

# **MID AMERICA SISTERHOOD OF CHURCHES MEMBERSHIP PACKET**

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# Church Organization

## Our Conviction

### What does God say about church order?

Those who belong to Christ's army must work with concerted action. They cannot be faithful soldiers unless they obey orders. **United action is essential.** An army in which every part acts without reference to the other parts, has no real strength. In order to add new territory to Christ's kingdom, His soldiers must act in concert. . . . **He calls for a united army,** which moves steadily forward, **not for a company composed of independent atoms.** The strength of His army is to be used for one great purpose. Its efforts are to be concentrated upon one great point--the magnifying of the laws of His kingdom before the world, before angels, and before men (MS 82, 1900). {4BC 1146.4}

My brethren, the Lord has called upon you to do a certain work, but you have not done it; and now in the place where you are, there is discord and contention and strife. But this need not be. **God does not design that his workmen shall stand apart as independent atoms.** All have a great and solemn work to do, and it is to be done under God's supervision. {PH156 12.1}

An army in battle would become confused and weakened unless all worked in concert. If the soldiers should act out their own impulsive ideas, without reference to each other's positions and work, they would be a collection of **independent atoms**; they could not do the work of an organized body. **So the soldiers of Christ must act in harmony....Union is strength. A few converted souls acting in harmony, acting for one grand purpose, under one head, will achieve victories at every encounter.** {SpM 121.1}

### What has happened to the SDA organization?

The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. **A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.** The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. **The Sabbath** of course, **would be lightly regarded,** as also the God who created it. **Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement.** The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, **they would place their dependence on human power,** which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. {1SM 204.2}

*For a look at how this prophecy is being fulfilled in the General Conference see the booklet, **Issues: No New Organization** by John and Marshall Grosboll*

### Are Historic Adventists making a New Organization?

*The argument has been made against any type of organization in the Historic Adventist movement that it would be forming a new organization. And inspiration forbids this.*

The Lord has declared that the history of the past shall be rehearsed as we enter upon the closing work. Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now **step off the foundation** that God has established. **We cannot now enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth.**--MS. 129, 1905.

*Notice that she says that apostasy from the truth constitutes the formation of a new organization. The GC structure is step by step entering into a new organization because it is apostatizing from the truth in point after point. Those of us who are upholding the pillars of the faith are maintaining the old organization which Christ established upon Himself and His apostles.*

*For more on this issue see the booklet mentioned above.*

### **What is true Gospel Order? A Look at the early church.**

As an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards of **gospel order. Churches were duly organized** in all places in Lycaonia and Pisidia where there were believers. **Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established** for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers. {AA 185.2}

This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. Those who in any place were by his labor led to accept Christ as the Saviour were at the proper time organized into a church. Even when the believers were but few in number, this was done. The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20. {AA 185.3}

The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. **When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches,** with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted. {AA 95.3}

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." I Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. **Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God.** {AA 96.1}

In the church at Antioch the consideration of the question of circumcision resulted in much discussion and contention. Finally, the members of the church, fearing that a division among them would be the outcome of continued discussion, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, with some responsible men from the church, to Jerusalem to lay the matter before the apostles

and elders. There they were to meet **delegates** from the different churches and those who had come to Jerusalem to attend the approaching festivals. Meanwhile all controversy was to cease until a final decision should be given in general council. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the different churches throughout the country. {AA 190.2}

The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The "apostles and elders," men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message. From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time. {AA 196.2}

**The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel.** Those to whom was given the responsibility of the general oversight of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to "feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2, 3); and the deacons were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." These men were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock. {AA 91.1}

Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the **organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained.** Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts --"first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony. {AA 91.2}

### **Is our being organized under true Gospel Order a preference or a conviction?**

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." 1 Corinthians 14:33. **He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old.** He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God. {AA 96.1}

The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much feared and neglected. [THE ADVENTISTS WERE OF ALL CHURCHES, AND AT FIRST THEY HAD NO IDEA OF FORMING ANOTHER CHURCH. AFTER 1844 THERE WAS GREAT CONFUSION, AND THE MAJORITY WERE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ANY ORGANIZATION, HOLDING THAT IT WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE PERFECT LIBERTY OF THE GOSPEL. THE TESTIMONY AND LABORS OF MRS WHITE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN OPPOSED TO FANATICISM, AND IN THE INSTRUCTION GIVEN THROUGH HER, ORGANIZATION IN SOME FORM WAS EARLY INSISTED UPON, AS NECESSARY TO PREVENT CONFUSION.] Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and

after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles. **And now in these last days,** while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, **there is more real need of order than ever before;** for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it. {EW 97.1}

