

# **DUNKARD BRETHREN**

## **CHURCH MANUAL**

Published by authority of General Conference,

Board of Publication,

Dunkard Brethren Church, Inc.

REVISED – 2025

Obtainable from the Secretary of the

Publication Board

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, COVENANT AND BAPTISM**

The Church is composed of persons who covenant to be loyal to the principles of the Gospel, as understood by the church.

By conviction of sin, conversion and confession of our sins, by faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as revealed to us by the Bible, and by trine-immersion baptism, we enter into covenant relationship with one another as one Body in Christ Jesus. Thus, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we mutually agree to walk together in Christian love, to strive together for the advancement of the Church in knowledge, holiness and prosperity, to promote spirituality, humility and peace, and to sustain its worship, ordinances and doctrines. We agree to cheerfully contribute of the means that God gives us for the building of churches, for supporting the ministry when needed, for missionary work, for supporting the poor, and for every other good work that tends to the enlargement of Christ's Kingdom on earth and for the good of its subjects.

We also engage to live truthful and exemplary lives before the world, to have private devotions in our families, and to religiously instruct and educate our children. We agree to labor for the physical and spiritual good of our neighbors and those with whom we associate, to be honest and upright in all of our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our conduct. We are to watch over each other in brotherly love, pray for each other and aid each other in sickness and distress, ever remembering the best of all rules, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

An applicant for membership from another denomination who has knowingly been dis-fellowshipped, or who left that denomination because of his own offense(s), is required to make a good-faith effort to right the wrong(s) committed in that denomination before being taken into membership in the Dunkard Brethren Church.

Members may be accepted into the Dunkard Brethren Church from religious groups of similar faith and practice, who have been baptized by immersion for the remission of sins, after being fully instructed as all applicants for membership. They are asked to make the usual answer of acceptance, approved by the Church Council.

Baptism is administered in water. When the applicant enters into baptism sincerely, having a good conscience toward God, it is followed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Being born of water and of the Spirit brings about the entrance into the Kingdom of God here on earth.

After the applicant answers that they are willing to conform to the scriptures as understood by the church, Matthew 18:10-22 is read. Following this reading, he or she is asked if they are willing to be governed by that scripture in the adjustment of personal difficulties that may arise. After an affirmative response, the applicant is led into water of sufficient depth so that when kneeling the water will cover the body when bowing forward during immersion.

When the applicant is properly settled upon their knees, they are asked the following three questions, to which they respond affirmatively.

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He brought from Heaven a saving Gospel?
2. Do you willingly renounce the Devil with all the sinful pleasures and practices of this world?
3. Do you covenant with God, through Christ, to be faithful unto death?

The Elder or Minister administering baptism then says: “On this confession of faith which you have made before God and these witnesses, I baptize you for the remission of sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” timing the three immersions of the applicant with the words as spoken.

While the one baptized remains the kneeling, the administrator lays his hands on their head and prays for the forgiveness of their sins, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit’s comforting influence and guidance, and that their name be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

Upon coming out of the water the one baptized is received by a handshake and/or a holy kiss denoting they are now a part of the Body of Christ, the Brotherhood, and the local Church family.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE CHURCH VISIT**

There is no direct Scriptural authority for the church visit, but it has been a practice in the Church as a means to an end. The desired end is that all members may be in unity and peace, so they may participate in the Communion services in a worthy manner. (I Cor. 11:27)

As a part of their official duties, the church visit is made by the Deacons. Ministers or Elders have the liberty to assist or perform the church visit if they consider it best in cases where Deacons have little or no experience in this work. When necessary, laymembers may also be called upon to assist in the visit.

The design of the visit is to determine the spiritual condition of the members. There may be a need to clarify and address any questions or struggles existing in the members’ minds regarding their faith or practice. It is the responsibility of those making the visit to inquire into the nature of such difficulties or issues, and if possible, to assist in resolving the problems.

The visit is made prior to the Love Feast Services. It is best if two brethren go together from home to home. The visit is important and should be made with great care. Enough time should be taken with each family to have a season of worship and prayer.

The following questions are suggested to accomplish the purpose of the visit:

1. Are you still in the faith of the Gospel, as you declared when you were baptized?
2. Are you, as far as you know, at peace and in union with the church?
3. Will you still labor with the Brethren for an increase in holiness, both in yourself and others?
4. Do you wish to share anything that you consider needful or valuable regarding the spiritual growth or prosperity of the Church?

After all members have been visited, the Deacons or others who have made the visit will present a report to the church council, so the necessary arrangements can be made for a Love Feast service.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHURCH OFFICIALS**

The Eldership is the highest office in the Church. Elders are advanced from the Ministry to the Eldership in the congregation where they hold their membership. The authority to ordain Elders shall be, and is vested in, the Elders of the District. The request may originate in the official body of the congregation, from the Presiding Elder of the congregation or in the District Elders meeting. All Elders, except for age and experience, are of equal rank officially, being ordained by the laying on of hands. A committee of two Elders shall be appointed by the District Elders for that purpose.

