



ASSEMBLY FOR ALL NATIONS

LOCAL CHURCH CONSTITUTION English Translation

LILONGWE, MALAWI

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LOCAL CHURCH CONSTITUTION

In accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of Assembly for All Nations, all churches under Assembly for All Nations shall conduct their affairs in accordance with this Local Church Constitution, to ensure unity of purpose and consistency in conduct and practice. As a Pentecostal church, every local church shall aim to spread the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, establish indigenous churches, and observe all the principles of Assembly for All Nations.

PART 1

NAME

Every church, with the approval of the National Executive Committee (NEC) in its country, may use any name under the principal name of Assembly for All Nations (Part 1, Section 3 of the AfAN Constitution).

PART 2

DEFINITIONS (Part 2 of the AfAN Constitution)

i. AfAN Global Board.

This is a board of twelve officers responsible for administering the affairs of Assembly for All Nations worldwide. The Board shall also administer the affairs of the Global Pastors Conference, comprising the National Pastors who lead AfAN in all countries where the church is established.

ii. General Assembly.

This means the body of duly convened delegates, constituted as described in Part 9, Section 2 of the Constitution, which shall exercise the highest power and authority in Assembly for All Nations.

iii. **National Church**

This term shall sometimes be used in place of Assembly for All Nations in any country where the church is established.

iv. **National Officers**

These are the officers responsible for administering the church in each country.

v. **National Board of Administration**

This is a board of six officers in the national leadership office who shall administer the affairs of the General Assembly, the General Presbytery and the National Executive Committee when those bodies are not in session.

vi. **National Office**

This is the central office from which the senior church officers in each country carry out their duties on behalf of the National Church.

vii. **National Executive Committee**

This is the body responsible for overseeing all the affairs of the church in a country.

viii. **General Presbytery**

This is the second-highest governing body of Assembly for All Nations in each country. It comprises leaders from the Global Board, the National Executive Committee, Division Committees, District Directors, National Ministry Directors and Heads of Departments.

ix. **Division**

This is an administrative area of the National Church comprising several districts. Its leader is called a Director.

x. **District**

This is an administrative area of the National Church. Its boundaries may follow the administrative district boundaries of Malawi, but the church may also establish its own boundaries with the approval of the General Assembly. [Translator's note 1]

xi. **District Assembly**

This is the meeting that exercises the highest authority within a District.

xii. **District Director**

This is the chairperson and leader of the entire District.

xiii. **Cluster**

A District shall be divided into smaller areas, each with officers responsible for administering its affairs. Clusters shall oversee several local churches.

xiv. **Cluster Director**

This is the chairperson and leader of a Cluster.

xv. **Local Church**

This is a body of believers who meet as a local congregation to fulfil the purpose of Assembly for All Nations.

xvi. **Indigenous Missionary Churches**

These are local churches that are self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. They also have a responsibility to plant other churches that operate in the same way.

xvii. **Church Departments**

These are bodies that perform various supporting functions for the church, including health, education, relief and development.

xviii. **Church Ministries**

These are bodies that carry out activities directly related to the core purposes of Assembly for All Nations.

xix. **Advisory Services**

These are services provided by retired pastors, experienced pastors and people in other occupations who may be asked to advise pastors in active ministry.

xx. **Global Disciplinary Council**

This is the highest and final worldwide disciplinary tribunal of Assembly for All Nations.

xxi. **National Disciplinary Council**

This is the highest disciplinary tribunal of Assembly for All Nations in each country.

xxii. **General Disciplinary Committee**

xxiii. **National Directors of Ministries**

These are the persons responsible for leading and supervising the work and activities of the church's ministries.

xxiv. **Pentecostal Church**

This term describes a National Church or local church whose practices and conduct conform to those of the New Testament church. It believes in baptism in, filling with, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit for ministry in the present age. It also believes that the initial outward evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues.

PART 3

THE LOCAL CHURCH

Section 1 — Nature

A body of believers that meets regularly for worship, belongs to a Cluster, and follows the principles and doctrines of Assembly for All Nations shall be recognised as a local church and shall fulfil the following requirements (Part 11, Section 2 of the AfAN Constitution):

- i. The local church shall maintain a register of persons who have attended the church consistently for six months.
- ii. The church shall support its pastor through tithes, offerings from its members and funds obtained from other sources.
- iii. There shall be church elders who meet the qualifications prescribed by the Constitution and Bylaws of Assembly for All Nations and this Local Church Constitution.
- iv. The church shall have the following functioning ministries and bodies:
 - a) Bible School
 - b) Women's Ministry
 - c) Youth Ministry
 - d) Men's Ministry
 - e) Children's Ministry
 - f) Evangelism and Missions Ministry