As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, **organization was indispensable.** {CET 195.2}

Yet there was strong feeling against it among our people. The First-day Adventists were opposed to organization, and most of the Seventh-day Adventists entertained the same ideas. We sought the Lord with earnest prayer that we might understand His will, and light was given by His Spirit, that **there must be order** and thorough discipline in the church,--**that organization was essential.** System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. **Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth.** {CET 195.3}

I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock can be shut. I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, "The church must flee to God's Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected." This is **indispensably necessary** in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith. {EW 100.2}

By the influence of the Spirit, the most discordant may be brought into harmony. Unselfishness is to bind God's people together with firm, tender bonds. There is a vast power in the church when the energies of the members are under the control of the Spirit, gathering good from every source, educating, training, and disciplining self. Thus is presented to God a powerful organization, through which He can work for the conversion of sinners. Thus heaven and earth are connected, and all divine agencies cooperate with human instrumentalities. {ML 39.5}

## Conclusion

*It is the **conviction** of the Mid America Sisterhood of Churches that we **must** maintain Gospel Order and the pattern established by the early Christian church, and uphold the pillars of the faith.*

# **The Mid-America Sisterhood of Churches**

## **Purpose, Policies and Procedures**

### **Our Purpose**

1. To maintain the foundational pillars of Historic Seventh-day Adventism and uphold Gospel Order.
2. To provide a network of churches that we know are on this foundation.
3. To draw the attention of the popular churches to the Law and the Sabbath .
4. To encourage people to take personal responsibility for their own salvation.
5. To encourage the return to the Spirit of Prophecy blue prints for Health and Education.

### **MASC Membership Procedures**

1. The Interested church will be given a “Membership Packet” containing:
  - a. Membership Procedures and MASC Policies and Procedures
  - b. Summary of Beliefs
  - c. Application, etc.
2. Delegates of an interested church are invited to attend an MASC business meeting as silent observers. MASC contacts shall visit with the interested church to answer any questions and evaluate their commitment to Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy Principles of organization and like beliefs.
3. The applying congregation covenants to join the MASC by accepting and signing the Summary of Doctrinal Beliefs. Individuals must join an MASC congregation by signing the Summary of Doctrinal Beliefs. Two MASC members must also sign as witnesses. The application of the interested church must be presented to the MASC delegates in session, to be voted on.

### **MASC Church Membership Removal**

Church disciplinary action within the MASC must follow the course outlined in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy for each specific situation.

1. Private Sin: Matthew 18 (See Testimonies vol. 2 pp 52, 53 & 54)
2. Publicly Known Sin: 1 Timothy 5:20 (see Testimonies vol. 2 pp 15 & 16)
3. Openly Practiced Sin: 1 Corinthians 5
4. One Causing Divisions: Romans 16:17

5. Accusations Against Elders: 1 Timothy 5:19
6. One Preaching Another Gospel (i.e. Doctrine of Salvation): Gal. 1: 3-9; 2 John 7-11
7. One Preaching/Practicing Heresy: Titus 3: 10 & 11 (This point is closely linked to point # 4 in some instances).

### **MASC Business Session Delegates**

1. Each church chooses two delegates to represent their body at each MASC meeting, other members may attend and participate in deliberation, but do not vote. Any new attendees must be silent observers at their first meeting, as well as anyone who has missed the previous two meetings. Silent observers may voice their opinions to their delegates.
2. There must be representation from two-thirds of the member churches to have a quorum.
3. The names of all the delegates and the church bodies they represent, who will be attending the meeting must be forwarded to the MASC secretary no later than two weeks before a scheduled meeting. The MASC secretary must be informed of any church delegate change no later than one day before the meeting. If a quorum (two-thirds of the churches) is not met, then the meeting will be rescheduled.

### **MASC Policies and Procedures**

The Bugle, a quarterly newsletter, will be sent out to all MASC members.

Individual churches are to send their own monies directly to ministries they wish to support rather than sending them through the MASC treasury, except for collective monies for activities of the MASC (such as camp meeting) which should be sent to the MASC treasurer. Tithes shall be used for the support of the gospel workers and offerings shall be used for supplies etc..

Each congregation shall choose its own treasurer. Elders, deacons, etc. can be chosen as the Lord moves to fill these positions of responsibility. Ordination is to be conducted at the local church level. Information and support is available through the MASC.

Each congregation shall be responsible for its own members in all matters of church discipline.