The Elders assembled at District Meeting, or when called together at any other time, shall consult as to the ordination of all Elders in the District. If a majority of the Elders decide that the ordination should proceed, they shall appoint a committee of two or more elders who shall go to the congregation for the ordination. After consulting with the membership, the ordination shall proceed if there are no Scriptural objections. (I Pet. 5:1-5, Titus 1:1-11)

#### **The Ordination Charge**

Dear brother (naming him), the Church having called you to the ministry of the word, and having found you faithful, now proposes to ordain you an Elder, by the laying on of hands of the ordination Elders. In ordaining you an Elder, the church gives you all the rights, authority and responsibilities of the office. You are authorized to preside in council meetings in your home congregation or in other congregations when requested; to preside in District Meeting or in General conference; to give the charge to ministers and deacons and install them into their respective offices. It will be your duty to faithfully preach the word, and to care for the spiritual needs of all the members, being yourself an example to the church in all holiness and purity of heart, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

When presiding over a congregation, it will be your responsibility to take oversight willingly and be in counsel with your official brethren and the church. Servant leadership is not for personal gain and does not desire to lord over God's heritage.

In restoring repentant transgressors to membership in the church, you will require them to make acknowledgement of their errors, ask forgiveness of the church, and promise to live faithfully to their vows.

Being in the Eldership, you are equal with all other Elders. Nevertheless, the Scriptural phrase “Ye younger submit yourselves to the elder,” still applies to you. The church will hold you to the faith and practice of the Scriptures as understood by the Brotherhood assembled in General Conference. Should you manifest an arbitrary, self-willed and domineering spirit, the church will hold you accountable. She may, as necessary, suspend you, take from you all the authority of the eldership she now gives you, and return you to the ministry, the laity, or even expel you from membership if necessary.

Now, dear brother (naming him), do you willingly accept the position into which the church hereby proposes to place you? Do you, in good faith, without any reservation, accept and adopt all the doctrine and practice of the General Brotherhood, in her plainness of dress and non-conformity to the world? Do you promise to unite your labors with your faithful brethren, to observe and enforce the faith and practices of the General Brotherhood?

After the one being ordained has answered these questions affirmatively, his wife, if a member, should be asked the following:

Having heard the charge to your husband, do you as his helpmeet, freely covenant to stand by him and support him in the duties and responsibilities now placed upon him?

Both should then be asked to kneel and hands should be laid upon the one being ordained, accompanied by prayer; after which they are received by the members of the congregation by the right hand of fellowship and the kiss of charity.

### **Election For Officials**

1. Before an election for any church official is called for in a congregation, a majority of the officials must be in favor of holding an election.
2. Ministers and Deacons are elected by the members of the congregation where they hold their membership. It is recommended that a message on the qualifications of Church leadership, in accordance with Apostolic example, along with general admonition against electioneering, be preached in advance of the election to give ample time for prayer and fasting.
3. In all meetings for an election, the presiding elder should moderate, conducting the opening devotions or choosing another to do so.
4. After the opening devotions are concluded, the Presiding Elder turns the service over to the election committee.
5. The committee proceeds with the work as follows: In privacy, they receive the ballots of each individual in a ballot box. (A two-thirds majority must favor an election before it can be held and only members sixteen-years-old and older are eligible to vote.)
6. If a favorable vote is obtained, the committee then announces an election, making appropriate remarks, and stating that the election is for the number of ministers and/or deacons requested by the officials.

7. The committee proceeds with the meeting by reading II Timothy 2:1-4 and II Timothy 4:1-5 for ministers and I Timothy 3:1-13 for deacons, followed by comments as the Spirit may lead. Additionally, stating disqualifications such as divorce or separation from wife, lack of faithfulness to the Scriptures, and not upholding Conference decisions. Following this, a special prayer is engaged in by the congregation, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the election.
8. The voice of the church is then taken in privacy by ballot vote. Ballots are to be dropped in a box in the presence of the Election Committee.
9. When voting for one official, one name is placed on the ballot. When voting for two officials for the same office, two names are to be placed on the ballot, and so on, depending on the number of officials requested for each position.
10. When voting for officials, a simple majority vote is necessary to confirm the election.
11. When voting for one official and two individuals each receive at least 40% of the votes, the congregation may choose to select both individuals for that position. They would both be installed after a two-thirds majority of the congregation approves of such action.
12. If there is no election due to a scattered vote, the Election Committee may then meet with the officials of the congregation to present the names of the brethren who total the majority, to determine whether or not there is any Scriptural reason hindering those brethren from serving in the office being filled. The Election Committee will then present the names of those brethren to the congregation. After a season of prayer requesting the continued leading of the Holy Spirit, the ballots are again dropped in a box in the presence of the Election Committee, and the previous two rules shall apply.

