

# **United Church of God**

## **Region's & National Councils' relationship to the Council of Elders and Home Office/Ministerial & Member Services**

**Answers to Questions**

**By C M White  
Version 3.3**

**The Council of Elder's role is "to provide oversight and guidance within UCGIA for the preaching of the gospel, the service and care of local congregations" (*Constitution*, Article 1.2.5).**

## CONTENTS

<b>PURPOSE</b> .....	3
<b>PART ONE. SALIENT UCG GOVERNING STATEMENTS</b> .....	3
<b>Constitution extracts</b> .....	3
<b>Bylaws Extracts</b> .....	6
<b>Rules of Association extracts</b> .....	6
<b>PART TWO: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS</b> .....	10
<b>Are the regions (including national councils) completely independent of the Council of Elders and Ministerial and Member Services (ie HQ/home office)?</b> .....	10
<b>What does 'signing up' to the UCG mean?</b> .....	10
<b>How should local congregations be administered?</b> .....	10
<b>Can the MMS and COE be appealed to in cases of abuse?</b> .....	11
<b>Can the COE and MMS be appealed to in cases of non-compliance with UCG values etc; or perceived breach of contract?</b> .....	11
<b>Can Regions or National Councils vote to overturn or negate UCG values, COE directives etc?</b> ..	12
<b>How should the COE and MMS deal with recalcitrant or rogue ministers in the regions?</b> .....	12
<b>How do other groups operate?</b> .....	12
<b>Can the Council of Elders have representation on national councils/boards?</b> .....	12
<b>Can legal advice be taken at face value?</b> .....	12
<b>PART THREE: CASE EXAMPLE OF A NATIONAL COUNCIL</b> .....	13
<b>Does the Australian <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> give the UCG, Australia, complete independence?</b> .	13
<b>Does Australian law prevent the National Council from submitting to the Council of Elders, Constitution etc of the United Church of God, aia?</b> .....	13
<b>In what way is the Church an Association?</b> .....	13
<b>Should the National Council operate as if it is independent?</b> .....	14
<b>Can the National Council be enlarged to add an overseas member?</b> .....	14
<b>NATIONAL COUNCILS AND THE COE &amp; MMS - SOLUTIONS</b> .....	14
<b>APPENDIX. DEFINITIONS FROM THE RULES OF ASSOCIATION</b> .....	15
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	16

### Abbreviations

- COE Council of Elders
- GCE General Conference of Elders
- MMS Ministerial & Member Services
- UCG United Church of God, an international association
- UCGA United Church of God, Australia

## PURPOSE

The reason for assembling this document is to understand more fully the role and governance granted to and practiced by the Council of Elders (COE) and how all the United Church of God, aia's (UCG) regions are to operate in accordance with it.

Also, there has been some 'push back' by a few who wish to have independence and not to pastor the local congregation(s) along the lines of the UCG or in accordance with its values and various principles. Some claim that the COE is 'the U.S. Council of Elders' with no jurisdiction – not so, it is the international overseeing body and includes members external to the USA.

However, the UCG does not wish the members to be cut off from its leadership by anyone in the middle. We do not wish to replicate old problems. For instance, The UCG's *New Beginnings* (13 November 1995) contains the following very encouraging statements and has never been reversed:

1. "... **leadership of the Church must not be cut off from the membership** and we are trying to encourage that necessary communication link according to what we perceive the New Testament model to be".
2. "Congregational Development. **To recognize and promote the ability of members to participate**, under the care of the pastor, in the organization and functioning of the local congregation".
3. "Furtherance of the Gospel. **To encourage the involvement of each member and congregation in the advancement of the gospel** internationally, nationally and local". (pp. 2-3) [emphasis mine]

Of interest is the COE's role as the international body that oversees the UCG across the world. It does not get involved with the minutiae of management, nevertheless its role includes policy approval, dissemination and execution; as well as international oversight. As such, all regions/national councils (and their elders) must acknowledge that and operate in accordance with the values of the UCG.

Anything outside of that may be regarded as rebellion and breaking away from the UCG which can be undertaken surreptitiously and without reference to the lay-members as if they didn't matter.

Below are relevant extracts from the governing documents which throw light on the role of the COE and regions/national councils. Only those parts of the governing documents which is considered to be relevant for the purpose of this paper are included below and includes accompanying comments.