The MASC delegates shall assemble as necessary to discuss issues involving the work of the Sisterhood. The delegates in business session shall choose, on a yearly basis, the treasurer, secretary, Bugle editor and their assistants to serve from May to May. A chairperson is elected at the end of each business meeting to serve at the next meeting.

A Meeting Committee will be elected on a yearly basis to serve in arranging for meetings such as: campmeeting, holy convocations, Bible conferences, family camps etc.

## GOSPEL ORDER

**The following texts should be studied in preparation for setting up Gospel Order in the local church. They deal with the different offices and qualifications necessary.**

Acts 6:1-7 [“Seven Deacons”. See AA p.87-96]  
Acts 14:21-23 - Elders  
Acts 15:1-6  
Acts 15:22-29 – “chosen men” [Delegates -  
Acts 16:4,6 [see AA 95.3 & 190.2]  
Acts 21:17-19  
1 Tim 3:1-13 – Bishops, Deacons, and possibly Deaconesses [see SDA-BC on vs.11]

1 Tim 5:17-22 - Elders  
Titus 1:5-9  
James 5:14,15  
1 Pet 5:1-6  
Read *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* p. 151-186, **Guiding Principles in Administration**  
*Early Writings of Ellen G. White* p. 97,100,101

**“Simple organization and church order are set forth in the New Testament Scriptures, and the Lord has ordained these for the unity and perfection of the church. The man who holds office in the church should stand as a leader, as an adviser and a counselor and helper in carrying the burdens of the work. He should be a leader in offering thanksgiving to God. But he is not appointed to order and command the Lord's laborers. The Lord is over His heritage. He will lead His people if they will be led of the Lord in the place of assuming a power God has not given them. Let us study the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of First Corinthians, and the fifteenth chapter of Acts.**

“Let the men carrying responsibilities treat those who labor with them with the same consideration that they would wish to receive, were they the helpers, and others the leaders. **“All ye are brethren,”** the Saviour declares. **Position does not give a man kingly authority.** The meekness of Christ is a wonderful lesson given to the fallen world. Learning this meekness from the great Teacher, the worker will become Christlike.” {LLM 464}

“Such arrangements should be made for the little companies accepting the truth as shall secure the prosperity of the church. One man may be appointed to lead for a week or a month, then another for a few weeks; and thus different persons may be enlisted in the work, and **after a suitable trial someone should be selected by the voice of the church to be the acknowledged leader, never, however, to be chosen for more than one year.** Then another may be selected, or the same one may be re-elected, if his service has proved a blessing to the church. **The same principle should be followed in selecting men for other responsible positions,** as in the offices of the conference. Untried men should not be elected as presidents of conferences. Many fail to exercise proper discernment in these important matters where eternal interests are involved.” {5T 619.2}

The following is an outline of the offices and their qualifications gleaned from the above texts.

## **Deacons**

### **Qualifications**

Grave (dignified)  
Rules family well  
Not double tongued  
Not a drunk  
Not greedy  
Well grounded in the faith

### **Method of appointment**

Ordination by laying on of hands  
Must be proved first

### **Duties**

Oversee the care of the poor and needy primarily but also preach, administer the ordinances and baptize.

## **Deaconesses**

### **Qualifications**

Grave (dignified)  
Not slanderers  
Sober  
Faithful in all things

### **Duties**

Does not delineate

## **Elders**

### **Qualifications**

Blameless in the following areas  
Husband of one wife  
Vigilant  
Sober  
Of good behavior

Hospitable  
Good teacher  
Not a drunk  
Not quarrelsome  
Not greedy  
Patient  
Not prone to fight  
Not covetous  
Rules family well  
Not a novice  
Respected in the community  
Good steward of God  
Not self-willed  
Not soon angry  
Just  
Holy  
Temperate  
Able to exhort and teach doctrine

### **Method of appointment**

Ordained by laying on of hands  
Lay hands on no man suddenly

### **Duties**

Prayer and ministry of the Word  
Meet with other elders to study out issues  
Communicate their decisions to the church body  
Anoint the sick  
Feed the flock  
Oversee the flock not as a ruler but as an example  
Protect the church from false teachers and false doctrines

## **Chosen Ones [Delegates]**

Chosen by the local church to meet with delegates from other local churches to study out questions and resolve issues, thereby maintaining unity.

It appears that these were usually chosen from among the elders of each church.

## **Treasurer**

Judas served as a treasurer for Jesus' group of disciples. Just because he was an unfit treasurer does not mean the position is not valid and necessary.