- g) Relief, Education and Development Committee
- h) HIV/AIDS and Health
- i) Home Cells
- j) The local church shall support students attending a ministerial training college approved by Assembly for All Nations, either by paying their fees in full or by sharing the cost with the students according to the church's capacity, and by assisting them in other areas.
- v. The local church shall have a pastor's residence, or secure accommodation for its pastor, and shall have a well-maintained place of worship. Where the church does not own a pastor's residence, it shall pay the pastor's rent.
- vi. The church shall provide the pastor with a monthly allowance to support the pastor's family, together with other assistance, including support for home-cell activities, airtime and transport to church meetings.
- vii. The church shall be expected to grow spiritually, numerically and financially.

Section 2 — Composition

The local church shall comprise:

- i. Pastors approved by the AfAN Global Board.
- ii. Church elders appointed by the local pastor.
- iii. Members admitted in accordance with the church's constitution.

Section 3 — Responsibilities of the Local Church

The responsibility of the local church is to carry out and fulfil the following purposes of Assembly for All Nations:

- i. To promote and support the spread of the Gospel throughout the world.
- ii. To promote and support the worship of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in spirit and in truth.
- iii. To encourage and support all believers.
- iv. To provide opportunities for fellowship among Christians of the same faith.
- v. To promote assistance to those in need.

Section 4 — Special Activities of the Local Church

The local church shall participate in all activities included in the annual programme of Assembly for All Nations, as follows:

i. Pastor Appreciation Day

This is a day on which the church expresses appreciation to the pastor for the work being done in the congregation. The church shall prepare gifts to be presented at the end of the sermon, and ministries and individuals shall also be given an opportunity to present their gifts. This day does not replace the day on which the church ordinarily gives gifts to the pastor.

ii. Other Special Days

There shall be days for Children's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Evangelism and Missions, and any other days established by the Global Board.

On these special days, a special offering shall be received to support the central office of the relevant ministry, in addition to the regular offering for that day, which shall remain with the local church.

Section 5 — Standards for Church Membership

Every church shall designate a day for receiving new members.

After baptism, all prospective members shall undergo instruction to demonstrate their faithfulness and to learn the principal doctrines of Assembly for All Nations, together with teaching on the proper conduct and responsibilities of believers.

The requirements for membership are:

- i. Being born again.
- ii. Baptism in water.
- iii. Living a holy life.
- iv. Faithful attendance at worship services.
- v. Tithing on all income received by the believer before any deductions.
- vi. Faithfulness to the doctrine and principles of Assembly for All Nations.
- vii. Successful completion of membership instruction.

Section 6 — Qualifications for a Church Elder or Minister

- i. The person shall be born again.
- ii. The person shall be baptised in water.
- iii. The person shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.
- iv. The person shall be faithful in giving tithes, offerings and all other church contributions.
- v. The person shall faithfully attend worship services and all other meetings.
- vi. The person shall be faithful to the doctrines and beliefs of Assembly for All Nations.
- vii. The person shall live an exemplary life and have a good reputation.
- viii. The person shall be an admitted member of the local church.
- ix. The person shall be willing to submit to the authority of the Lead Pastor and all pastors serving at the church.

Section 7 — Church Council

Every local church shall have a Church Council comprising:

- i. The Lead Pastor.
- ii. All assisting pastors appointed by the Lead Pastor.
- iii. The Administrator, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer, Home Cell Coordinator and other leaders of ministries or church bodies.

Section 8 — Appointment of Church Elders and Ministers

- i. Church elders or ministers shall be appointed by the Lead Pastor to serve for one or two years. They may be reappointed if they perform their duties well.
- ii. A church elder or minister may be removed from office for failure to perform the duties of the office or to support the Lead Pastor's vision.

Section 9 — Duties of the Church Council

The Church Council shall perform the following duties:

- i. Support, communicate and further the Lead Pastor's vision.

- ii. Promote adequate support for the pastors by providing sufficient assistance for their families, suitable housing and all other provisions for their welfare, including pension contributions.
- iii. Ensure that the place of worship is presentable and well maintained.
- iv. Ensure that all ministries operate in accordance with the pastor's vision.
- v. Ensure that the church and its pastors are protected.
- vi. Receive reports from all ministries.
- vii. Examine and approve applications for membership.

Section 10 — Board of Administration

The Local Church Board of Administration shall comprise:

- i. The Lead Pastor.
- ii. An assisting pastor, where there is one (Executive Pastor).
- iii. The Administrator.
- iv. The Secretary.
- v. The Deputy Secretary.
- vi. The Treasurer.
- vii. The Home Cell Coordinator.