### **Charge to Minister**

Dear brother, (naming him), the church having chosen you for the ministry, and having confidence in your fidelity and integrity, authorizes you to preach the Gospel.

Additionally, your responsibilities may require you to:

- Arrange meetings for preaching according to the general order and practice of the Dunkard Brethren Church.
- Administer the ordinance of baptism and give the instructions preceding baptism when requested by the presiding elder to do so.
- Take the counsel of the church on the admission of applicants for baptism.
- Officiate at Lovefeast in the absence of an elder, or when requested to do so by the elder or elders present.
- Solemnize marriages according to the laws of the State and practices of the church and principles of Scripture.
- Conduct funerals.
- Assist in anointing the sick when a second elder is not available.

You are not authorized to install officials in the church or to give an official charge. You may not preside in council when an official of the church is being tried or dealt with. You may not make congregational appointments (clerk, treasurer, trustee, etc.) unless specifically authorized by the presiding elder.

While the church now invests you with the rights and privileges enumerated, she will hold you to the Scripture, "Ye younger submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (I Peter 5:5.) The church will hold you to the faith and practice of the Scriptures as understood by the Brotherhood assembled in General Conference. Should you manifest an arbitrary, self-willed and domineering spirit, the church will hold you accountable. She may, as necessary, suspend you, take from you all the authority of the ministry she now gives you, and return you to the position of laity, or even expel you from membership, if necessary.

Do you commit to respect the responsibilities and authority now vested in you and to abide by the instructions which you have just received?

After the one being installed has answered affirmatively, his wife, if a member, should be asked the following:

Having heard the charge to your husband, do you as his helpmeet, freely covenant to stand by him and support him in the duties and responsibilities now placed upon him?

Both should then be asked to kneel and hands should be laid upon the one being ordained, accompanied by prayer; after which they are received by the members of the congregation by the right hand of fellowship and the kiss of charity.

### **Charge of Deacons**

Dear brother (naming him), feeling the need of help in the deacon's office, the church has seen fit to call you into that important service. In serving in this capacity, it is your duty to visit members facing hardship and report their condition so that their needs may be addressed. In the work of administering to these needs, a correct account should be kept and reported to the church. It is also your duty to attend to the church visit.

When important matters are being investigated, you may be asked to accompany the Elder or minister, or you may be sent alone to investigate the matter and report back to the investigating body.

It is your duty to see that the necessary preparations are made, that the tables are served, and that everything is attended to in proper time and order at Lovefeasts and when a District Meeting is held in your congregation.

It is your duty to assist the ministry when called upon. This can be done by reading Scripture, leading in prayer, and bearing testimony to what has been said by the minister. When there is no one in the ministry present, it is your duty to take charge of the meeting, conducting the services in the usual way, with edifying and exhorting comments on the Scriptures.

Do you commit to respect the responsibilities and authority now vested in you and to abide by the instructions which you have just received?



After the one being installed has answered affirmatively, his wife, if a member, should be asked the following:

Having heard the charge to your husband, do you as his helpmeet, freely covenant to stand by him and support him in the duties and responsibilities now placed upon him?

Both should then be asked to kneel and hands should be laid upon the one being ordained, accompanied by prayer; after which they are received by the members of the congregation by the right hand of fellowship and the kiss of charity.

### **Acceptance of Officials from Other Denominations**

Loyal, faithful and true officials, after accepting the instructions and requirements applying to all applicants for membership in the Dunkard Brethren Church, may be accepted in their respective office as outlined in the Dunkard Brethren Church Polity, Article XI, Section 3.

### **Church Officers**

In addition to elders, ministers, and deacons, each congregation should have the following officers: Presiding Elder, Trustees, Treasurer, and Clerk.

**PRESIDING ELDER** – Paul’s instruction to Timothy was to establish oversight in all congregations to avoid confusion and uncertainty.

The congregation secures proper oversight by choosing from among the Elders one to preside over the congregation. It is suggested to have a fixed term of office of 1 to 3 years for the presiding eldership.

No Elder shall be elected as presiding Elder of any congregation without the majority vote of members present at the time of the election.

**TRUSTEES** – The trustees should have oversight and maintain all church property, and they should see that all deeds are recorded and preserved.

**TREASURER** – The Treasurer shall receive all funds and pay all bills as directed by the church. He shall keep a record of accounts, and as often as requested, shall provide the church council with a statement of funds received and expenses paid. Once a year, he shall provide a complete report to be reviewed for accuracy by two members appointed by the church for that purpose.

