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PROPOSED GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSTITUTION

***RECOMMENDED BY THE
JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND STANDING RULES
TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NCC AND CWS
FOR ACTION IN NOVEMBER 2010***

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

CONSTITUTION

**AS PROPOSED TO BE
AMENDED AND RESTATED
THROUGH NOVEMBER 2010**

25 PREAMBLE

26
27 The General Assembly is a community of Christian communions who, in response to the
28 gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, as
29 Savior and Lord. These communions covenant with one another to manifest ever more
30 fully the unity of the Church. Relying upon the transforming power of the Holy Spirit,
31 these communions come together as the General Assembly in common mission, serving
32 in all creation to the glory of God.

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35 ARTICLE I – NAME AND DEFINITIONS

36
37 The name of this body shall be the GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NATIONAL
38 COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THE USA AND CHURCH WORLD
39 SERVICE, hereinafter referred to as the “General Assembly.” The General Assembly is
40 comprised of member communions (general or national church bodies) of the General
41 Assembly, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of
42 America (“NCC”), and Church World Service, Inc. (“CWS” or “Church World Service”),
43 as represented by delegates from those communions, NCC and CWS.

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46 ARTICLE II – PURPOSES

47
48 The purposes of the General Assembly are:

- 49
- 50 • To embody in all we do our basic confession of the triune God and of Jesus
 - 51 Christ as Savior and Lord;
 - 52 • To promote and integrate unity, prayer, dialogue, mission, and social witness;
 - 53 • To support the integrity of creation and be responsible stewards of resources;
 - 54 • “To act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of
 - 55 conviction compel us to act separately” (the Lund Principle);
 - 56 • To carry out the work with a commitment to full participation;
 - 57 • To be an anti-racist body in our life and witness and to promote the dignity
 - 58 and rights of all people;
 - 59 • To advocate a social, political and economic order based on peace and justice;
 - 60 • To act in a spirit of collegiality, promote ecumenical education, and support
 - 61 our common work through responsible stewardship; and,
 - 62 • To respect all faiths and traditions and to engage in dialogue and collaborative
 - 63 action with people of other faiths.

64
65 In furtherance of these purposes, the General Assembly will:

- 66
- 67 • provide opportunity for celebration and worship in order to name signs of the
 - 68 Holy Spirit in our midst, drawing the communions together and challenging
 - 69 them to more faithful common witness;
 - 70 • facilitate collaboration between NCC and CWS;

- 71 • approve, amend or rescind public policy statements as proposed by NCC and
72 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
78 objective, the venues of General Assemblies should be in places where
79 member communions have a substantial presence and are able and willing to
80 assist in building local involvement.
- 81 • engage in community building so as to enable member communions to deepen
82 their understanding of, and relationship with, one another;
- 83 • witness to the one ecumenical movement by being a body where the close
84 working relationship between the NCC and CWS is demonstrated so that the
85 relationship of unity, justice, and service in the ecumenical movement is
86 clearly affirmed.

88

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90 ARTICLE III - MEMBER COMMUNIONS

91

92 Section 1. Role of General Assembly

93

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

97

98 Section 2. Eligibility

99

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

107

108 Section 3. Election of Communions to Membership

109

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

112

- 113 A. it has been certified eligible by the Membership and Ecclesial Relations Committee,
114 according to the Standing Rules, for consideration for membership in the General
115 Assembly, NCC and CWS, at a previous regular meeting of the General Assembly;
- 116

117 B. two-thirds of the member communions present and voting (separately as communions
118 with one vote each) at a meeting of the General Assembly approve; and

119
120 C. two-thirds of the delegates to the General Assembly present and voting approve.

121
122 Section 4. Responsibilities

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

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131 ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

132
133 Section 1. Designation

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

139
140

140 Section 2. Qualification and Election

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

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

147
148

148 Section 3. Suspension or Removal

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

154
155

156 ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP, DELEGATES, VOTING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

157
158 Section 1. Designation

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

163

164 Section 2. Membership

165

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

171

172 Section 3. Delegates

173

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

176

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

178

179 1. one (1) additional delegate for each 250,000 communicant members
180 or major fraction thereof above the first 250,000 up to a total of 2,000,000; plus

181

182 2. one (1) for each 500,000 communicant members or major fraction thereof
183 above 2,000,000 up to a total of 10,000,000; plus

184

185 3. one (1) for each 1,000,000 or major fraction thereof above 10,000,000 subject
186 to a maximum of four (4); plus

187

188 4. a minimum of one (1) delegate representing interests and concerns
189 as participant in local, regional or national ecumenism with

190

191 A) one (1) additional such delegate for the next 4,000,000 communicant
192 members or major fraction thereof above the first 4,000,000 and

193

194 B) one (1) additional such delegate for the next 2,000,001 or more
195 communicant members above the first 8,000,000.

196

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

199

200 1. the responsible executive of the communion unless that person is an Officer of
201 NCC or CWS, in which case the communion may name an additional
202 representative;

203

204 2. one or more members of the communion's governing body or, as appropriate,
205 executive leadership; and

206

207 3. an adequate number, as determined by the communion, of executives of
208 cognate boards or program divisions of the communion.