## PART ONE. SALIENT UCG GOVERNING STATEMENTS

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
<b>Constitution extracts</b>	
<b>1.0 ARTICLE 1 - MISSION STATEMENT AND DEFINITIONS</b>	
The mission of the United Church of God, <i>an International Association</i> , is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in all the world, make disciples in all nations <b>and care for those disciples. [cp Article 3.1 and Rules of Association Preamble]</b>	The UCG is not a federation per se. Rather, it is an organisation with outlying regions, some of which have national councils. National councils do not function like State Governments within a federation, but a parallel would be local councils. In effect the GCE (General Conference of Elders) is a sort of Parliament, the COE is the Executive/Cabinet, the Ministerial and Member Services (MMS) the major

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
	<p>administrative arm of government/ bureaucracy.</p> <p>NB: "care for those disciples". This indicates that they must take an interest in what is going on regionally and locally.</p>
<b>1.2 DEFINITIONS</b>	
<b>1.2.1 The Church</b>	
<p>The "Church" is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is "the Church of God." As defined in the Holy Scriptures, the Church <b>is the Body of Christ and is greater and more inclusive than any corporate or associated organization established by human beings.</b></p>	<p>We recognise that the body of Christ includes other Church of God groups and individuals.</p>
<b>1.2.5 Council of Elders (Council)</b>	
<p>The term "Council" as used in the governing documents means those established by the General Conference, and as described in this Constitution, <b>to provide oversight and guidance within UCG/A for the preaching of the gospel, the service and care of local congregations</b> and the administration of God's tithes and offerings received by UCG/A.</p>	<p>Oversight is provided by the COE including "care of local congregations." There is no 100% delegation to national councils in the Constitution and no geographical restriction or restraint upon the COE.</p>
<b>2.1 PREAMBLE</b>	
<p>The following are statements regarding the fundamental beliefs of the United Church of God, <i>an International Association (UCG/A)</i>. <b>This article is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the beliefs of the UCG/A.</b> Questions about doctrine and belief will be addressed by a process adopted by the Council of Elders (the Council) and approved by the General Conference of Elders (the General Conference).</p>	<p>There are indeed many, many other doctrines including the process of born again, church eras, place of safety, typology, origin of nations, Dan 11 prophecies, God Family, Millennial temple and sacrificial system, fair chance of salvation in the Great White Throne Judgment period etc</p>
<b>3.2 FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH</b>	
<p>There is one body, the Church, which is a spiritual organism. The Church has many members, <b>to each of whom God has bestowed a measure of faith through the Holy Spirit.</b> Through that Spirit, our Father has made us one in the Body of Christ, and, individually, members one of another. He has given us gifts that differ according to His will and has entrusted His Spirit to each of us so that we might exercise those gifts with humility, <b>gentleness and patience</b> in submission, first to Jesus Christ, and then to one another. <b>By the establishment of this Constitution, we acknowledge the truth of Scripture that members serve in different functions within the Church, and that it is God the Father and Jesus Christ who determine each member's function within the Church.</b></p>	<p>All of us have a measure of faith, not necessarily a measure of the holy spirit. No one has a 'double portion' of the spirit. Nor sits on Moses Seat nor operate as priests.</p> <p>Aggressiveness, rudeness and such-like are unbecoming. These are tactics used to intimidate and control.</p> <p>As all members have spiritual gifts and talents, a minister must get to know each member and how to utilise them in the Church, not prevent them from doing so.</p>
<b>3.2.1 God's Purpose for Diverse Functions Within His Church</b>	
<p>The purpose for the various functions established within God's Church <b>is to equip each member to perform the work of service:</b> first to the Church and when the Church has the opportunity, to all humanity. The proper working of each individual member in accordance with his or her function causes the Church to grow.</p>	<p>Ministers are supposed to equip the members to perform the work of service. <b>Recycled sermons do not do that. Sign-up lists and opportunities to serve in work groups does. Appointing people to</b></p>