**CLERK** – The clerk shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of all church councils and be responsible for all records, including records of the membership of the congregation. A congregation may also designate a separate clerk to keep the records of membership.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANOINTING THE SICK**

We believe the anointing of the sick is an appointment of the Lord, and that it was intended to be perpetuated in His Church. At the request of an ill member, the Elders of the Church are contacted to do this work. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." (Jas. 5:14)

The scriptural specification is for the anointing to be performed by two Elders. In practice, the Church has permitted a Minister, or a Deacon to assist an Elder, when a second Elder is not available. (Jas. 5:14; Matt. 10:8).

The anointing service consists of singing a hymn, reading of James 5:10-18 with appropriate comments, followed by prayer. This prayer may include petition for the spiritual preparation of the one to be anointed and those performing the anointing.

Opportunity may be given for the individual receiving the anointing to express his or her desire or purpose in calling for the anointing.

The one assisting pours oil into the hand of the leading elder who applies it to the head of the one being anointed. Similarly, this is done a second and a third time, with the leading elder using the words, successively, "We anoint you dear brother (or sister) in the name of the Lord unto the perfecting of your faith, unto the healing of your body, and unto the forgiveness of all your sins." This is followed by prayer with both brethren laying hands on the one being anointed and closing with the Lord's prayer.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Council Meetings are of two kinds, the Official Council and Church Council.

**Official Council** – The official council consists of all the officials of the congregation present and is presided over by the presiding elder of the congregation or some other elder designated by him. In the absence of an elder, a minister may preside in the official council but only to consider matters within the scope of the charge given to him as a minister.

The business of the official council is to prepare the program of business for the church council and to give appropriate care to other matters pertaining to the welfare of the church. Business items for church council should be approved by a majority of the church officials present.

**Church Council** – Church councils are composed of all congregation members present.

The presiding elder of the congregation shall be the moderator in all church councils. In his absence, or by his request, any elder or minister present may serve as moderator.

It shall be the duty of the moderator to keep order and state and explain the items of business. He shall begin and end the meeting with prayer, and shall call for the business of the meeting in the following order:

1. Read the minutes of the previous meeting.
2. Receive letters of membership of members who have moved into the congregation.
3. Give letters of membership to those who have moved out of the congregation.
4. Hear reports of committees and other unfinished business.
5. Entertain new business.
6. Read meeting minutes for correction and approval.

Matters affecting the local congregation, the District or the General Brotherhood are proper subjects for the church council to consider and its decisions are final on local matters.

When acting in harmony with decisions of General Conference, a minority cannot be overruled.

On all important matters each member 16 years of age and over should vote, "Silence for consent" is not sufficient.

### **RULES OF ORDER**

#### **Officers and Members**

1. The Moderator should take charge of the meeting and call it to order.
2. The Moderator shall conduct the meeting following parliamentary rules of order.
3. The Moderator shall have the responsibility to speak on points of order but should always give an opportunity to any member to express their opinions also.
4. A member is not entitled to speak in the meeting until he has addressed the Moderator and has been acknowledged by him.
5. The person making a motion should be given opportunity to provide explanation.
6. If a member is misrepresented by a speaker, they should be given an opportunity to correct the misunderstanding.
7. A member shall not be interrupted while speaking, except to call them to order or to ask for further explanation.
8. A member digressing from the subject being discussed or using improper language against the meeting or any member, shall be called to order.
9. A member called to order shall not speak until the point is decided (unless they are permitted to explain), after which they may continue their remarks if there are no objections.

#### **Appeals**

10. If the decision of the Moderator is not satisfactory, an appeal may be made immediately.
11. An appeal must be made by motion, seconded by three members.

12. The question is then stated by the Moderator: "Shall the decision of the Moderator stand as the decision of the meeting?" After having been open for debate, it is decided like any other question.
13. The Moderator is allowed to take part in the debate of the appeal, either in the Moderator's position, or by appointing a Moderator pro tempore while he has the floor.
14. A motion to table an appeal is always in order.

### **Motions and Resolutions**

15. When a motion is made and seconded and has been stated by the Moderator, it becomes the business of the meeting.
- ~~16.~~ Once a motion becomes the business of the meeting, no other motion can be made or spoken on until the original motion is resolved.
17. Before a motion becomes the business of the meeting, it is acceptable for the mover to withdraw or modify it without any motion for the purpose.
18. When a motion is made the business of the meeting, no other motion can be received unless it is considered more urgent.
19. No motion can be made without the presenter first being acknowledged by the Moderator.
- ~~20.~~ When an item of business has been decided, a motion to reconsider it cannot be made while other motions or business are on the floor.
21. A question of order may be raised by any member and is decided without discussion by the Moderator. If his decision is not satisfactory, any member may appeal the Moderator's decision and have the question decided by the meeting following the rules for appeal.

