1. Objective.

The winning of souls to Christ and establishing of assemblies in all places where converts are won, should be regarded as the primary objective of all missions. All other branches of ministry should be subordinated to this.

2. The Local Assembly.

A. We recognize the local assembly as God’s agency through which the Holy Spirit works for the edification of believers and the evangelization of the surrounding regions.

B. We recognize the local assembly as entitled to self-government under Jesus Christ, its living Head, and as having the right to administer discipline to its members in accordance with the Scriptures and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. The spiritual leadership in the local assembly is not necessarily a paid pastor, and where there is no pastor, leadership may be exercised by elders and deacons who are self-supporting.

D. Every assembly should be a training center for instruction in the Word of God and in spiritual ministry.

E. Every assembly established should be self-supporting from the beginning, although in some places where property is expensive and preaching places can be secured only at considerable expenditures, this principle may have to be modified for a time.

3. The Missionary.

A. The ministry of the missionary is one of great importance, since he is an ambassador for Christ and is sent as God’s representative to the people. He must remember that above all else he is a servant, and should never consider that race or control of finances...
entitle him to exercise lordship over the assemblies. As soon as the national converts manifest gifts of ministry they should be encouraged to take responsibility.

B. The missionary should never consider that he is permanent in any one place, but ever have his eyes on the regions beyond, seeking to make the assembly in each place a self-supporting and self-propagating unit. He will, of course, like the apostle Paul, find it necessary to exercise a spiritual oversight over the new assemblies until they are fully established, after which a Council should be formed by the local assemblies to supervise their own work.

C. Great care should be exercised in the purchase or erection of buildings. Wherever possible church buildings should be erected by the nationals. Missionary residences, rest homes, and Bible schools may have to be financed from home sources.

D. Missionary policy and program for the development of the field shall be governed by the indigenous church principles as set forth by the General Council. No project shall be undertaken that eventually cannot be taken over, supported and managed by the national church. While precedence in the work and the practices of other mission societies should be carefully considered, these are not to be accepted as guides. However, when methods have already been introduced which are not in harmony with indigenous principles, patience, wisdom, and tact are required in establishing a new policy to avoid disrupting the harmony and unity of the work. Such changes may require years to work out.

4. The Bible School.

A. The Bible school is necessary to give more advanced training to men and women who have proved themselves in their local assemblies as having a call from God for special services.

B. In every Bible school the ordinary standards of native life in that country should be observed in order not to alienate the students from their own people.
Reference has been made in Chapter III, “Self-Government,” to the standard of membership for local assemblies, adopted by the Assemblies of God in Central America. The following is a translation from Spanish of this standard. It is given here as an illustration and suggested guide for other fields where something similar may be needed. This booklet was prepared especially for new converts, the greater part of whom came out of Roman Catholicism. For that reason those doctrinal truths are presented first which will help clarify certain unscriptural ideas generally held by the people. Naturally, in a non-Catholic area, a different order may be preferable.

To conserve space, this “Standard” has been slightly abridged here. Questions to aid in the study of each section have been deleted.

**Standard of Faith and Fellowship**  
*for the Local Assemblies of God in Central America*

**Prologue**

The purpose of this booklet is to set forth essential Biblical doctrines and practices as a basis of faith and fellowship among the members of the local church. These doctrines are phrased so that they may be easily taught to the new convert and readily understood by him. Moreover, the booklet will explain to the convert the new relationships which he now enjoys with other believers, and will teach him how to behave worthily as a member of the church to which he is to belong.

The pastor, or someone designated by him, will hold weekly classes for new converts during two or three months, until he has finished teaching this booklet. Those who attend these classes are called “members under instruction.” At the end of this time of instruction, those who have studied will be examined as to their faithfulness to Christ and their comprehension of Christian truth. Having given satisfactory evidence
of their Christian life to the Official Board of the church, they shall be baptized in water and become “active members.”