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
	undertake tasks instead of volunteering doesn't do that either.
<b>3.2.2 Administrations Within the Church</b>	
<p>An assembly of members, wherever located, recognized by UCGIA, and governed by UCGIA's published Rules of Association, shall constitute a local congregation of UCGIA. Each local congregation, where possible, is guided and shepherded by a pastor, assisted by elders, deacons, deaconesses and others. A congregation may establish one or more local advisory councils to assist the ministry in serving the needs of the local congregation, UCGIA as a whole and, as they have the opportunity, their local community. <b>The local congregation also works in conjunction with the Council of Elders, the home office and the national council (if applicable) to administer the established policies and procedures of UCGIA.</b></p>	<p>The congregation (not just the minister) without geographical restrictions, works in conjunction with the COE. How can that be done if there are forms of preventing members doing so? Members should have easy access to have input on policy and provide alerts of non-compliance which this section seems to suggest.</p>
<b>3.2.2.1 National Councils</b>	
<p>A council or board that is established to meet the requirements for legal recognition of UCGIA or serves the administrative needs of UCGIA in nations other than the United States of America, is a national council. <b>A national council shall conduct itself in accordance with Scripture, this Constitution, the national council bylaws, the Rules of Association and applicable law.</b></p>	
<b>3.2.2.2 The Local Congregation</b>	
<p>An assembly of members, wherever located, recognized by UCGIA, and governed by UCGIA's published Rules of Association, shall constitute a local congregation of UCGIA. Each local congregation, where possible, is guided and shepherded by a pastor, assisted by elders, deacons and deaconesses. <b>A congregation may establish one or more local advisory councils to assist the ministry in serving the needs of the local congregation, UCGIA as a whole and, as they have the opportunity, their local community. The local congregation also works in conjunction with the Council, the home office and the national council (if applicable) to administer the established policies and procedures of UCGIA.</b></p>	<p>NB: the congregation establishes such an advisory council. It may be better to call them 'working groups' that are <i>not</i> democratically elected but have sign up lists instead. Rather, to have 3 such groups composed of volunteers (ie via sign-up lists), viz organising socials, good works and outreach activities. Appointing people 'willy nilly' without giving others' opportunities to serve is contrary to the Constitution and UCG values. Similarly, making decisions, judgments, appointments etc without getting to know the person or situation 'because I am inspired' has got to stop.</p>
<b>3.2.2.5 Home Office</b>	
<p>The Home Office is the principal place of business and its personnel who serve UCGIA by implementing and administering operations and policies adopted and approved by the General Conference or Council or as delegated in the Constitution and Bylaws of UCGIA.</p>	<p>ie. the home office/MMS issues policies etc without restriction. In other words, COE policy can be distributed internationally for implementation.</p>
<b>4.3.1 Good Standing</b>	
<p>An elder is in good standing if he is and remains a member and minister of UCGIA, is of good reputation and above reproach in his community, and continues to meet the</p>	

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
scriptural qualifications for the ministry as outlined in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and other scriptures. Whether an elder continues to meet these requirements <b>shall be determined by the Council</b> based upon such biblical standards and principles.	There is no restriction on the geographical reach by the COE in determining whether a minister meets Biblical standards.
<b>4.7.1 Causes of Suspension, Termination or Expulsion</b>	
An elder may, based on scriptural teaching, be suspended or terminated for misconduct. Any elder <b>who fails to meet the scriptural qualifications of a minister based on biblical standards may be expelled from the General Conference and have his ministerial credentials revoked by the Council.</b> An elder who is expelled from the General Conference is immediately precluded from performing any ministerial duties in any congregation of UCGIA.	There is no restriction on the geographical reach by the COE in expelling an elder.
<b>Bylaws Extracts</b>	
<b>8.1 NOMINATION AND SELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS</b>	
In order to provide direction <b>and oversight</b> of UCGIA, a Council of Elders (Council) shall be created.	The COE provides oversight. Oversight is not static nor minimalist. It includes actions and the concept of having representation or 'being over' what is going on anywhere internationally, not just the USA. This also means that the COE can send representatives to visit any region without any invitation. The national councils just have to accept such a decision and cannot prevent it. No amount of voting and lobbying can stop it either.
<b>8.7.2 Specific Responsibilities</b>	
The Council shall be entitled to conduct all activities permitted by law for Council members except as limited by law, the Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution and Bylaws, including, without further limitation, the following: (1) To (a) appoint and remove all officers; (b) to approve the selection of all operation managers nominated by the president and remove any operation manager; (c) <b>to approve the selection of employees and agents (and their removal or termination) and to prescribe duties for them;</b> to approve their compensation; and to require from them their faithful service and (d) to adopt any needed policies or procedures for implementation of the foregoing regarding said employees or agents. (2) <b>To direct and control, by policy, the affairs and activities of UCGIA and make rules and regulations for this purpose.</b>	The COE can appoint or remove employees, which includes salaried elders/pastors. They also prescribe duties for them – breach of contract must be viewed seriously.  <b>NB: this is a big one. The COE directs and controls via policy and makes rules and regulations. This is not restricted to the USA.</b>
<b>11.4 AUTHORITY TO INTERPRET GOVERNING DOCUMENTS</b>	
The General Conference has final authority with respect to the interpretation and enforcement of the Constitution with respect to any controversy that may arise thereunder. The Council has final authority with respect to the interpretation and enforcement of these Bylaws and the Rules of Association and with respect to any controversy that may arise thereunder.	It is the COE that interprets the <i>Bylaws</i> and <i>Rules of Association</i> .
<b>Rules of Association extracts</b>	