“As treasurer for the disciples, he [Judas] was called upon to provide for the needs of the little company, and to relieve the necessities of the poor.” {DA 717.2}

“He had been appointed treasurer of the united funds of the disciples, and had dishonestly appropriated to himself the means which were designed for the service of God.” {2SP 375.2}

## ORDINATION

*This compilation of texts, Spirit of Prophecy quotes, and Adventist history notes, is designed to give a brief historical overview of the use, goals, and limits of ordination in the church of Christ, beginning with the call to the disciples.*

“And he saith unto them, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Matt. 4:19.

“He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples....The Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He Invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.” DA 297.

“The first step was now to be taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to be His representative on earth....Jesus had called His disciples that He might send them forth as His witnesses, to declare what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world.... These disciples had been for some time associated with Jesus in active labor.” DA 291,292.

“And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.” Mark 3: 13,14.

“While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ. He now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. With great earnestness and apparent sincerity he declared, ‘Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.’ Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him, but uttered only the mournful words: ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.’ Matt. 8:19,20. Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut off by the statement of His poverty.

“The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work. They were surprised that Jesus received him so coolly.

“The disciples had been much disappointed that Jesus had not tried to secure the co-operation of the leaders in Israel. They felt that it was a mistake not to strengthen His cause by securing the support of these influential men. If He had repulsed Judas, they would, in their own minds, have questioned the wisdom of their Master. The after history of Judas would show them the danger of allowing any worldly consideration to have weight in deciding the fitness of men for the work of God. The co-operation of such men as the disciples were anxious to secure would have betrayed the work into the hands of its worst enemies.” DA 293,294.

“When Jesus ended His instruction to the disciples, he gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord’s disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry.” DA 296.

*The previous paragraphs stand as a warning to us to take great care in deciding the fitness of men for the work of God, and, especially, the need of carefulness when individuals*

*attempt to push themselves forward to gain positions of influence and leadership. The following quotes show that ordination is a public, acknowledgement by the church, of an already evident calling. Ordination does not do the qualifying.*

“there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Acts 13:1-3.

“Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself...God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry.” AA 160,161.

“Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.

“The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of “the middle wall of partition” (Ephesians 2:14) that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy, and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews. God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.

“Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one’s authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.

“To the Jews this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads....And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they, by that action, asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles ...

“At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands....

“The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church....

“God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ’s body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.” AA 160,163.

The following principles should be taken into account regarding ordination:

**1. “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be a partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.” I Tim. 5:22.**

“...those who are about to enter upon the sacred work of teaching Bible truth to the world should be carefully examined by faithful, experienced persons.

“After these have had some experience, there is still another work to be done for them. They should be presented before the Lord in earnest prayer that He would indicate by His Holy Spirit if they are acceptable to Him. The apostle says: ‘Lay hands suddenly on no man.’ In the days of the apostles the ministers of God did not dare to rely upon their own judgment in selecting or accepting men to take the solemn and sacred position of mouthpiece for God. They selected the men whom their judgment would accept, and then they placed them before the Lord to see if He would accept them to go forth as His representatives. No less than this should be done now.

“In many places we meet men who have been hurried into responsible positions as elders of the church when they are not qualified for such a position. They have not proper government over themselves. Their influence is not good. The church is in trouble continually in consequence of the defective character of the leader. Hands have been laid too suddenly upon these men....

“Ministers should be examined especially to see if they have an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time, so that they can give a connected discourse upon the prophecies or upon practical subjects. If they cannot clearly present Bible subjects they need to be hearers and learners still. They should earnestly and prayerfully search the scriptures, and become conversant with them, in order to be teachers of Bible truth to others. All these things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before men are hurried into the field of labor.” 4T. 406,407

“Some young men who enter the field are not successful in teaching the truth to others because they have not been educated themselves. Those who cannot read correctly should learn, and they should become apt to teach before they attempt to stand before the public.” 4T. 406

**2. Qualifications of the candidate should be investigated according to I Timothy 3, Titus 1: 6-9,**

“The family of the one suggested for office should be considered. Are they in subjection? Can the man rule his own house with honor? What character have his children? Will they do honor to the father’s influence? If he has no tact, wisdom, or power of godliness at home in managing his own family, it is safe to conclude that the same defects will be carried into the church, and the same unsanctified management will be seen there. It will be far better to criticize the man before he is put into office than afterward, better to pray and counsel before taking the decisive step than to labor to correct the consequences of a wrong move.” 5T. 618

**3. Time should be given to determine suitability for the post.**

“Such arrangements should be made for the little companies accepting the truth as shall secure the prosperity of the church. One man may be appointed to lead for a week or a month, then another for a few weeks; and thus different persons may be enlisted in the work, and after a suitable trial someone should be selected by the voice of the church to be the acknowledged leader, never, however, to be chosen for more than one year. Then another may be selected, or the same one may be re-elected, if his service has proved a blessing to the church. The same principle should be followed in selecting men for other responsible positions, as in the offices of the conference. Untried men should not be elected as presidents of conferences. Many fail to exercise proper discernment in these important matters where eternal interests are involved.” 5T 619.

