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**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE
USA AND CHURCH WORLD SERVICE**

CONSTITUTION

Approved by the General Assembly
November 13, 2008
Denver, Colorado

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PREAMBLE

The General Assembly is a community of Christian communions who, in response to the gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, as Savior and Lord. These communions covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity of the Church. Relying upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, these communions come together as the General Assembly in common mission, serving in all creation to the glory of God.

ARTICLE I – NAME AND DEFINITIONS

The name of this body shall be the GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA AND CHURCH WORLD SERVICE, hereinafter referred to as the “General Assembly.” The General Assembly is comprised of member communions (general or national church bodies) of the General Assembly, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America (“NCC”), and Church World Service, Inc. (“CWS” or “Church World Service”), as represented by delegates from those communions, NCC and CWS.

ARTICLE II – PURPOSES

The purposes of the General Assembly are:

- To embody in all we do our basic confession of the triune God and of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
- To promote and integrate unity, prayer, dialogue, mission, and social witness;
- To support the integrity of creation and be responsible stewards of resources;
- “To act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately” (the Lund Principle);
- To carry out the work with a commitment to full participation;
- To be an anti-racist body in our life and witness and to promote the dignity and rights of all people;
- To advocate a social, political and economic order based on peace and justice;
- To act in a spirit of collegiality, promote ecumenical education, and support our common work through responsible stewardship; and,
- To respect all faiths and traditions and to engage in dialogue and collaborative action with people of other faiths.

In furtherance of these purposes, the General Assembly will:

- provide opportunity for celebration and worship in order to name signs of the Holy Spirit in our midst, drawing the communions together and challenging them to more faithful common witness;
- facilitate collaboration between NCC and CWS;
- approve, amend or rescind public policy statements as proposed by NCC and CWS;

- 73 • provide opportunities for learning about the vision and programs of the global
74 ecumenical movement, including encouraging programs for young adults and
75 seminarians;
 - 76 • organize opportunities for public witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ that is
77 appropriate to the venue and historical moment. In order to facilitate this objective,
78 the venues of General Assemblies should be in places where member communions
79 have a substantial presence and are able and willing to assist in building local
80 involvement.
 - 81 • engage in community building so as to enable member communions to deepen their
82 understanding of, and relationship with, one another;
 - 83 • witness to the one ecumenical movement by being a body where the close working
84 relationship between the NCC and CWS is demonstrated so that the relationship of
85 unity, justice, and service in the ecumenical movement is clearly affirmed.
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ARTICLE III - MEMBER COMMUNIONS

91 Section 1. Role of General Assembly

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93 The General Assembly has the responsibility to determine the communions that are regular
94 members (“members”) of the General Assembly, and therefore of NCC and CWS, as set forth
95 in this Article III.

97 Section 2. Eligibility

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99 Acceptance by a communion of the nature and purposes of the General Assembly, and of NCC
100 and CWS, as set forth in the Preamble and body of this Constitution and the bylaws of NCC
101 and CWS, respectively, is prerequisite to eligibility for election to membership in the General
102 Assembly, NCC and CWS; provided that once a communion has become a member of NCC
103 and CWS, that communion shall not thereafter become ineligible for such membership based
104 on any subsequent change in this Constitution or the nature and purposes of the General
105 Assembly.

107 Section 3. Election of Communions to Membership

108
109 A communion may become a member of the General Assembly, and therefore of NCC and
110 CWS, upon its request if:

- 111
112 A. it has been certified eligible by the Membership and Ecclesial Relations Committee,
113 according to the Standing Rules, for consideration for membership in the General
114 Assembly, NCC and CWS, at a previous regular meeting of the General Assembly;
 - 115
116 B. two-thirds of the member communions present and voting (separately as communions with
117 one vote each) at a meeting of the General Assembly approve; and
 - 118
119 C. two-thirds of the delegates to the General Assembly present and voting approve.
- 120

121 Section 4. Responsibilities

122

123 Communion in assuming membership in the General Assembly, thereby accept responsibility
124 for assisting in the furtherance of its purposes and work, by making annual financial
125 contributions to NCC and CWS, and by reporting, interpreting and embodying the purposes
126 and work of the General Assembly, NCC and CWS within their constituencies.