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
<p><b>Purpose and Function of the Rules of Association</b></p> <p>The RoA are designed to further good relationships within UCG/A and to effectively facilitate the work of UCG/A. <b>These rules are subordinate to the governing documents of UCG/A</b> as well as the legal documents of the National Councils in their respective nations if differences with these RoAs are required by local law. Their integrity derives from the spiritual ethic of love and mutual submission (Philippians 2:3; Ephesians 5:21 and other scriptures).</p>	
<p><b>Rule 1-130 National Councils</b></p> <p>National Councils are established pursuant to the Constitution of UCG/A to meet the requirements for legal recognition of UCG/A or serve the administrative needs of UCG/A in nations other than the U.S. <b>These National Councils shall conduct themselves in accordance with the Scriptures, the UCG/A Constitution, their legal documents, the RoA and applicable law.</b></p>	<p>Here they NCs are under the UCGIA Constitution.</p>
<p><b>Rule 1-140 Doctrine</b></p> <p>All local congregations and National Councils of UCG accept and <b>uphold the basic doctrines</b> as listed in the Constitution of UCGIA. <b>Each realizes that this is not a complete listing of the doctrines of UCGIA.</b> Each accepts the apostle Peter's instruction in 2 Peter 3:18 "... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (NAS). Therefore, each must be willing to abide by the process for doctrinal development as outlined by the Council and adopted by the General Conference.</p>	<p>Uphold does not mean to ignore, but to powerfully preach all the doctrines. Otherwise one is in breach of contract.</p>
<p><b>Rule 1-150 Qualifications for Membership</b></p> <p>In order to be, and remain, a part of UCG/A, <b>all local congregations and National Councils agree to adhere to the following standards.</b> Each agrees to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accept and uphold the fundamental beliefs of UCG/A as stated in the Constitution.</li> <li>2. Abide by the decisions of the General Conference and the Council with respect to the goals and purposes of UCG/A.</li> <li>3. Abide by the decisions of the General Conference and the Council with respect to matters of governance, provided these do not conflict with local or national law.</li> <li>4. Work within the constitutional structure of UCG/A if desiring to bring about changes or improvements in doctrine, goals and purposes, or matters of governance <b>and support and assist the Council in curtailing divisive behavior on the part of anyone in the ministry or membership.</b></li> </ol>	<p>Local congregations are not debating chambers to change our doctrines. Doctrinal differences can be discussed outside of UCG Church services but not in a way that undermines the doctrines or causes upsets and divisiveness.</p> <p>Divisive behaviour includes abuse and non-compliance. And refusal to implement UCG beliefs and practices.</p>
<p><b>Rule 3-100 Establishment of National Councils</b></p> <p>National Councils are established to meet the requirements for legal recognition of UCG/A or <b>serve the administrative needs of UCG/A</b> in areas or nations other than the U.S. All National Councils must be acknowledged by the Council. Each current or future National Council or congregation currently associated with UCG/A is considered to be a part of, and associated with, UCG/A. Future congregations or National Councils may become members of the association through their proper and legal representatives and upon acknowledgment by the Council of Elders. Since National Councils are subject to the laws of their respective countries,</p>	<p>NB: UCG is not a federation and national councils are not parliaments with automatic bloc representation in the GCE or in the COE.</p>

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
they are expected to be either directly responsible for the administration of UCG/A, or entrusted with the management of the work of and representation for UCG/A in their respective countries. (Refer also Rule 1-130 National Councils)	
In order for a National Council to be recognized as a member of this association, <b>all individual members of said National Council officers, directors, trustees or voting members of the corporations or other governing structures of National Councils must be, and remain, members in good standing of UCG (see Chapter 1 of these rules for definition).</b>	Good standing includes upholding all the doctrines and behaving properly. Bullying is not proper behaviour.
National Councils with structures and/or governance inconsistent with these RoA should alter them to be consistent as soon as possible unless local law prohibits the changes. Otherwise, permission should be sought from the Council to allow such inconsistency. <b>Each National Council shall ensure that the Home Office legal counsel has a current copy of their legal documents</b> and shall furnish that office with any proposed amendments thereto before they are adopted.	Presumably, this has been carried out.
<b>Rule 3-110 Administration</b>	
Each National Council shall maintain its own legal and administrative structure and direct its own affairs in accordance with its legal documents, these RoA, the Constitution of UCG/A and other applicable law. Each National Council will be, in its own country, the official representative of UCG/A. In turn UCG/A shall have, or be represented by, only one duly constituted National Council or equivalent body in each country, area of incorporation or geographical responsibility.	I.e. National Councils administers the national affairs. But it carries out the will of the COE and GCE and the policies, behaviours etc. Nothing must be done in contradiction of the governing bodies and policies. <b>Refer to Rule 1-150 which clarifies this.</b>
All congregations located in nations outside the U.S., in areas where there exists a duly recognized National Council, shall be administered by that National Council, its legal documents, appropriate national law, the Constitution of UCG/A and these RoA. Therefore, such congregations are ineligible to seek direct oversight as a local congregation, or as a separate entity answering to the Home Office or a neighboring National Council. <b>Any conflict or dispute in this respect, which cannot be resolved, shall be referred by any one or all of the parties concerned to the Council, or those it designates, for resolution.</b> National Councils exist outside the U.S., but there is no requirement to form a National Council in order for congregations or individual UCG/A members to have membership in UCG/A.	Congregations are administered by national councils, however according to the Constitution Article 1.2.5 the COE would evidently have the final say because the <i>Constitution</i> has precedence over the <i>Bylaws</i> and <i>Rules of Association</i> . In any event, any administration must be in accordance with policies and values of UCG.  Again, it is the COE, which makes final decisions.
<b>Rule 3-120 Establishing a Legal Structure</b>	
To the extent where legally possible, each National Council is responsible for choosing the legal structure that most effectively enables legal recognition of UCG/A or serves the administrative needs of UCG/A in those nations and to accomplish UCG/A's mission within that area and <b>to provide the maximum protection for the members</b> of UCG/A and UCG/A (or its members' assets). These structures may consist of separate corporations, unincorporated associations, trusts or, if permitted, by registration of UCG/A as a foreign corporation doing business in that country or similar governance with more direct oversight by the Home Office.	<b>National councils are supposed to provide protection for the members, which includes protection from abuse. As such, the COE can issue a policy for all regions and national councils to have independent panels (judiciaries) as part of the appeal process. Such a policy would likely include</b>



GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
	a terms of reference, fairness guidelines, stages in appeal, recusing of those that can be biased and composition of said panel.
<p><b>Each National Council shall consult with the attorney(s) designated by the Council, in cooperation with local legal counsel, if needed, in determining which structure is best.</b>                      To the extent possible (unless prevented by national or local law), the legal documents of each National Council shall establish UCGIA as the general association of which that National Council and its congregations are a part, or a member.</p>	
<p>Local congregations in countries where there is no National Council may choose to set up a legal entity for the purpose of serving UCGIA and protecting UCGIA's assets.</p>	
<p><b>Rule 3-130 Coordination of Resources</b></p>	
<p>Each National Council of UCGIA agrees to participate with the Council and the Home Office of UCGIA (where appropriate) in the development of programs for the purpose of sharing available information and resources so that the mission of UCGIA may be accomplished and those resources properly protected. These programs will be developed through mutual cooperation among the Council, the Home Office and each respective National Council.</p>	<p>Note how national councils are meant to cooperate with the COE and MMS. The regions, after all, are supposed to be fully UCG, not partially UCG.</p>
<p><b>Rule 4-100 Dissemination of Teachings</b></p>	
<p>All local congregations agree to participate in and support the development and teaching of doctrine for the edification of UCGIA and the proclamation of the gospel. This must be reflected by the National Councils providing their congregations access to key publications of the Home Office, including videos and periodic correspondence from the president, the Council and others</p>	<p>What if many doctrines are not taught? Even since 1995? Is this not a breach of trust and breach of contract?</p>
<p><b>Rule 4-110 Ordination of Elders</b></p>	
<p>All local congregations and National Councils agree to the process for the ordination and/or credentialing of elders as adopted by the Council. Each National Council agrees to accept the scriptural standards and qualifications for elders and abide by the relevant articles of the Constitution of UCGIA. Since elders are expected to teach and are admitted to the General Conference, the Council must give final authorization for their ordination and/or credentialing.</p>	<p>This would include the removal of inappropriate elders.</p>
<p><b>Rule 4-130 Interpretation and Enforcement</b></p>	
<p>Consistent with the governing documents that provide for the day-to-day operation of UCGIA, the Council is authorized to interpret the meaning and provide for the enforcement of these RoA.</p>	<p>The COE interprets the <i>Rules of Association</i>, not the national councils.</p>
<p><b>Rule 4-140 Position of Home Office</b></p>	
<p><b>The Home Office serves as corporate headquarters for UCGIA.</b> The Home Office staff are charged with both serving and providing administrative oversight for all U.S. congregations. <b>They will assist and cooperate with the National Councils when requested and wherever possible.</b> Local congregations outside the U.S. without a National Council, are directly administered from the Home Office or their designees, or they may choose to operate under the administration of a National Council in a nearby country.</p>	<p>The MMS has a dual role which includes assisting the national councils and its representatives. It also issues policies etc from the COE for national council implementation. Thus, the MMS does not run the regions, but certainly works with them. Belligerence and 'push back' against</p>

GOVERNING STATEMENTS	COMMENTS
	the MMS is not in the spirit of the governing documents.

## PART TWO: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Based on the above, a series of Q&As have been formulated to answer questions that arise.

### **Are the regions (including national councils) completely independent of the Council of Elders and Ministerial and Member Services (ie HQ/home office)?**

It should not be possible for an existing part of the UCG to be fully independent as all regions and areas have signed up to the critical governing documents that have created the UCG and which are established to ensure its operations, integrity and doctrines.

### **What does 'signing up' to the UCG mean?**

This means that the relationship between the regions and COE, MMS or the international home office is supposed to be close. Indeed, having agreed to and signed up to the various documents etc below, all regions are under the UCG and its COE, GCE and the MMS.