In case sufficient proof of the sincerity of any member under instruction is lacking, he will not be baptized, but his case will be considered again at the time of the next baptizing.

**The Bible ordains the teaching of Christian doctrine**

1. The disciples were sent to teach in all the world (Matt. 28:19,20; Mark 16:15).

2. After Pentecost, the apostles taught the truths of the gospel both to converted and unconverted (Acts 2:40–42; 11:26; 19:9,10; 20:20; and 2 Tim. 2:1,2).

3. Believers in Jesus Christ who obey the Word of God will receive the following benefits:

   a. They will have a firm foundation for their faith and a guide to help them in the service of God (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

   b. They are promised the continual presence of Christ with them, who will confirm His Word with signs following (Matt. 20:20; Mark 16:20).

   c. They will partake of the love of God (Jn. 14:15,21,24; 15:10).

   d. They will enjoy true spiritual liberty (Jn 8:31,32; Rom. 8:1,2).

**I. The Purpose of the Local Church**

Believers in Christ who live in the same community should gather together to form a local church or assembly (Matt. 18:17,20; Acts 8:1; 9:31). The purpose of this assembly is:

1. To worship God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23,24; Psa. 117; Col. 3:16). This is our spiritual worship.

2. To be instructed in the holy doctrines of the Scriptures, and so grow in knowledge, holiness, and love (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; Psa. 119:9; 2 Cor. 7:1; Jn. 13:34). This is our education and culture.

3. To spread the knowledge of the gospel everywhere, by means of the testimony of a good life and by preaching the Word of God (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). This is our service to humanity.
II. Fundamental Doctrines

A. The Church of Christ

1. The Church of Christ is a people (a) redeemed by the blood of Jesus (Eph. 1:7); (b) separated from the world (2 Cor. 6:16–18); (c) believing the gospel (Jn. 20:31); and (d) fulfilling the Christian precepts (Titus 2:11–14).

2. The spiritual nature of the Church is revealed by the following symbols:

   a. The body of Christ. (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:12,27). This symbol reveals the spiritual relation that exists between Christ and the believer, as well as the union among believers. It also shows that the spiritual authority rests in Christ, the head, and not in any intermediate person on the earth. Nevertheless the ministry of the gospel is carried on by men (Eph. 4:11–16).

   b. A building or temple (1 Cor. 3:9,16; 1 Pet. 2:6,7; Eph. 2:20–22). The believers are the “spiritual stones” used in the construction of this spiritual temple. This establishes first of all that Christ is the Rock upon which the Church is founded and second, that it is an error to teach that the Church is founded on Saint Peter, since he was only one of the apostles, and as an apostle, was a part of the foundation as were all the others. Eph. 2:20. This teaches that God dwells in the Church to guide and bless her.

   c. The True Vine (Jn. 15:1,2). Christ and the believer are united in the same spiritual life as the branch receives its life from the vine. The believer is a branch that ought to bear fruit. God, the Husbandman, purges each believer so that he will bear more fruit (Heb. 12:5,6–11). This symbol teaches us that the believer is made partaker of the divine nature which imparts to him faith, grace, love, and courage; second, that the believer should bear fruit, bringing other souls to Christ; and third, that God disciplines His sons so that they will walk in holiness and be fruitful in service.
3. How to become a member of the Church. The all-important requirement in order to be a member of the Church of Christ is regeneration (Jn. 3:3–5). Three steps are necessary:

a. Faith in Christ and in His blood that cleanses from sin (Jn. 14:6; 3:6,16; Acts 16:31; Eph. 1:7; 1 Jn. 1:7,9).

b. True repentance. Acts 2:38; Matt. 9:13. This means to confess our sins to God and to forsake them (1 Jn. 1:9; Jn. 8:11; 5:14; Prov. 28:13).

c. A public confession of faith in Christ. Rom. 10:9,10; Mark 8:38.