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ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

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131 Section 1. Designation

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133 The Officers of the General Assembly shall be the Co-Moderators (who shall serve ex officio
134 during their respective terms of office as the President of NCC and the Chair of CWS,
135 respectively), the General Secretary of NCC, the Executive Director of CWS, and any other
136 officers who may be elected by the General Assembly.

137

138 Section 2. Qualification and Election

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140 A. Each Officer of the General Assembly shall be a member in good standing of a member
141 communion, and shall serve upon its approval.

142

143 B. All officers of the General Assembly shall serve without compensation except as otherwise
144 authorized by the General Assembly.

145

146 Section 3. Suspension or Removal

147

148 The General Assembly may at any regular or special meeting remove any Officer of the
149 General Assembly from elected office with or without cause upon establishment of a quorum
150 and subsequent majority vote, provided at least one delegate of each of two-thirds of the
151 member communions present and voting votes for such removal.

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154 ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP, DELEGATES, VOTING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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156 Section 1. Designation

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158 As a witness to oneness in Christ and His mission, the General Assembly shall give leadership
159 to NCC and CWS through ecumenical sharing among communions and development of the
160 lives of NCC and CWS as communities of communions.

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162 Section 2. Membership

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164 Membership of the General Assembly shall consist of (a) current member communions of
165 NCC that either vote in favor of the adoption of this Amended and Restated Constitution or
166 otherwise ratify their approval of it in writing, and (b) communions that become members of
167 the General Assembly, and therefore of NCC and CWS, after the adoption of this Constitution.

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169 Section 3. Delegates

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A. The maximum number of delegates of a member communion to the General Assembly shall be determined as follows:

There shall be a base of five (5) delegates from each member communion plus:

1. one (1) additional delegate for each 250,000 communicant members or major fraction thereof above the first 250,000 up to a total of 2,000,000; plus
2. one (1) for each 500,000 communicant members or major fraction thereof above 2,000,000 up to a total of 10,000,000; plus
3. one (1) for each 1,000,000 or major fraction thereof above 10,000,000 subject to a maximum of four (4); plus
4. a minimum of one (1) delegate representing interests and concerns as participant in local, regional or national ecumenism with
 - A) one (1) additional such delegate for the next 4,000,000 communicant members or major fraction thereof above the first 4,000,000 and
 - B) one (1) additional such delegate for the next 2,000,001 or more communicant members above the first 8,000,000.

B. The delegation of each member communion shall be selected by the communion. Such delegation shall include, but shall not be limited to:

1. the responsible executive of the communion unless that person is an Officer of NCC or CWS, in which case the communion may name an additional representative;
2. one or more members of the communion's governing body or, as appropriate, executive leadership; and
3. an adequate number, as determined by the communion, of executives of cognate boards or program divisions of the communion.

In selecting its delegation, each communion should follow these guiding principles:

- i.) Delegations should be representative of the communion's racial and ethnic composition;
- ii.) Delegations should be so constituted that approximately one-half are lay, not less than one-quarter are women and approximately one-eighth are under 30 years of age at the time of their selection; and
- iii.) Delegations should be positioned and equipped by their communions to report and interpret the programs and ministries of the General Assembly, NCC and CWS within their constituencies.

219 C. Additional delegates, not in excess of fifteen percent of the total maximum number of
220 delegates as determined above, may be selected by the Nominations Committee and elected by
221 the General Assembly on recommendation of the Nominations Committee, to achieve greater
222 strength with respect to:

223

- 224 1. Persons with special knowledge and expertise;
- 225 2. Additional persons representative of national, regional and local ecumenism;
- 226 3. Persons representative of racial and ethnic minority groups; and
- 227 4. Requisite numbers of lay and clergy persons, women and men, and young and
228 older adults in order to meet the inclusiveness goals of the General Assembly.