### **Debate**

22. No member shall interrupt another while speaking, except in accordance with Rule No. 9.
23. Any person referring to a former speaker should only use their name if doing so is not objectionable.
24. Debate should be respectful and kind and should not digress from the topic being discussed.
25. All motions, resolutions, etc., are debatable, except:
  - a. A motion to adjourn
  - b. A motion to table an item of business
  - c. A motion for the previous question (this motion stops further discussion and brings the matter to an immediate vote)
  - d. A motion to read a paper, pending a question

*End of 2025 Installment (Query 1 - 2025)*  
*Numbering below is based on 2024 Version of Manual*

### **Order And Succession of Question**

30. When a question is regularly before the meeting, no other question can be put except: (1) Privileged Questions: Motion to adjourn, question of privilege, motion for orders of the day; (2) Incidental Questions:

Questions of order, motion for the reading of papers, withdrawal of a motion, suspension of a rule, amendment of an amendment; (3) Subsidiary Questions: Motion to lie on the table, postponement to a day certain, commitment, amendment, postpone indefinitely.

These motions are arranged in their order of precedence among themselves.

31. A motion to adjourn, unqualified, takes precedence of all others, and is always in order, except (1) When a member is speaking; (2) when the meeting is voting; (3) when no business has been transacted since a motion to adjourn has been decided in the negative.
32. When no other business is before the meeting, a motion to adjourn may be amended. When it supersedes the pending question, it must simply be to "adjourn," without any particular day added, and cannot be amended.
33. A motion to adjourn except to a day certain is not debatable.
34. A motion to lie on the table, decided affirmatively, removes the matter before the meeting, until by a motion and vote it be again taken up.
35. A motion to lie on the table cannot be amended, nor can it be debated.
36. When a member moves the previous question, and this is seconded, the Chair must immediately put the question: "Shall the main question be now put?" A negative decision suppresses the main question for the day. If decided in the affirmative, the main question is to be put immediately.
37. A motion for the previous question cannot be amended or debated.
38. A motion to postpone to a day certain may be amended by substituting one day for another.
39. A subject should be referred to a committee when more careful consideration is required than can be given in the meeting. A subject may also be recommitted.
40. A motion to commit or recommit may be amended by substituting one committee for another, by altering the numbers, or by instructions.
41. In form, an amendment may be made by: (1) Inserting or adding certain words; (2) striking out certain words; (3) striking out certain words, and inserting or adding others.
42. An amendment may be amended, but an amendment to an amendment cannot be amended.
43. An amendment to an amendment must be decided first.
44. A vote either adopting or rejecting an amendment cannot afterward be altered, except to reconsider.
45. A motion to postpone indefinitely may be amended by making it to a day certain. A matter indefinitely postponed cannot be renewed.
46. All doctrinal queries or petitions with their answers, be voted on by ballot. All other business optional, by ballot or otherwise.

Doctrinal queries shall require a two-thirds majority to pass.

### **Committee**

47. A Committee may be appointed to consider any particular subject, to obtain information, or to perform certain duties.

48. A Committee may be instructed by the meeting at the time of appointment, or while in the performance of its duties, if necessary.
49. The number on a special Committee shall be determined by the Moderator, or by the members of the meeting.
50. The member first named by the Moderator shall act as Chairman, or the Committee shall elect its own Chairman, unless he be designated by the mover of the motion to appoint.
51. A Committee once discharged may be revived. A Committee appointed for one purpose, may perform other duties of the same or different character.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RULES IN CASE OF OFFENCES**

Our rules are based on those given in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew, and are as follows:

1. When an offence is given to a member, in language or conduct, if the offense relates only to himself, the offended shall, without consulting any one, go to the offender with an honest purpose to be reconciled, if possible. If satisfaction is given, he shall forgive and no more be said about it.
2. If satisfaction be not given, it shall be the duty of the offended to select one or two to go with him, choosing such as he may deem best adapted to effect a reconciliation, with whom he shall again converse with the offending brother. If satisfaction then be given, the matter shall be forgiven and no further complaint be made.
3. If these efforts both fail to secure a reconciliation, it shall be the duty of the offended to lay the matter before the church, and submit to her action in the case.
4. If any member of the church shall be publicly guilty of any crime or gross impropriety, it shall be the duty of the member, knowing the transgression, to inform the elder, who shall see or write to the offender, and inform him that the matter will be laid before the church, that he may appear in his own defense.
5. When common report charges a crime against a member, it shall be the duty of the one hearing it to report it to the elder, who shall have the member visited or informed of the report, and if there is reason to believe that it is true, to have the most judicious steps taken to ascertain its correctness, and then lay the report and its evidence before the church for action in the case.
6. When circumstances are impracticable to have a member who is reported to have been guilty of crime visited, it shall be the duty of the elder hearing of such crime, to take the most judicious measures to ascertain the truth in regard to the report, and lay the matter before the church.
7. If a member, having erred, shall voluntarily confess it to the church, and manifests satisfactory repentance, no further proceedings shall be taken against him except in cases of public scandal or gross immoralities.