**4. Candidates are to be leaders, not rulers.**

“The man who holds office in the church should stand as a leader, as an adviser, and a counselor and helper in carrying the burdens of the work. He should be a leader in offering thanksgiving to God. But he is not appointed to order and command the Lord’s laborers. The Lord is over His heritage.” LLM 816. John 13:1-20, I Peter 5:1-3

**5. The life should be a testimony to the value of health reform**

“Why do some of our ministering brethren manifest so little interest in health reform? It is because instruction on temperance in all things is opposed to their practice of self-indulgence. In some places this has been the great stumbling block in the way of our bringing the people to investigate and practice and teach health reform. No man should be set apart as a teacher of the people while his own teaching or example contradicts the testimony God has given His servants to bear in regard to diet, for this will bring confusion. disregard of health reform unfits him to stand as the Lord’s messenger.

“The light that the Lord has given on this subject in His word is plain, and men will be tested and tried in many ways to see if they will heed it. Every church, every family, needs to be instructed in regard to Christian temperance. All should know how to eat and drink in order to preserve health. We are amid the closing scenes of this world’s history, and there should be harmonious action in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers. Those who stand aloof from the great work of instructing the people upon this question do not follow where the Great Physician leads the way. If any man will come after Me,” Christ said, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Matthew 16:24.

“The Lord has presented before me that many, many will be rescued from physical, mental, and moral degeneracy through the practical influence of health reform.” 6T 378

**6. Paul and Barnabas were ordained as missionaries by the church that they ministered in, not by the council at Jerusalem. In like manner, Paul ordained men in the churches as he set them up, and he instructed Titus to do likewise.**

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Acts 13:1-3.

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:” Titus 1:5

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Acts 14:23

NOTE: “...(In 1855) J.B. Frisbie, a pioneer minister in Michigan, wrote, in a two-part article under the same title (Church Order), of (1) the elders who had the spiritual oversight of all the churches—the “traveling elders”—and, (2) the “local elders” who had the pastoral care of one church. These he distinguished from the deacons, who were to look after the temporal affairs of the church.” (Review and Herald 6:155, Jan 9, 1855) In the Jan. 23 issue 9, p.164, in answer to a question by John Byington as to whether elders and deacons were to be appointed in every church, James White urged that the New Testament church order be adopted and that in ‘every Church where the numbers, and talents, and graces of individuals are sufficient,’ the officers of the church should be appointed...as late as 1896 the following question and answer appeared in the Review and Herald: ‘If a local elder moves to another church, and is there chosen elder, does he need to be reordained?’ ‘Yes; we think he should be ordained again, because his ordinations are local’ Review and Herald, 73:121, Feb. 25, 1896.” Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, pp. 299,300.

*Based on these previous statements, we find it prudent that the elders in a congregation be chosen by their local church, and ordained by men who are intelligent regarding the candidate’s character and abilities, either at their church or, by prior arrangement, at a wider meeting of the area churches such as a campmeeting, or MASC business meeting. Traveling elders should be known for responsible service in their local church capacity, and ordained to their work by the larger body of churches, at an open forum with the widest possible representation of churches, such as at a campmeeting.*

#### **7. Unordained men are also laborers for Christ.**

“Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” Luke 9:46-50

“There are many who are laborers together with God whom we do not discern. The hands of ministers have never been laid upon them in ordination for the work; but nevertheless they are wearing the yoke of Christ, and exert a saving influence in working in different lines to win souls to Christ. The success of our work depends upon our love to God and our love to our fellowmen. When there is harmonious action among the individual members of the church, when there is love and confidence manifested by brother to brother, there will be proportionate force and power in our work for the salvation of men. Oh, how greatly we need a moral renovation! Without the faith that works by love, you can do nothing. May the Lord

give you hearts to receive this testimony.” Testimonies to ministers and Gospel Workers pg. 188

It is our recommendation, that those ordained to serve the church be evaluated according to the Scriptural and Spirit of Prophecy counsels presented above in order to guard the integrity and influence of an elder’s office.