4. The work of the Church in the earth.

a. To preach to every creature (Matt. 28:19; 1 Pet. 2:9,10).

b. To maintain the Bible standard of holiness and righteousness before the world (Eph. 5:25–27; Matt. 5:13–16).

c. To be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14; Gal. 6:10; Matt. 5:16,44,45).

5. The financial support of the Church in the earth. Salvation cannot be purchased with money, nor can we pay for the spiritual blessings God sends us (Isa. 55:1,2; Matt. 10:8).

Funds are required to pay the expenses of the ministry and evangelize the world. The Church is supported financially by its members. This is natural, for the members are those who have the greatest interest in the Church’s mission. The tenth part of the believer’s income is the portion which should be dedicated to the work of God. This is the tithe. Offerings are gifts over and above the tithes. Tithing for the work of God has ever been the practice of faithful men of God in the three principal periods of Bible History.

a. In the period of the patriarchs, centuries before Moses gave the Law, men of God paid tithes (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:4; Gen. 28:22).

b. Under the Law of Moses, tithing was established (Lev. 27:30–34). It was of such importance that God pronounced special blessings on those who fulfilled this requirement and cursings upon those who failed to do so (Mal. 3:8–10).

c. The period of the Church. Although the Church is not under the Law of Moses (Luke 16:16; Rom. 6:14), yet St. Paul
referred to the system of tithing under the Law as a model for the support of the ministry (Num. 18:21 and 1 Cor. 9:13,14). Note the words “even so” of verse 14. (See also the words of Jesus in Matt. 23:23.)

It is important to note the difference between the system of tithing under the Law and as it is practiced by the Church. The Israelites did it by obligation under the Law, while believers give from love and gratitude to God (2 Cor. 9:6–8). The entire chapter 8 of Second Corinthians deals with the grace of liberality. Verse 2 shows that poverty and tribulation make our gift greater in the eyes of God. Verse 7 teaches that we should not desire gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit while neglecting the grace of liberality.

B. The Holy Bible

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God by which He reveals His will to His people (2 Peter 1:20,21). It is the infallible rule of faith and conduct to guide us from earth to glory (Psa. 119:11,105; Jn. 5:24; 20:31).

2. We should not add to, nor take away from the Bible (1 Peter 1:25; Rev. 22:18,19).

C. The One True God

The one true God has revealed Himself as the Eternal “I AM”; and further has revealed that He exists as a Holy Trinity: as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; Isa. 43:10,11; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

D. The Salvation of the Soul

1. The salvation of the soul is a spiritual and miraculous transformation which God effects in the individual who exercises faith in the Word of God, faith in the blood of Jesus, and repents of his sin (Jn. 3:3–5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 1:11–13; 1 Peter 1:18,19,23; Acts 2:38).

2. Only in Christ is there salvation (Acts 4:10–12; 16:30,31; Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). There is no salvation through the Law of Moses (Rom. 3:20–22); nor through the worship of images
The Indigenous Church

(Ex. 20:4,5; Isa. 44:9–18). Mary, the mother of our Lord, is not able to save us—rather she, too, needed a Saviour (Acts 4:12; Luke 1:46–48).

E. A Holy Life—Sanctification

God is holy, and requires that His children be holy (1 Peter 1:15,16; Heb. 12:14).

1. Sanctification means (a) cleansing from sin; (b) separation from sin and; (c) consecration to God (2 Chron. 29:5,15; 1 Thess. 4:3; 2 Cor. 6:17; Num. 8:17).

2. Sanctification is attained through (a) faith in the Word (Jn. 17:17; Eph. 5:26); (b) faith in the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:10,29); and (c) the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (1 Pet. 1:2; Gal. 5:5,16,22).

3. Sanctification is effected (a) instantaneously, at the time of conversion (1 Cor. 6:10,11); and (b) continuously, each day as the believer walks with God (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Jn. 1:7).