The following have been signed up to:

- UCG Constitution
- Bylaws
- Rules of Association
- Fundamentals of Belief and other doctrines
- Values
- Mission Statement
- Positioning Statements
- Various policies (eg ministerial code of conduct and minister in good standing policies)
- Ministerial manual
- ABC ministerial training
- Ministerial contracts
- Distribution of UCG literature

For a pastor to act seemingly independently endangers the congregations and could be in breach of contract.

### **How should local congregations be administered?**

A local congregation must be run as if it is a UCG congregation with indepth sermons, clubs, Bible studies, use of talents/spiritual gifts, sign-up lists, following the UCG Constitution etc.

A local congregation must reflect the values, Constitution, Bylaws, Fundamentals and other doctrines, policies and overall direction of UCG. For any pastor to demonstrate independence or to 'push back' at leadership must be addressed. Of interest is that some create division by purporting that the members standing up for the UCG are a problem when it is they who are operating against the Church.

To prove that they are UCG pastors and elders must demonstrate the following:

- Sermons must be indepth and include the Fundamentals and other doctrines such as the Godhead, the process of born again, clean & unclean meats, US & Britain in prophecy, church eras, place of safety, Millennial temple and sacrificial system, typology etc etc

- Hold regular, indepth Bible studies
- Organise regular outreach/evangelism efforts
- Utilise the gifts and talents within the congregation
- Have sign up lists for a variety of opportunities including those below
- Speaker's Club must be established
- Working Groups to organise socials, outreach, good works to engage the maximum number of members. No appointing people to these positions like a dictator - unless no one fills in the sign-up lists or the congregation is too small
- Gets to know all the members and how they can each have a role in the local congregation
- Does not believe and act on slander
- The weekly newsletter must include the President's letter plus those of the Chairman and important MMS statements. As well as policy updates
- Looks out for needs and helps to alleviate suffering

NB: a local pastor is not supposed to prevent the above, but enthusiastically give support to this to demonstrate he is a genuine UCG pastor. Otherwise, he is getting paid for something he does not believe in and will not do. Doing little and yet being paid is nothing but fleecing the flock.

### **Can the MMS and COE be appealed to in cases of abuse?**

Yes. However, one should go through all the steps of Matt 18 or similar process, but in some serious breaches, one should be able to go to the relevant National Council direct or even MMS. The MMS implements policies (including member appeal) that the COE has approved.

When one goes through all the Matthew 18 or similar and local appeal processes and there is still no resolution, then one can appeal to the COE. Apparently, they refer this to an independent panel of 4 or 5 local elders (presumably they have a Terms of Reference and operating guidelines for them to comply with). This process cannot be influenced by the other elders to determine an outcome to what they want, thus skewing justice.

Claiming that they are inspired and members just have to accept decisions and behaviours without question otherwise they are considered rebels, is cultic and not church teaching.

Once a final decision is made by them, then the national council and local pastor must comply and not be vindictive and make that member's life hellish. Or undermine them; or prevent them from participating in the local congregation and using their talents/gifts.

If anything like this happens, they must be put on a bullying charge and reprimanded.

### **Can the COE and MMS be appealed to in cases of non-compliance with UCG values etc; or perceived breach of contract?**

The above process would apply.

Breach of contract by a pastor would include, but not be limited to:

- Not upholding or preaching in detail on the Fundamentals and other doctrines of UCG (eg US & Britain in Prophecy, clean & unclean meats, prophecy in general, typology, the process of born again, Godhead and dozens of other truths)
- Repetitive and shallow 'sermons'
- Not operating the local congregation like a UCG congregation
- Not abiding by the code of conduct
- Thumbing one's nose at the MMS or its inquiries
- Belligerence
- Strange behaviours

- High turn-over in attendees/membership (this must be reported)
- Ignoring the requests and directives of the Director Operations or similar recalcitrance (ie a pastor's supervising officer)
- Lying

### **Can Regions or National Councils vote to overturn or negate UCG values, COE directives etc?**

No, not under any circumstance. Any such vote has no effect and is not regarded as implemented.

The 'tail wagging the dog' is not permissible.

### **How should the COE and MMS deal with recalcitrant or rogue ministers in the regions?**

Some wish to act as independently as possible, attempting to hide their actions and even stating that the COE is only for the USA and thumbing their nose at MMS inquiries.

Director Operations **should report this directly to MMS** by decree of the COE as well as to the relevant National Council because the current structure prevents him, in part, from making improvements or changes. This is the only way to make the position work properly.

This does not mean that the COE or MMS is involved in running foreign offices – it just means that they are kept informed of matters and this ties the regions and home office closer together.

### **How do other groups operate?**

Various corporations, religious organisations and Church of God groups come under the leadership, direction and policies of their overseas ruling bodies, usually based in the USA.

There is completely no reason for any of the UCG regions to refuse to cooperate with the COE and MMS.