8. Every member against whom any charge is preferred, shall have the privilege of speaking in his own defense.
9. Written testimony of individuals who are not members, and have good moral characters, may be admitted as confirmatory evidence in cases of discipline.
10. If members fail to give satisfaction to the church in relation to charges preferred against them, or persistently refuse to appear before the church when notified to do so, they shall, by a majority vote be expelled.

### **Procedure for Responding to Sexual Abuse**

Definition of "Sexual Abuse" for the purpose of this policy: Sexual abuse is sexual contact that involves an adult and an individual under the age of 16 years old.

**God's instruction in the Old Testament:** Lev. 18:1-21, Lev. 20:1-27

**God's instruction in the New Testament:** Matt. 4:17, Matt:18:1-22, Rev. 21:1-8

**The Church's responsibility:** 1 Cor. 5:1-13, Rom. 13:1-14, Gal. 6:1-8, 1 Pet. 2:11-17

#### **I. Acute Sexual Abuse**

1. All members of the Dunkard Brethren Church shall see themselves as protectors of the vulnerable and abused. Members are to take immediate action, coupled with prayer, to report suspected abuse to local church officials and local authorities.
2. Mandatory reporters (ex. elders, ministers, deacons, or teachers) shall call 911 (or the appropriate agency) to report the incident.
3. The reporter will document their action using the Abuse Response Protocol form (this document can be found in the manual *A Biblical Response to Sexual Abuse*).
4. Any church member criminally charged with sexual abuse shall be placed on probation (considered to be a member **not** in good standing) by the church pending the outcome of the legal process.
5. During the investigation, the accused shall be removed from all church responsibilities and shall not be allowed to commune.
6. Should the accusations be confirmed to be correct (by confession or conviction), the accused shall be removed from membership.
7. If membership is later reinstated, any person who has been convicted of, or has confessed to, sexual abuse of a minor shall be prohibited from all participation in children's ministry and shall not be eligible to hold any official position (deacon, minister, or elder). 1 Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9
8. Since a hallmark of true repentance is being willing to let go of self-preservation, an Offender Covenant shall be established between the Church and the offender. A copy of this agreement shall be forwarded to the Standing Committee and implemented by the offender's congregation. (the Offender Covenant can be found in the manual *A Biblical Response to Sexual Abuse*).

9. If a member has a history of committing sexual abuse and moves to another congregation, a report of the nature of the crimes and actions taken shall be forwarded to the receiving congregation's local officials and presiding elder.
10. If a member has a history of committing sexual abuse and moves to another church, assembly, or congregation, a report of the nature of the crimes and actions taken shall be forwarded to the leadership of the receiving church, assembly, or congregation.

## **II. Confession of Sexual Abuse - Without Conviction**

Sexual abuse may not be revealed for many years, well past the legal statute of limitations.

1. Any church member who is accused of sexual abuse and confesses to the accusations but has never been convicted may be removed from membership if deemed appropriate.
2. Any person who confesses to sexual abuse of a minor shall be prohibited from all participation in children's ministry. They shall not be eligible to hold any official position (deacon, minister, or elder), if they were a professing believer at the time of the abuse.
3. Also, an Offender Covenant shall be established between the Church and the offender. A copy of this agreement shall be forwarded to the Standing Committee.

## **III. Accused of Sexual Abuse - Without Confession or Conviction**

Victims of sexual abuse may not want to report acutely for many different reasons. The accusations may come to light after the statute of limitations has passed.

1. The local church officials shall appoint a committee to investigate the sexual abuse of any church member who denies accusations of sexual abuse and has not been convicted of these crimes. This investigation shall not interfere with or replace the local authorities' investigation. Individuals with a history of sexual abuse, or of failing to properly handle reports of sexual abuse, are not permitted to serve on such committees. The local committee shall forward a report of their investigation to Standing Committee.
2. If the investigation confirms the accusations of sexual abuse, the accused shall be removed from membership in the Dunkard Brethren Church and permitted to attend church services and church activities only after signing an Offender Covenant. Also, a report of the findings shall be given to local authorities, local congregation, District elders, and Standing Committee.
3. If the person later confesses to sexual abuse, repents, receives licensed, clinical counseling, and then desires membership to be



reinstated, the requirement of an Offender Covenant shall remain in effect. A copy of this agreement shall be forwarded to the Standing Committee.

4. If membership is later reinstated, any person who confesses to sexual abuse of a minor shall be prohibited from all participation in children's ministry. They shall not be eligible to hold any official position (deacon, minister, or elder), if they were a professing believer at the time of the abuse.