F. Prayer

Prayer is the privilege and duty of every person (1 Tim. 2:8). It is a drawing near to God in spiritual communion in order to worship Him and praise Him for His mercies (Psa. 103:1; Phil. 4:6); to bring our requests to Him (1 Jn. 5:14; Jn. 15:7; Matt. 7:7); and to intercede on behalf of others (Eph. 3:14–17; 1 Sam. 12:23). Prayer should be made to God in the name of Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:13,14); in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26); and with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15).

G. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

1. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was not only for the apostles but is the privilege of every converted person (Acts 2:38,39; Matt. 3:11).

2. Each believer should seek with faith until he receives (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5).

3. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:4; 10:44,46; 19:6; Mark 16:17–20).
4. The baptism in the Spirit gives power to be a faithful witness (Acts 1:8; 4:31).

H. Divine Healing

1. Divine healing is promised in the Holy Scriptures (Mark 16:18; James 5:14,15).
2. Healing from sickness has been provided in the atonement, along with salvation from sin. Healing is the privilege of every believer (Isa. 53:4,5; 1 Pet. 2:24).
3. Christ healed all who came to Him (Matt. 8:16,17).
4. God is our healer (Ex. 15:26).

I. The Future Return of Christ

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the believer.
1. At the time of His coming the Church will be caught up to meet Him, including both those who have died in Christ, and those who are still alive (1 Thess. 4:16,17)
2. After this extraordinary happening, the Lord will come to the earth with His holy saints, bringing salvation to His people, Israel, and will reign upon the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

J. Eternal Condemnation

After the millennium, the wicked dead will be raised and made to appear before the great white throne where they will be judged according to their works and then cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15; Matt. 25:41).

III. Sacraments

A. Christian Baptism

1. Christian baptism is a type of our death to the “old man” and the resurrection of the “new man” to walk in “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:22–24).
2. Baptism is a testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore the sincerity of the faith of the candidate should be clearly manifest (1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 8:26–38; Col. 2:12). This explains why it is not possible to baptize infants: they cannot give a testimony of faith.

3. Baptism is administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19).

4. The word “baptize” in the original Scriptures signifies “to immerse.” This harmonizes with the teaching of Rom. 6:3,4.

B. The Lord’s Supper

1. This sacrament was instituted by the Lord who commanded that it should be practiced until His second coming (Matt. 26:26–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–31).

2. The bread and the wine represent the body and blood of Christ. His body was broken when He carried our sins on the cross. His blood establishes the New Covenant (1 Cor. 11:24,25).

3. The Lord’s Supper is observed in memory of the death of Jesus and contains a promise of His second coming (1 Cor. 11:26).

4. It is the privilege and duty of every active member to participate in the Lord’s Supper, for it is a symbol of our partaking of the divine nature (Jn. 6:53).

5. It is necessary that the believer examine himself first, so as not to take the Lord’s Supper unworthily (1 Cor. 11:28). (Note: If a believer feels that he is spiritually unprepared to partake, instead of refusing to do so, he should seek God for pardon and renew his consecration to God, and thus he will be able to partake with all the church. In this way the Lord’s Supper will be a means of keeping the spiritual life of the church at a high level.)

(Here follows an explanation of the ceremonies of the dedication of Children, the Marriage Ceremony and the Funeral Service, which are not included here for lack of space.)
IV. THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

A. Requirements for Membership. The member must:

1. Have experienced salvation through faith in Christ, and have expressed his desire to follow Him all the days of his life (Rom. 10:9,10).
2. If married, have been married according to civil law (1 Cor. 6:9; 7:2,10,11; 1 Pet. 2:13; Heb. 13:4).
3. Have studied this Standard of Faith and Fellowship carefully and have agreed to fulfill its teachings.
4. Have been baptized in water (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38).

(Note: A believer may also be received by letter of recommendation from the Official Board of another Assembly of our fellowship. When a believer does not present a letter of recommendation, he should be received as an “inactive” member until information can be obtained concerning his conduct.)