“God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ’s body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.”AA 160,163.

***Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. II Chronicles 20:20***

## MASC SUMMARY OF DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

1. The following summary of beliefs is for the purpose of confessing Christ and His truth (see Matt 10:32,33; 28:20; Rev 19:10; 22:9); the summary has no authority of its own, and should never be used to settle doctrinal controversy. The Word of God is the authority for resolving any doctrinal differences (see Matt 22:29; 2 Tim 3:16). Since it is "impossible for God to lie", all of His Word is truth (Heb 6: 18; see Titus 1 :2; Psa 119:142; John 17:17); this means that true doctrines will be in harmony with "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" and "all that the prophets have spoken" (Matt 4:4; Luke 24:25). It is dangerous to base any doctrine on only one text (see Isa 28:9-13). Before accepting any doctrine there should be at least "two or three witnesses" from inspiration in support of it (Deut 17:6; 19:15; I John 5:6,8; John 15:26; 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 1 :20, 21; 1 Peter 3: 15; Matt 22:12,34; Rom 3:19; Titus 1 :11).

2. The true and living God, the first person of the Godhead, is our heavenly Father. (Gen. 1 :26; Matt 28:18,19; 1 Cor. 8:5,6; Eph3:9; Jer 10:10-12; Heb 1:1-3; Acts 17:22-29; Col 1:16-18; Gen 1:2; Heb 11:3; John 1:1-3)

3. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, Who created all things in cooperation with His Father and the Holy Spirit, is the eternal Son of God, fully divine, who took upon Himself man's fallen nature, therefore fully human, yet never sinned at any time, is the only Saviour from sin; and man's salvation is by grace through faith in Him. (Matt 28:18,19; John 3:16; Micah 5:2; Matt 1:21; 2:5,6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11,12; Eph 1:9-15; 2:4-8; Rom 3:23-26; Heb 1,2; 4:14,15)

4. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, is Christ's representative on earth, and leads sinners to repentance and to obedience of all God's requirements. He is the Comforter who guides us into all truth and convicts us of sin. (Matt 28: 18, 19; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Rom 8:1-10; Eph 4:30)

5. Through Christ, believers receive forgiveness of sins which are confessed and forsaken, and for which, as far as lies in their power, restitution is made. (Eph 1 :7; Coll:14,15; 1 John 1:7-9; Isa 55:6,7; Eze 33:15; Matt 5:23,24; 6:14,15)

6. The Bible is God's inspired Word, and though written by man, is the authoritative, infallible revelation of God's will, and is the full, sufficient, and only rule of faith and practice. (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Ps 119:9,11,105,130; 1 Thess 2:13; Isa 8:20; Jer 15:16; Heb 4:12)

7. All who enter the kingdom of heaven will be born again, converted individuals. Christ dwells in the converted heart, writing upon it the principles of God's law, leading the believer to delight to obey its precepts, and imparting power for such obedience. (Matt 18:3; John 3:3; 2 Cor 5:17; 6:16; Eze 36:26,27; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:2; Psa 40:8; Heb 8:10-12; John 14:15; Coll:27; 3:16; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:14-21)

8. Upon His ascension, Christ began His ministry as high priest in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, which sanctuary is the antitype of the earthly tabernacle of the former dispensation. As in the type, a work of investigative judgment began as Christ ; entered the second phase of His ministry, in the most holy place, foreshadowed in the earthly service by the Day of Atonement. This work of the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary and the final atonement began on October 22, 1844, closing off the last pre-advent time prophecy of the Bible, the 2300 days. The investigative judgment constitutes the final judgment of our life's record (close of probation) before Jesus returns. (Heb 4:14; 8:1,2; Lev 16:2,29; Heb 9:23,23; Dan 8:14; 9:24-27; Rev 14:6,7; 22:11)

9. The second coming of Christ is the hope of the church, the climax of the gospel, when Jesus will come literally, personally, and visibly, with all of His holy angels. Jesus pointed to signs of the times that would testify that His coming is at hand. And the almost complete fulfillment of all the various lines of prophecy indicates that "He is near, even at the doors". (John 14:1-3; Titus 2:11-14; Heb 9:28; Acts 1:9-11; Rev 1:7; Matt 25:31; Luke 9:25; 21:25-33; Matt 24:14,36-39,33 margin)

10. Mankind is mortal (subject to death). When people die they are unconscious (asleep). All people, good and evil alike, remain in the grave from death until the resurrections. (Eccl 9:5,6; Psa 115:17; 146:3,4; Job 14:10-12,21,22; 17:13; John 11:11-14; 1 Thess 4:13; John 5:28,29)