#### **IV. Care of the Victim**

1. **If the victim is in immediate danger or requires immediate medical attention, call 911 first.**
2. Create a care and protection plan with the victim when appropriate (please review the manual *A Biblical Response to Sexual Abuse* for resources on the care of sexual abuse victims).
3. Ensure the victim receives the counseling and care needed.
4. A report of the plan for care shall be forwarded to Standing Committee.

#### **V. General Guidelines**

1. Church officials and members of a congregation shall refrain from testifying on behalf of the accused except when subpoenaed or after receiving written consent from the presiding elder and the majority of the official body.
2. Letters of recommendation written by church officials or members for the accused which shall be presented at trial or prior to sentencing will also need written approval from the presiding elder and the majority of the official body.
3. The congregation where the perpetrator held membership shall cover the cost of counseling for the victim(s) as well as ancillary costs, up to \$10,000 per victim. This counseling is to be provided by a Biblically-based, licensed clinical counselor. Additional financial assistance may be requested through the Dunkard Brethren Church Relief Board.
4. No Retaliation or Disparagement - Retaliation and disparagement against victims or reporters is contrary to the Anabaptist values of the church. No one reporting concerns of sexual abuse shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or disparagement as a result of reporting. Anyone associated with the church who retaliates against a good-faith reporter or victim shall be subject to church discipline and/or removal from membership.
5. The central theme of the gospel is Heaven's passion and provisions to redeem and reconcile every soul to fellowship and acceptance to their Creator. Sexual abuse is a tragic event, but it is not beyond Heaven's redemption. Care of the eternal soul should never be neglected in pursuit of justice. The family of God is called to make every effort to provide support, hope, and healing to both victims

- and abusers.
6. The hallmarks of this reconciliation process will include a willingness on the part of the perpetrator to be faithful to the Word, accountable to the church, and teachable. It will include a specific accountability and discipleship plan approved and put into action by the local leadership and may include restitution to the victim as evidence of gospel change.

### **Church Trials**

Church trials are conducted with fairness and equality.

The accused shall be supplied a copy of the charges, signed by the author, at least ten days before trial, unless a shorter time is agreed upon.

Gospel evidence is necessary to conviction, outside testimony may be used corroboratively.

Matt. 18 applies to all matters strictly personal. Trespasses of a general nature are handled on general principles.

All actions of the church are to be respected by the membership.

### **Rehearing And Restoring**

1. Restoration may be effected where the petitioner resides or where the rehearing is had. In case a member is disfellowshipped or an official is deposed, and moves into another congregation, the Church where the member was disfellowshipped or deposed must give her consent before the member is restored to full membership or official position.
2. The rehearing may be had where the party resides, by mutual agreement.

### **Committees**

1. General or District Conferences may grant request for committees when they feel every reasonable effort to settle difficulties, has failed.
2. Committees report their work to the body appointing them. In case of appeal the work of committees becomes final when ratified by the body appointing them.
3. Committees shall say who shall pay their expenses, except in case of appeal, the expenses shall be borne by the party losing the case. Committees may, in case of appeal, require the appellant to deposit sufficient funds with the proper treasurer to cover the estimated expense.
4. Elders shall be tried by a committee of three elders, as shall be provided for in advance by the District Elders' Meeting. The following shall be the method of procedure. Where an elder persists in a course not in harmony with the usages and general order of the brotherhood as defined by General Conference, he shall have a fair trial before the church where his membership is held. If he refuses to be tried or persists in being

insubordinate when tried, they shall, whether favored by a majority of the church or not, depose him from office, and if need be, relieve him of membership, and such action shall be respected by all the churches until it is overruled by a committee from General Conference, or until he is reinstated by a majority of the church where his membership is held, favored also by a majority of the Elders of the District.

It is to be understood in this connection that the Elders, having the oversight of the Brotherhood at large (Item 3, Church Officials, Polity Booklet), have full authority, when acting as Standing Committee, to send committees on their own initiative or otherwise, whenever they deem that the welfare of the Brotherhood requires it, and the authority of a committee when so sent extends even to the hearing of charges against Elders and action thereon.

Individual Elders have neither authority nor justification to go into other congregations and interest themselves in trouble there, nor to meddle in it in any way.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUNDAY SCHOOLS**

General Conference has established the following methods for organizing and conducting Sunday Schools.