B. Duties of Members

1. To live a consecrated life and not contaminate oneself with the world (2 Peter 1:4–8; 1 Cor. 6:9–11).
2. To learn how to win souls for Christ (Acts 8:4).
3. To honor, respect and support the pastor (1 Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Cor. 9:12–14).
4. To contribute to the support of the work with tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:10; Matt. 23:23).
5. To attend regularly the services of the church.
7. To establish a family altar in the home, as conditions permit.
8. To vote in the business sessions of the church, seeking God’s guidance for every decision.

C. The Privileges of Members

1. To receive the ministry of the Word from the pastor (Acts 20:27,28).
2. To receive visits from the pastor.
The Indigenous Church

3. To take part in the activities of the church.
4. To receive the Lord’s Supper.
5. A member may be named to fill one of the official posts in the church.
6. A member may receive license as a lay preacher to help in the work in the outstations.
7. Each member shall receive a membership card.

D. The Member’s Responsibility to Other Members

1. To visit the sick, help the needy, comfort those in trouble, and strive to maintain harmonious relationships with all (1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 12:14; James 1:27; Matt. 25:35–40).
2. To pray for a brother overtaken in a fault (1 Jn. 5:16).
3. To withdraw from those who cause divisions (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6,7,13–16).

E. The Member’s Responsibility Toward the Unconverted

1. To live a clean life and give a good testimony of power and grace of God (1 Pet. 2:9,12,15; 1 Thess. 5:22; Matt. 5:13–16).
2. To strive to give the gospel to the unsaved and pray for their salvation (2 Cor. 5:18,19; 1 Tim. 2:1–7).
3. To love his enemies (Matt. 5:43–48).

V. DISCIPLINE

When a member is accused of a fault of such a nature that it affects the testimony and standard which the church is endeavoring to maintain, that member should be called before the Committee in charge of discipline. (The Committee shall be composed of the members of the Official Board. If the case so requires, one or two other members of the church may be added to the Committee [Matt. 18:15; 1 Cor. 6:1–5]). The purpose of this Committee is:

1. To correct the fault (2 Cor. 7:8,9).
2. To restore the offender (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 6:14,15).
3. To preserve the good testimony of the church (1 Tim. 3:7; Titus 1:10–13).
4. To protect other members from falling into the same error (1 Cor. 5:6,7).

The Committee shall proceed in the following manner:

1. The Committee shall meet, and the accused shall be called in. This should be done as soon as possible after the fault has become known.
2. In case the accused denies his guilt, he must not be judged guilty unless his guilt is proved by trustworthy witnesses (2 Cor. 13:1).
3. If when the accused person is called before the Committee, he does not wish to appear, then he shall be judged after the testimony of the witnesses has been heard (1 Cor. 5:3,4).
4. The Committee shall endeavor to arrive at the real truth in the case, and if the accused is found guilty, the Committee should endeavor with love to lead him to a sincere repentance in order that he may be restored (2 Cor. 2:7,8).
5. If the accused humbles himself in true repentance, asking pardon of the church in public, he shall be pardoned (Matt. 6:14,15).
6. Disciplinary action should not be considered as a punishment. A time of discipline, determined according to the seriousness of his sin, shall be decided upon for the fallen brother who desires to be restored; first, as a measure to prove the sincerity of his repentance; and second, to give time for the other members to observe his genuine restoration before he is permitted to exercise all of his privileges as a member of the church.
7. During the time when a member is under discipline, he shall not exercise the usual privilege of membership; however, he must be faithful in attending the services. The time of discipline may be from one to three months, not more than this period except in very exceptional cases.
8. The recommendation of the Committee shall be made public in the next meeting of the church, for its approval.
9. If the offender does not manifest a spirit of humility and repentance, this shall be sufficient reason to remove his name from the list of members (1 Cor. 5:13).

10. When such a person has been removed from the list and desires to be readmitted, he should present his petition in writing to the Official Board of the church.

11. A member who intentionally stays away from services for six months, and who also withdraws his support shall be liable to the cancellation of his membership.