11. Immortality comes only through obedience to God's word and is bestowed as a gift from God at Christ's second coming. (1 Cor 15:21,22, 51-55; Ps 146:3,4; Eccl 9:5,6,10; 1 Tim 6:15,16; 2 Tim 1:10; 1 John 5:11,12)

12. The righteous dead will be raised to life at Christ's second coming (advent). Together with the righteous living, they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and will go with Him to heaven, there to spend one thousand years (the millennium). (Rev 1:7; John 5:25,28,29; Hosea 13:14; 1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thess 4:13-18; John 11:24,25; 14:1-3; Rev 20:4,5,6; Isa 25:8,9)

13. The wicked that are living at the time of Christ's second advent will be slain by the brightness of His coming. These, with the wicked dead of all ages, will await the second resurrection, at the close of the one thousand years. (2 Thess 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14,15; Rev 20:5,12,15; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; Isa 24:21,22)

14. At the end of the one thousand years, the following events will take place: (a) Christ and the righteous will descend from heaven, with the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2,10); (b) the wicked dead will be resurrected (Rev 21:11,12); (c) Satan, his angels and the wicked will receive the final wages of sin when fire comes down from God out of heaven to utterly destroy them. This is the second death (Rev 20:7-10,14,15); and (d) this fire, which destroys the works of sin, will purify the earth (2 Peter 3:10-14; Mal 4:1-3; Rev 20:4,8).

15. The earth, cleansed by fire and re-created by the power of God, will become the eternal home of the redeemed and God Himself will live with them. (2 Peter 3:9-13; Isa 65:17-25; 35:1-10; 45:18; Matt 5:5; Mal 4:1-3; Prov 11:31)

16. The seventh day of the week, Saturday, is the eternal sign of Christ's power as Creator, Sanctifier, and Redeemer and is therefore, the Lord's day, the true Christian Sabbath, constituting the seal of the living God. It is observed from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 16:24-31; 20:8-11; John 1:1-3,14; Eze 20:12,20; Mark 1:21-32; 2:27,28; Isa 58:13; Luke 4:6; 23:54-56; 24:1; Acts 17:2; Heb 4:9-11; Isa 66:22,23; Lev 23:32; Rev 7:1-8)

17. The observance of Sunday is the Pagan counterfeit of seventh-day Sabbath observance. Sunday has been promoted by the papacy as a mark of her authority. When Sunday observance is enforced by United States civil law it becomes the end-time mark of the beast. (Ex 31:13; Eze 20:12,20; Rev 7:1-8; 13:16; 14:1,9,10)

18. The papacy is the antichrist of the Bible prophecy; it was the great persecuting power of the Middle Ages and will again, in partnership with apostate Protestantism, persecute God's saints at the end of time. It is the change of the Sabbath and the many pagan and unbiblical teachings that

she has introduced to Christendom that denotes her as modern, spiritual Babylon. (1 John 4:2,3; Daniel 7:25; Rev 13:1-8)

19. The tithe is holy unto the Lord and is God's provision for the support of His ministry. It reminds us that God is the owner of all things. Freewill offerings are also a part of God's plan for the support of His work throughout the world. (Lev 27:30-32; Mal 3:8-12; Num 18:20-28; Matt 23:23; Prov 3:9,10; 1 Cor 9:13,14; 2 Cor 9:6,7; Ps 96:8)

20. The Seventh Commandment: ["Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow. ...Marriage was from the creation constituted by God a divine ordinance. The marriage institution was made in Eden. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden. Then let this, God's institution of marriage, stand before you as **firm as the Sabbath** of the fourth commandment." (TSB 158, 159; see 79).] Marriage was ordained by God in Eden before the fall, for the benefit of humanity, and its sanctity is guarded by one of the ten commandments (see Gen 1:27; 2:18-25; Ex 20:14; Prov 18:22; Heb 13:4). The only ground for divorce in Scripture is "fornication", after such a divorce the innocent party has the Scriptural right to remarry, but it is "adultery" for the guilty party to remarry either before or after the innocent party remarries (see Matt 5:31,32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:1-40). If there has been a divorce on other than Biblical grounds, or merely a separation without a divorce, reconciliation is the ideal; but even if the two remain separated, they are still married to each other in God's eyes, and should act accordingly (see 1 Cor 7:10, 11).