209

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

211

212 i.) Delegations should be representative of the communion's racial and ethnic
213 composition;

214

215 ii.) Delegations should be so constituted that approximately one-half are lay,
216 not less than one-quarter are women and approximately one-eighth are under
217 30 years of age at the time of their selection; and

218

219 iii.) Delegations should be positioned and equipped by their communions to
220 report and interpret the programs and ministries of the General Assembly,
221 NCC and CWS within their constituencies.

222

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

227

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

233

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

241

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

247

248 Section 4. Voting and Additional Participation

249

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

255

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

260
261 A member communion may at any time during a quadrennium withdraw one or more of
262 its delegates to the General Assembly and substitute other delegates in their place,
263 provided that the communion's delegation as revised thereby meets the requirements for
264 representation as set forth in Article V, Section 2.B, of the Constitution.

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

272
273 Each state ecumenical agency is invited to send one representative, at its own expense, to
274 participate in meetings of the General Assembly with voice but without vote.

275
276 Section 5. Responsibilities

277
278 The General Assembly shall have authority to:

279
280 A. adopt and amend the Constitution and any Standing Rules of the General Assembly
281 and its Committees;

282
283 B. elect additional officers of the General Assembly;

284
285 C. approve the certification of a communion as eligible for membership in the General
286 Assembly, and therefore of NCC and CWS;

287
288 D. elect additional member communions to the General Assembly;

289
290 E. approve the certification of delegates to the General Assembly as specified in Article
291 V, Section 3.B and Section 3.D of the Constitution;

292
293 F. elect delegates to the General Assembly as specified in Article V, Section 3.C;

294
295 G. elect or appoint the General Assembly committees;

296
297 H. elect or appoint the following Committees with such composition and numbers as are
298 specified in the Standing Rules: Constitution and Standing Rules; Membership ~~and~~
299 ~~Ecclesial Relations~~, Nominations, Committee on Collaboration (referred to in Section
300 10 below), ~~Ecumenical Networks, Inclusiveness and Justice~~, General Assembly
301 Planning and Committee on Reference. These Committees shall have such

- 302 responsibilities as are delegated to them by the General Assembly or in this
303 Constitution or the Standing Rules;
304
- 305 I. elect or appoint such other committees with such composition, numbers and
306 responsibilities as are specified in the Standing Rules and as it determines are
307 necessary or appropriate to carry out its responsibilities;
308
 - 309 J. approve, amend and rescind public policy statements, as proposed by NCC and CWS,
310 as a basis for NCC and CWS program development;
311
 - 312 K. adopt public statements, including messages and resolutions;
313
 - 314 L. receive and act upon reports and recommendations from the NCC Governing Board
315 and the CWS Board of Directors;
316
 - 317 M. receive and act upon reports and recommendations from General Assembly
318 committees;
319
 - 320 N. review Constitution and Standing Rules changes being considered and advise the
321 Committee on Collaboration regarding such changes; and
322
 - 323 O. receive the financial reports of NCC and CWS.
324

325 Section 6. Term of Service

326

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

337

338 Section 7. Meeting.

- 339
- 340 A. The General Assembly shall meet on a schedule for each quadrennium as mutually
341 determined by both the NCC Governing Board and the CWS Board of Directors.
342
 - 343 B. A special meeting of the General Assembly shall be called into session by the Co-
344 Moderators or within ninety days (90) following receipt of a petition for such meeting,
345 specifying its purposes and signed by at least one fourth of the members of the
346 General Assembly. Forty-five (45) days written notice of a special meeting shall be
347 given to all members of the General Assembly and only matters specified in the notice
348 may be considered at such a meeting.

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

ARTICLE VI - MISCELLANEOUS

Section 1. Status.

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

Section 2. Limitations

The General Assembly shall have no authority or administrative control over its member communions. It shall have no authority to prescribe a common creed, form of church government, or form of worship, or to limit the autonomy of the communions

394 cooperating in it. Membership in the General Assembly, in and of itself, does not
395 constitute an affirmation of the rites and rituals of the other member communions.

396

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398 ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION; STANDING RULES

399

400 Section 1. Amendments to Constitution

401

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

403

404 A. by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the member communions taken by their
405 respective communion delegations, each communion voting separately provided notice of
406 the specific amendment being proposed has been given at least ~~forty five (45)~~ thirty (30)
407 days in advance; and

408

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

410

411 The text of any proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be distributed in writing to
412 delegates to the General Assembly at least ~~forty five (45)~~ thirty (30) days in advance of
413 the meeting at which action on the amendment is to be taken.

414

415 Section 2. Standing Rules

416

417 The General Assembly may adopt, amend or rescind Standing Rules that are not
418 inconsistent with this Constitution by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the individual delegates
419 present and voting. The text of any proposed Standing Rule(s), or amendment or repeal
420 thereof, shall be distributed in writing to delegates to the General Assembly at least ~~forty~~
421 ~~five (45)~~ fifteen (15) days in advance of the meeting at which action on the adoption,
422 amendment or repeal of the Standing Rule(s) is to be taken.

423