### **Can the Council of Elders have representation or observer status on national councils/boards?**

Some argue that the COE cannot have representation on overseas councils or boards. Unless there is specific local governmental legislation preventing such voting representation, it is permitted. The COE can seek to appoint one of their members, or someone from MMS or an elder to be represented and such representation at meetings can be undertaken electronically.

This is not to run the National Councils, but to 'be over' or cognisant of the Work around the world.

If a national UCG church has been set up to minimise or prevent COE voting representation, that needs to be changed in the local Constitution.

On the other hand, if legislation does limit or prevent voting board membership of overseas people on national boards, then the COE can nominate a non-voting attendee or observer for each meeting.

### **Can legal advice be taken at face value?**

Some claim that legal advice has proven that certain regions are completely independent and can do virtually whatever they so wish. However, members should be able to view this legal advice and test it with other advice that can be obtained, then we will know for certain if such advice was correct.

Just because a region may be incorporated in a certain way does not prevent it from being subject to an international home office. There may be local requirements and policy tweaks, but nothing major can or should be done to undermine or create 'distance' between the regions and home office.

## **PART THREE: CASE EXAMPLE OF A NATIONAL COUNCIL**

### **Does the Australian Corporations Act 2001 give the UCG, Australia, complete independence?**

The United Church of God Australia (UCGA) is a Company Limited by Guarantee and subject to the Australian Corporations Act 2001 in addition to other associated Acts and Regulations.

It is an Australian company which has entered into a binding relationship with UCG in 1995/96 through the UCG's *Rules of Association* from a legal standpoint.

While the UCG is registered in Australia, the *Rules of Association* were established to ensure that the Church operated in a similar way regardless of geographic location. In particular, the values, treatment of members, local congregational structure, Fundamentals of Belief and other doctrines were to be identical.

While the Church in Australia is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee, there is nothing the Church here can or should do to limit the authority of the COE, the ruling body. Similarly, it is not a foreign incorporated entity, yet it was set up – and agreed by all and sundry - to function under the leadership of the COE and all that entails.

### **Does Australian law prevent the National Council from submitting to the Council of Elders, Constitution etc of the United Church of God, aia?**

In one sense it does not really matter whether it is a legally separate corporation or not – there is absolutely nothing in Australian or American law preventing the UCGA operating in accordance with what is signed up for and the expectations of their lay members and stakeholders.

From a spiritual and Church governance standpoint, it is subject to the COE and various policies of that Church. The relationship is therefore bound even tighter by this spiritual doctrine of Church governance.

It is not that the COE cannot intervene in areas deemed necessary – it is whether the National Council will object to them and in effect operating as a part of the UCG. To iterate – there is nothing under law that requires the NC to operate as if it were only using the name *United Church of God* and the doctrines and little else. There is so much more to being the Church than that.

If that is what some people think and are operating by, then they are out of alignment with the UCG and are minimising what should be the UCG in Australia. Such an approach, would in effect, be as if they were operating another Church with little in common except the name etc.

### **In what way is the Church an Association?**

There is no definition of Association in the various governing documents, but it is clear that it is supposed to be **United** first and foremost. And secondarily there are national councils. Upon reading the Constitution, Bylaws and Rules of Association, it is clear that “association” in their context means a close and unified organisation, not a loose association as in a political sense. Rather, it is a group of people who have come together and organised for a joint purpose in the same way.

One definition is “a group of people **united** in an organization because of their common interests” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/association>) It is not a loose confederation with the outer areas acting independently and without regard to the Constitution, Bylaws or Rules of Association or the UCG way.

### **Should the National Council operate as if it is independent?**

The *Rules of Association* bind the UCGA into accordance with everything about the UCG so that it is indeed a branch of the UCG and not on an equal footing with the Council of Elders.

Under the above section *What does 'signing up' to the UCG mean?* a number of areas that have been agreed to and must be followed have been listed, but apparently are not always.

The only way for the UCGA to break the association with UCG and become fully independent spiritually, doctrinally, in practice and values etc, is for a debate and vote of all the elders (around 18 or so) and lay-members/stakeholders.

What would be the purpose of such a push? Merely open rebellion so as not to operate like a UCG church in a variety of ways.

Others are more sneaky: they operate as if their congregation were not UCG but are happy to use the label United Church of God and receive a salary.

On the other hand, the UCG has the facility to cancel the agreement with UCGA or another region if it is rebellious, does not operate in accordance with its systems, values or does not preach its doctrines.

### **Can the National Council be enlarged to add an overseas member?**

To add overseas membership to the NC, the UCGA may need to enlarge its membership for this to take place by amendment to its Constitution.

Alternatively, the Company members (currently about 18 elders) could vote and recognise a non-resident as an elder who is eligible for election to the NC consequently replacing one of the current Australian elders).