21. The Christian is called unto sanctification and his life should be characterized by carefulness in conduct and in modesty and simplicity in dress. There should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women. He or she is to refrain from any attire that is out of keeping with the Biblical rule of modesty, and from the wearing of earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, colorful cosmetics, and any form of adornment that draws attention to themselves. Their influence is to come from the inner adornment of a character that will attract others to Jesus. (2 Kings 9:30; Jer 4:30; 1 Thess 3:13; 4:3,7; 5:23; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:3-5,15; Isa 3:16-24; 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Tim 2:9,10 Deut 22:5)

22. The Christian will recognize his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he will honor God by caring for his body, abstaining from such things as caffeinated and alcoholic beverages, illicit and social drugs, tobacco in all its forms, the blood and fat of flesh foods, and all unclean meats. Christians will be striving to comply with God's instruction concerning the original diet of Gen 1:29 and 3:18. (1 Cor 3:16,17; 6:19,20; 9:25;10:1-11,31;2 Cor 7:1; Gal 5:17-21; 6:7,8; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Lev 11:1-8; Acts 15:29)

23. In the Christian life, there is complete separation from worldly practices such as card playing, theatergoing, dancing, novel reading, competitive sports, watching unprofitable television programs, and listening to sensual, worldly music etc., which tend to deaden and destroy the spiritual life. (2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; 2 Tim 2:19-22; Eph 5:8-11; Col 3:5-10)

24. The church is to come behind in no gift and the presence of the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy is to be one of the identifying marks of God's true church at the end of time. (1 Cor 1:5-7; 12:1-28; Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:10,13; Rev 12:17; 19:10) We recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.

25. The Bible teaches a definite organization. The members of this organization are under sacred obligation to be subject unto Christ, the Head of the church, to loyally support His work, and to share in

its maintenance. They are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. (Matt 16:16-18; Eph 1:10-23; 2:19-22; 1 Cor 14:33,40; Titus 1:5-9; Matt 18:15-18; 1 Cor 12:12-28; 16:1-3; Heb 10:24-27; Acts 4:32-35; 6:1-7)

26. Baptism by immersion is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and openly expresses faith in His saving grace and the giving up of sin and the world. It is recognized as a condition of becoming a member of the body of Christ. (Matt 3:13-17; 28:19; Acts 2:38,41-47; 8:35,39; 16:32,33; 22:16; Rom 6:1-11; Gal 3:27; Col 3:1-3)

27. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper commemorates the Saviour's death; participation by members of the body is essential to Christian growth and fellowship. It is to be preceded by the ordinance of foot washing as a preparation for this solemn service. (Matt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:23-30; John 6:48-56; 13:1-17)

28. Through the study of the Word God speaks to us, imparting light and strength; through prayer the soul is united with God. These are Heaven's ordained means for obtaining victory in the conflict with sin and for the development of Christian character. (Ps 19:7,8; 119:130; John 6:63; 17:17; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Thess 5:17; Luke 18:1; Ps 55:17; Isa 50:4)

29. Every church member is under sacred command from Jesus to use his talents in personal soul-winning work in helping to give the gospel to all the world. When this work is finished and the character of Christ is perfectly reproduced in His people, Jesus will come. (Matt 24:14; 5:48; 25:14-29; 28:18-20; Rev 22:17; Isa 43:10-12; 2 Cor 5:17-20; Rom 10:13-15; Gen 17:1; Eph 4:12,13)

30. In accordance with God's uniform dealing with mankind, warning them of coming events that will vitally affect their destiny, He has sent forth a proclamation of the approaching return of Christ. This preparatory message is symbolized by the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. These messages result in a people who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Amos 3:7; Matt 24:29-34; Rev 14:6-12; Zeph 3:13; Micah 4:7,8; Isa 26:2; Rev 22:14)

*This brief summary should be considered as merely an introductory overview. No believer should consider that this summary includes the entire scope of Christian faith and practice; instead, believers should learn, observe, and even teach all things whatsoever Christ has commanded (see Matt 28:20). Every Christian should have a commitment to study the Word of God daily and continue to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". (2 Peter 3:18; see Luke 2:52; John 6:48-63; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15)*

# Commitment Form

**I (we) believe all of the above Bible doctrines and wish to state so formally by signature, thus covenanting to be (a) member(s) of the Mid-America Sisterhood of Churches.**

**Signatures:**

**The above signed are accepted as members of the MASC by the vote of the body of delegates in business session as indicated by the signatures of the officers.**

**MASC Secretary** \_\_\_\_\_

**MASC Treasurer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Officiating Chairperson** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_