229

230 Each such additional delegate shall be a member of a member communion or of a non-member
231 communion eligible for membership in the General Assembly. A person thus named from a
232 non-member communion shall be approved by that communion; a person named from an
233 eligible non-member communion shall be approved by an appropriate member communion
234 after consultation with the proposed additional member's communion. These members shall
235 not affect the number of members permitted to any particular delegation as defined in Section
236 2.A of this Article.

237

238 D. In addition to the delegates determined pursuant to subsections 3-A, 3-B and 3-C of this
239 Article V, members of the NCC Governing Board and the CWS Board of Directors not
240 otherwise included above among the delegates of their respective communions shall be
241 delegates to the General Assembly and considered part of their communion's delegation.

242

243 Section 4. Voting and Additional Participation

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245 Each delegate to the General Assembly shall be entitled to one vote on all matters to be voted
246 upon by the General Assembly. Member communions voting separately as ~~such~~ communions
247 shall be entitled to one vote only as a communion as specified elsewhere in this Constitution
248 on matters relating to the admission of new member communions and on amendments to this
249 Constitution.

250

251 A member communion may appoint or elect alternate delegates for a quadrennium or proxies
252 to attend a particular meeting or session of the General Assembly. Persons named by their
253 communions as alternate delegates for the quadrennium shall receive notices of meeting and
254 minutes of meetings held.

255

256 A member communion may at any time during a quadrennium withdraw one or more of its
257 delegates to the General Assembly and substitute other delegates in their place, provided that
258 the communion's delegation as revised thereby meets the requirements for representation as
259 set forth in Article V, Section 2.B, of the Constitution.

260

261 A member communion may be requested to suspend for cause one or more of its delegates to
262 the General Assembly, provided the Executive Committee has consulted the member
263 communion and recommends such action to a regular or special meeting of the General
264 Assembly and at least two-thirds (2/3) of the General Assembly delegates, representatives and
265 additional members, present and voting, vote to approve such a request.

266

267 Each state ecumenical agency is invited to send one representative, at its own expense, to
268 participate in meetings of the General Assembly with voice but without vote.

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270 Section 5. Responsibilities

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272 The General Assembly shall have authority to:

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274 A. adopt and amend the Constitution and any Standing Rules of the General Assembly and its
275 Committees;

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277 B. elect additional officers of the General Assembly;

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279 C. approve the certification of a communion as eligible for membership in the General
280 Assembly, and therefore of NCC and CWS;

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282 D. elect additional member communions to the General Assembly;

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284 E. approve the certification of delegates to the General Assembly as specified in Article V,
285 Section 3.B and Section 3.D of the Constitution;

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287 F. elect delegates to the General Assembly as specified in Article V, Section 3.C;

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289 G. elect or appoint the General Assembly committees;

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291 H. elect or appoint the following Committees with such composition and numbers as are
292 specified in the Standing Rules: Constitution and Standing Rules; Membership and
293 Ecclesial Relations, Nominations, Committee on Collaboration (referred to in Section 10
294 below), Ecumenical Networks, Inclusiveness and Justice, General Assembly Planning and
295 Committee on Reference. These Committees shall have such responsibilities as are
296 delegated to them by the General Assembly or in this Constitution or the Standing Rules;

297

298 I. elect or appoint such other committees with such composition, numbers and responsibilities
299 as are specified in the Standing Rules and as it determines are necessary or appropriate to
300 carry out its responsibilities;

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302 J. approve, amend and rescind public policy statements, as proposed by NCC and CWS, as a
303 basis for NCC and CWS program development;

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305 K. adopt public statements, including messages and resolutions;

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307 L. receive and act upon reports and recommendations from the NCC Governing Board and the
308 CWS Board of Directors;

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310 M. receive and act upon reports and recommendations from General Assembly committees;

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312 N. review Constitution and Standing Rules changes being considered and advise the
313 Committee on Collaboration regarding such changes; and

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315 O. receive the financial reports of NCC and CWS.