## **NATIONAL COUNCILS AND THE COE & HOME OFFICE/MMS - SOLUTIONS**

Instead of only receiving a verbal report from regional or national representatives at annual GCE conferences, the COE and MMS needs to be 'over' national council activities and major decisions. They must be cognisant of issues on an ongoing basis no matter where they might be, whether they get involved or not or the issues resolved locally – they must be aware of what is going on as that is a duty of care – and **a register kept** of these sorts of things and monitored to ensure that repeat offences do not occur. This is not management – it is oversight and duty of care.

Tapping someone on the wrist and consequently forgetting about a given offence (ie sweeping it under the carpet) will lead to repeats and vindictiveness. Also, relying on memory on what has occurred does not work – it needs to be registered.

Certain ones may consider the COE to be just for the USA, but it is the **international** governing body. The COE should be willing to carry out its oversight to develop a happy church. Otherwise there will be no growth. So, once issues are raised by someone, they should be investigated. Otherwise it will worsen and spread.

Repeated statements that it is "the American Council of Elders" has got to stop – it is the international Council of Elders. Why is that stated repeatedly? Because some do not wish to implement the UCG way but operate as if they were a completely different church.

Even if some think that their region is supposedly 100% independent of the UCG, they can humble their egos and subject themselves to the leadership of the Church.

Even if the COE had no legal authority over a regional area or country, it can exert its moral authority and the national council must accept (just as other organisations in a similar situation do). Otherwise it is rebellion and the members will flee.

**To iterate: the GCE is a sort of Parliament, the COE is the Executive/Cabinet, the Home Office/MMS the major administrative arm of government/ bureaucracy. The National Councils are equivalent, more-or-less, to Local Government (Councils) – they are similar to subsidiaries rather than affiliates.**

Finally, it should be realised that any rogue activity is by a small minority of elders and not the vast majority of members and associates. But even one rogue activity has repercussions and brings the Church into disrepute (ITim 3:7) and therefore must be dealt with swiftly.

To be quite frank, it is deceitful to pretend to be UCG but operate differently.

You see, if they had no issues with doctrines, governance, COE leadership, values and such like, why constantly bring up that they are a separate entity and independent and that the COE do not have any jurisdiction?

If there are issues, they must be open and honest and put their cards on the table and quit drawing a salary for something they do not believe in.

If they operated like a real UCG there would be no issues, would there? Just accept the UCG's doctrines, values and the COE leadership.

## **APPENDIX. DEFINITIONS FROM THE RULES OF ASSOCIATION**

### **Rule 1-100 Definitions**

**Advisory Councils/Committees:** Groups of UCG/A members that may be formed in local congregations to assist in the organization and administration of local programs. These groups are defined as "advisory" in the Constitution of UCG/A. The formation of such groups should be a cooperative effort between the pastor and membership. See Rule 1-110.

**Affiliates:** Affiliates are those who participate in and worship within UCG/A, but are not members of UCG/A. They may be prospective members, relatives of members, or duly baptized persons who attend but have not chosen to become UCG/A members.

**Church Member:** An individual who has been duly baptized and has the gift of God's Holy Spirit is a member of the Church of God regardless of organizational affiliation. (Acts:2:38-39; Romans:8:9) However the term "Church Member" or "Member of the Church" as used in the governing documents of UCG/A applies only to an individual who has been duly baptized, and who is and remains a member in good standing of UCG/A, and may be listed on the membership rolls of UCG/A (where available). This is distinct and separate from being a "Balloting Member of the Corporation" as described in the Bylaws of UCG/A.

**Governing Documents:** The Articles of Incorporation, the Constitution, the Bylaws and the RoA of UCG/A are considered the governing documents of UCG/A.

**Home Office:** As stated in the Constitution of UCG/A, the Home Office is the principal place of business and its personnel who serve UCG/A by implementing and administering operations and

policies adopted and approved by the General Conference and the Council or as delegated in the Constitution and Bylaws of UCGIA.

**Member Congregations of UCGIA:** Local congregations, pastored by an elder who is recognized by UCGIA, are member congregations of UCGIA. National Councils and the local congregations they serve are also members of UCGIA.

**National Council:** A council or board that is established to meet the requirements for legal recognition of UCGIA, or serve the administrative needs of UCGIA in nations other than the United States of America, is a National Council. For further information see Rule 1-130.

## REFERENCES

United Church of God (1995)	<i>New Beginnings</i> , 13 November, pp. 2-3
United Church of God (2020)	<i>Constitution of the United Church of God and International Association</i> (Amended 3 May 2020)
United Church of God (2020)	<i>Bylaws of the United Church of God and International Association</i> (Amended 3 May 2020)
United Church of God (2017)	<i>Rules of Associations. United Church of God and International Association</i> (Amended 7 May 2017)
United Church of God – Australia (2004)	<i>The Constitution of the United Church of God Australia</i> . ACN 071 927 243 (Dated 14 February 2003. Amended November 2004 v. 2.4)