgressions.
- 2.3.4. Dishonesty, fraud, perjury, and other misrepresentations.
- 2.3.5. Spreading false rumors about another.
- 2.3.6. Causing dissension or division within the church.
- 2.3.7. Violence or abuse directed toward others, especially a child or vulnerable adult.
- 2.3.8. Judgment of guilt by a criminal court of law.

¹ Note that Local Church Constitution Article 6 – Membership, Section 6.2 – Discipline, states “It shall be a condition of membership that persons accept and comply with the Discipline and Restoration Policy for Members of Local Churches.

² All official workers of the C&MA and workers emeritus of the C&MA are subject to the “Policy on Discipline, Restoration and Appeal for Licensed Workers; A Policy of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada” and the “Policy and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct for Official Workers and Churches.”

Article 3 – General Procedures

- 3.1. Ecclesiastical law permits proceedings on the presumption of innocence.
- 3.2. Proceedings will commence only when one or more responsible persons present charges to a member of the board by signing their names to a written statement or by giving personal testimony with full consent that they may be identified before commencing an investigation.
- 3.3. It is required that the testimony of accusers or witnesses be confirmed by reliable evidence to ascertain the possibility of malice or revenge. Witnesses should be reminded that, while they are not under oath, and therefore not subject to charges of perjury, testimony given which is proven to be malicious or grossly imaginative may render them subject to civil suit for defamation of character.
- 3.4. All investigations shall be conducted with Christian sincerity and with a view to corrective outcomes that will strengthen the faith of the member(s) in question and the testimony of the church. Accusations must be tested against reliable evidence to determine what substance they may contain.
- 3.5. The integrity of the church demands thorough and unbiased investigation of alleged wrongdoing. Where there is sound and reliable evidence of guilt, there is required also the application of suitable discipline.
- 3.6. Ecclesiastical law permits the respondent to testify on behalf of himself/herself, but any such evidence shall not be released to use in any civil proceeding in which the accused may become involved. It is essential that all records, whether of investigation or of discipline, be guarded carefully to prevent unauthorized use. All records shall be filed with the pastor. The pastor shall report all disciplinary matters to the district superintendent.
- 3.7. Recordings of proceedings shall be permitted only if such recordings are made with the full knowledge of those whose testimony or charges are given. No secret recordings shall be admissible as evidence. The names of all whose voices are recorded shall be given clearly at the beginning of their testimony. Recordings may be made of any sessions of investigation or discipline.

Article 4 – Procedures for Disciplinary Proceedings

- 4.1. A member(s) of the Board or a member(s) of the local church pastoral staff shall be delegated to meet with the member(s) in question who is alleged to be in violation of Scriptural moral standards, doctrinal truth or proper Christian behaviour, and they shall attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the Board and the member(s) in question. If the matter is resolved at this stage, a report will be presented to the Board with pertinent details of the resolution including, but not limited to, the formal accusation, the findings of the delegation, and any discipline applied. The proceedings will then conclude, subject to section 4.5.
- 4.2. If the matter is not resolved by 4.1, the senior pastor, or designated representative, and a subcommittee of the Board shall be delegated to meet with the member(s) in question and attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the Board and the member(s) in question. If the matter is resolved at this stage, a report will be presented to the Board with pertinent details of the resolution including, but not limited to, the formal accusation, the findings of the delegation, and any discipline applied. The proceedings will then conclude, subject to section 4.5.
- 4.3. If the matter is not resolved by 4.2, a special meeting of the Board may be called by the chair, or designated representative, to deal exclusively with the matter of the allegation(s) against the member(s) in question. The member(s) in question shall be notified and invited to the special meeting. The chair of the Board, or designated representative, shall act as the chair of this meeting. The board shall allow the member(s) in question to have

an agent or representative to present their case for them at the special meeting. At this meeting, the allegations against the member in question shall be summarized and questions and discussion shall be allowed by those present during the meeting.

- 4.4. At the special meeting, or within 15 days of the special meeting, and after prayer and having given due consideration to the issue, the Board shall meet to determine specific terms and conditions of any discipline that it deems appropriate including any related restorative course of action. The actions of the Board and the results of the vote shall be final and binding on the Board, the local church, and the member(s) in question, and the proceedings will then conclude, subject to section 4.5 and the rights of appeal contained in Article 5.
- 4.5. When disciplinary action has been taken against a member(s), the Board may choose whether or not to inform the membership of the local church and the manner in which the any report shall be stated.

Article 5 – Appeal Process

A right of appeal is given to the member(s) in question from the action of the Board taken at the special meeting described in paragraph 4.3 above.

- 5.1. Notice of appeal must be given to the district superintendent's office within 30 days after the vote of the Board at the special meeting.
- 5.2. An appeal hearing shall be commenced within 30 days after the request for the appeal hearing. The appeal shall be heard by the District Executive Committee or a subcommittee thereof. The district superintendent, or designated representative, shall be the chair of the hearing. The district superintendent shall determine the time, place, procedure, and conduct of the hearing. A full right of hearing shall be given to both the Board and the member(s) involved. The district superintendent shall allow either side to have an agent or representative to present their case for them at the appeal hearing.
- 5.3. The District Executive Committee shall make a final determination of all questions and issues relating to the discipline of the member(s) in question within seven days after the completion of the appeal hearing. The decision of the District Executive Committee shall be final and binding on the local church, the Board, the member(s) in question, the district corporation, and The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada.

Article 6 – Amendments

This policy may be amended by a majority vote of General Assembly, written notice having been given prior to General Assembly.

Amended – General Assembly 1996

Amended – General Assembly 2004

Amended – General Assembly 2022