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Section 6. Term of Service

Delegates (other than delegates who are serving by reason of being on the NCC Governing Board or the CWS Board of Directors pursuant to Article V, subsection 3-D above) to the General Assembly shall be appointed or elected for four-year terms, such terms to start January 1 of the first year of the quadrennium and to extend through December 31 of the fourth year or until their successors have been appointed or elected. Notwithstanding the above, a communion may review its list of delegates and make changes therein or fill vacancies, at any time. The term of office of delegates appointed or elected to fill vacancies during the quadrennium shall be for the remainder of the quadrennium or until their successors have been appointed or elected unless otherwise specified by the communion concerned.

Section 7. Meeting.

A. The General Assembly shall meet on a schedule for each quadrennium as mutually determined by both the NCC Governing Board and the CWS Board of Directors.

B. A special meeting of the General Assembly shall be called into session by the Co-Moderators or within ninety days (90) following receipt of a petition for such meeting, specifying its purposes and signed by at least one fourth of the members of the General Assembly. Forty-five (45) days written notice of a special meeting shall be given to all members of the General Assembly and only matters specified in the notice may be considered at such a meeting.

Section 8. Quorum

One-third of the number of authorized delegates to the General Assembly shall constitute a quorum, provided that number includes delegates from a majority of the member communions; and provided further that delegates from two-thirds of the member communions shall constitute a quorum for votes on the addition of member communions or amendments to this Constitution.

Section 9. Delegation of Responsibilities

The General Assembly may delegate to its committees the discharge of any of its responsibilities with the exception of those described below:

Article V, Section 5, Paragraphs A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J.

Section 10. Committee on Collaboration

The Committee on Collaboration shall be elected by the General Assembly and shall be comprised of the President of NCC, two other members of the NCC Governing Board nominated by that body, the General Secretary of NCC, the Chair of CWS, two other members of the Board of Directors of CWS nominated by that body, and the Executive Director of CWS. The Committee on Collaboration shall act *ad interim* on behalf of the General Assembly and shall have all powers of the General Assembly except those powers not authorized to committees under the immediately preceding Section 9. The Committee on

365 Collaboration shall have such other responsibilities as are delegated to it by the General
366 Assembly or in this Constitution or the Standing Rules. All actions of the Committee on
367 Collaboration shall be reported to the General Assembly at its next scheduled session. A
368 majority of the Committee members shall constitute a quorum of the Committee.

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ARTICLE VI - MISCELLANEOUS

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373 Section 1. Status.

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375 The member communions of the General Assembly, NCC, CWS, and the delegates to the
376 General Assembly disclaim any intent to form a legal joint venture, partnership or similar
377 entity.

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379 Section 2. Limitations

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381 The General Assembly shall have no authority or administrative control over its member
382 communions. It shall have no authority to prescribe a common creed, form of church
383 government, or form of worship, or to limit the autonomy of the communions cooperating in
384 it. Membership in the General Assembly, in and of itself, does not constitute an affirmation
385 of the rites and rituals of the other member communions.

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ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION; STANDING RULES

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389 Section 1. Amendments to Constitution

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391 This Constitution may only be amended by the General Assembly as follows:

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393 A. by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the member communions taken by their respective
394 communion delegations, each communion voting separately provided notice of the specific
395 amendment being proposed has been given at least forty-five (45) days in advance; and

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397 B. by a two-thirds vote (2/3) of the individual delegates present and voting.

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399 The text of any proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be distributed in writing to
400 delegates to the General Assembly at least forty-five (45) days in advance of the meeting at
401 which action on the amendment is to be taken.

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403 Section 2. Standing Rules

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405 The General Assembly may adopt, amend or rescind Standing Rules that are not inconsistent
406 with this Constitution by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the individual delegates present and voting.
407 The text of any proposed Standing Rule(s), or amendment or repeal thereof, shall be
408 distributed in writing to delegates to the General Assembly at least forty-five (45) days in
409 advance of the meeting at which action on the adoption, amendment or repeal of the Standing
410 Rule(s) is to be taken.

411