- Art. 1. Wherever practicable, nominations are to be made by the official body of the church.
- Art. 2. Where Article 1 is practicable, Church Council to vote by ballot for choice from the nominations, the one receiving the highest number of votes to be the superintendent; then from not less than two nominations, the assistant superintendent is to be elected in the same way. Children under twelve years of age not to vote.
- Art. 3. Where Article 1 and 2 are practicable, other officers and teachers to be elected by Church Council. All such to be in the order and good standing in the church.
- Art. 4. Brethren having the above qualifications should be preferred for adult and intermediate classes as teachers; while sisters might be used for juvenile classes.
- Art. 5. All library books, or periodicals, used by the school should pass careful censor of the official board of the church.
- Art. 6. Sending of delegates to County, State, National or World-wide conventions is misleading and an injury to the best interests of the School and should not be allowed.
- Art. 7. Pageants, Cantatas, Pantomimes and Dramatizations of any kind and performances having special costumes, banners and such like are following stage life and should not be tolerated.
- Art. 8. Contests, games and plays of any kind, should be very carefully guarded against, because of serious injury to the church interests.

- Art. 9. The Sunday-school should be conducted exclusively for the training of the pupils for consecrated church life and the salvation of their precious souls.
- Art. 10. Teachers' meetings are helpful when properly conducted. "Let all be done decently and in order." God being witness to all that we do.
- Art. 11. Organized classes lead to harmful practices and therefore should not be tolerated.
- Art. 12. Teach all Sunday-school scholars to stay for church services when there is any, following the school hour.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE MARRIAGE RELATION**

First of all, the Elder or Minister requested to perform a wedding ceremony, should assure himself that the parties thereto are scripturally and legally marriageable.

The marriage relation is of Divine appointment, being instituted by God and recognized by Christ and his apostles. The power and wisdom of our Heavenly Father was not more strikingly displayed in the framing of the material universe, than in his plan of placing the inhabitants of the earth in families. The constitution of the sexes, and their mutual dependence upon each other, were, as our Saviour clearly showed, designed and appointed from the beginning. Hence the sacredness of the marriage relation. Established in Eden, it has been perpetuated in successive dispensations, by which God has sought to promote the welfare of the human race. In all history, examples both positive and negative, have been accumulating to prove that the highest interests of humanity center in the family. It is an institution of most sacred importance, and therefore should be entered into understandingly, having in view all the sacred obligations belonging to it. The minister of the Gospel, in performing the ceremony, should try to impress upon the minds of those entering the marriage relation, the sacredness of the institution, and the grave responsibilities that they assume as they enter the new relation.

As a guide, and for the convenience of our ministers, the following forms of the marriage ceremony are submitted.

#### **Form No. 1**

When the parties present themselves before the minister, he may say:

Marriage is an institution of Divine appointment, sanctioned by Christ and his apostles, and designed to increase human happiness and support social order.

In the Bible, which should be your constant companion, you will find all needed instructions as to your duties toward each other.

As you have now presented yourselves before me for the purpose of being united in holy matrimony, in token of your decided choice for each other, as partners for life, you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, will please join right hands.

(Joining of hands.)

Do you solemnly promise, before Almighty God and these witnesses, to receive each other as husband and wife, agreeing to perform the duties, growing out of this relation, pledging yourselves to love each other, and to make every reasonable exertion to promote each other's happiness, until the union into which you are now entering is dissolved by death?

(Both answer in the affirmative.)

In view of the promises you have now made, I do, by virtue of the authority vested in me as a minister of the Gospel, pronounce you husband and wife. And what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

The ceremony is concluded by offering a short prayer.

### **Form No. 2**

After meeting the parties on the floor for the purpose of marriage, the minister says, addressing the man:

"Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife, performing towards her all the moral and Christian functions of the marriage state, forsaking all others and cleaving to her alone until separated by death?"

Answer by the man, "I do."

Addressing the woman:

"Do you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband, performing towards him all the functions of the marriage state, forsaking all others and cleaving to him alone until parted by death?"

Answer by the woman, "I do."

The parties now join hands and the minister will say:

Upon the promises which you have made before God and these witnesses, I do now, by the authority vested in me as a minister of the Gospel, pronounce you husband and wife, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

The minister now lays his right hand on the parties married, and offers an appropriate short prayer.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **BURIAL SERVICE**

The services held at the grave differ in localities, in accordance with the forms learned by those who officiate. Hence, we have no form, that has received the general sanction of the church, to give, but for the accommodation of those who wish something as a guide on these solemn occasions, we offer the following as suggestions:

Our funeral services are conducted about the same as the general public preaching services, except that the subject used should be in harmony with the occasion, and part of the discourse should be directed to the family of the deceased and the immediate friends.

SERVICES AT THE GRAVE – After the body has been placed in or over the grave, an appropriate Scripture may be read. We suggest the following:

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. I Cor. 15:41-58.

When convenient and practicable, a suitable hymn or hymns may be sung at the grave.

At the proper time, the following committal of the body to the Earth may be used:

“Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God in his wise providence to remove from us the soul of the departed, we therefore commit \_\_\_\_\_ body to the ground, earth to earth, and dust to dust, looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose second coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in them shall be raised and changed and made like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.”

Following this, a short prayer may be offered, and then dismiss the congregation.