VI. THE OFFICIAL BOARD

The Official Board shall work for the smooth functioning of all the activities of the church and for its spiritual development. It also shall be responsible for the providing of a place of worship and the necessary equipment (Acts 6:3; Titus 1:5).

1. The members of the Official Board shall be the pastor and from three to seven deacons, depending on the size of the assembly. These members shall name a secretary and a treasurer from among themselves. The pastor is president of all the sessions of the Official Board and of the church, except the annual sessions in which the pastor is elected, in which case he shall turn over the chair to the first deacon, or to one of the presbyters or executive officers of the Conference, if present.

2. The pastor shall be elected, or reelected, each year. This applies also to the rest of the members of the Official Board.

3. The deacons should be men of spiritual fitness and consecration, having been active members of the church for at least one year (1 Tim. 3:8–13).

4. The duties of the Official Board.
   a. The pastor is responsible for the faithful ministry of the Word of God in the services and has the general direction of the activities of the church.
   b. The deacons are to help the pastor in the activities of the church as follows:
(1) Visitation.
(2) Forming part of the Committee in charge of discipline.
(3) Seeing that the property is kept in good condition.
(4) Seeing that the funds of the church are properly handled.
c. The Official Board will hold a private session each month in which it will endeavor to:
   (1) Solve the problems in the church. These decisions shall be presented to the church in session for its approval.
   (2) Present a financial report.
   (3) Make minutes of the session.
d. The Official Board shall have the oversight of establishing outstations and Sunday schools in the surrounding district.
e. The Official Board, together with the presbyter of the section, shall extend licenses for lay preachers to those members who are chosen to help the pastor to care for the outstations.
f. The Official Board shall cooperate with the presbyter of the section in arranging for the sectional fellowship meeting.
5. Deaconesses will also be elected by the assembly, or they may be named by the Official Board. There should not be more deaconesses than deacons in an assembly. They will help the pastor in the various activities of the church such as, visiting the sick, keeping the chapel clean and decorated, and in certain cases may form part of the Committee in charge of discipline, when the Official Board requests it.

VII. DEPARTMENTS

There are three organized departments in the local church: The Sunday School, Christ’s Ambassadors, and the Women’s Missionary Council.
1. These three groups shall have their own officials.
2. They shall work in full harmony with the pastor, who is overseer of all church activities.
3. They may take up offerings for the expenses of their activities.
The Indigenous Church

Endnotes

1 From the Missionary Manual of the Foreign Missions Department of the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

2 Ralph D. Williams and Francisco R. Arbizu originally prepared the “Standard” for the work in El Salvador, Central America.

3 Point “c,” while not included in the original booklet, has been added here at the suggestion of Foreign Missions Department officials.

4 Explanation might well be added here to the effect that the rules that govern a Christian’s conduct are to be found particularly in the New Testament, rather than in the Old. See Matt. 5:27,28,38,39. (MLH.)

5 See “Privileges of Members,” 3, 4, 5, and 6. It has been objected that since partaking of the Lord’s Supper is a means of grace, this privilege should not be denied to a member under discipline. The writer, also, was reluctant at first to accept the position of the national brethren in this regard. However, in a Roman Catholic community, Holy Communion is given to a communicant only after he has gone to confession and done penance. Hence, in the public mind, it is a symbol of full restoration. Our Central American brethren feel that much damage is done to the testimony of the church when a member guilty of a grievous sin, such as drunkenness or immorality, is permitted to partake of the Lord’s Supper before he has given proof of the sincerity of his repentance. Such a one may soon after repeat his fault, and then again ask forgiveness. This is precisely the common practice among Catholics in that area. It is felt that to permit such an unhappy situation in our own assemblies would do more harm to the sinning individual and to the church than would result by depriving him of the privilege of partaking of the Lord’s Supper for a brief time, while he proved the sincerity of his repentance.

This is presented as an example of how an indigenous church may solve its own problems. It is not insisted upon as a guide for other fields. MLH.