Section 11 — Duties of the Local Church Board of Administration

The Local Church Board of Administration shall perform the following duties:

- i. Ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the church.
- ii. Advise the pastors on the conduct of church activities and on plans for church income and expenditure.
- iii. Employ and dismiss church employees under the direction of the pastors.
- iv. Consider and determine remuneration for pastors and church employees. The Board shall report these arrangements to the Church Council.
- v. Lead the development of church policies concerning administration, finances and personnel.
- vi. Hear and decide cases.
- vii. Establish procedures and policies for the administration of the church.

When the local church pastor dies, the Board shall:

- a. Arrange the funeral together with the church leaders.
- b. Allow the pastor's family to remain at the church for six months.
- c. Provide the surviving family with the support the pastor had been receiving for three months.
- d. Assist in ensuring that the money held in the Ministers' Benefit Fund is paid to the surviving family.
- e. Arrange transport for the surviving family to their home village or to the place where they will reside.

Section 12 — Duties of Local Church Officers

i. Lead Pastor

Authority to appoint a Lead Pastor to a local church shall rest with the Cluster, District, Division or National Executive Committee (NEC). These bodies shall also have authority to transfer a Lead Pastor to another church.

Unless prevented by circumstances, the pastor shall be present at the church at least three times a month and shall perform the following duties:

- a. Appoint the church elders.
- b. Be responsible for the spiritual life of the church.
- c. Determine and establish the purpose of the church.
- d. Oversee all the work of the church.
- e. Provide the church's vision and a plan for achieving it.
- f. Chair all church meetings. Church elders shall not hold a meeting without the Lead Pastor's knowledge.
- g. Be a member of all boards administering the church's ministries, but shall not vote in elections.
- h. Sign all documents relating to civil law and banking, unless this responsibility has been delegated to another person.

ii. Executive Pastor

Authority to invite or remove an Executive Pastor rests with the Lead Pastor of the local church. The Lead Pastor shall regard the Executive Pastor as a fellow pastor who is entitled to respect. If the services of the Executive Pastor are no longer required at that church, the church shall continue to support that pastor until another church is assigned to the pastor. Executive Pastors shall perform the following duties:

- a. Serve as deputy to the Lead Pastor.
- b. Perform duties assigned by the Lead Pastor from time to time.

iii. Administrator

The Administrator shall perform the following duties:

- a. Conduct the affairs of the church on behalf of the pastors when all the pastors are absent, or when instructed to do so even if the pastors are present.
- b. Prepare and present reports to the church.
- c. Perform the duties set out in the Church Leadership Manual.

iv. Secretary

The Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- a. Keep minutes of all meetings and issue them within 30 days after each meeting.
- b. Maintain church statistics.
- c. Communicate to the church all matters that the Lead Pastor wishes members to know.
- d. Perform all duties assigned by the Lead Pastor.
- e. Prepare and present reports to the church.

v. **Deputy Secretary**

The Deputy Secretary shall perform the following duties:

- a. Serve as deputy to the Secretary.
- b. Perform duties assigned by the Secretary from time to time.

vi. **Treasurer or Financial Officer**

The Treasurer shall perform the following duties:

- a. Safeguard all church funds and assets and administer them under the direction of the Lead Pastor.
- b. Make every effort to maintain proper financial records and accounts.
- c. Prepare financial reports for the church and present them to the Church Council.
- d. Ensure that financial records are maintained in a manner acceptable to persons qualified in financial administration.
- e. Prepare an annual financial plan and submit it to the Church Council.
- f. Chair the Finance Committee.
- g. Perform all duties assigned by the Lead Pastor.

Section 13 — Meetings

- i. The Church Council shall meet once every three months.
- ii. The Local Church Board of Administration shall meet once a month.
- iii. No meeting shall take place without the Lead Pastor's presence or approval. If a meeting is held otherwise, its purpose shall be regarded as improper.

Section 14 — Finances

i. **Opening a Bank Account**

Every church is encouraged to open an account with a bank of its choice. The pastor shall be the principal signatory. It is not advisable to keep church money in the home of a member or pastor.

ii. **The Church's Tithe**

Every church shall remit its tithe to the District Office each month. Where a church fails to remit its tithe for three months in any year, its Local Church Board of Administration shall be subject to discipline by the appropriate leaders.

iii. **Missions**

Assembly for All Nations is a missionary church. Every church shall therefore make every effort to remit 5% of its monthly offerings to the Division Office.

iv. **Missions Day**

The first Sunday of every month shall be Missions Day, and a missions offering shall be received.

v. **Ministerial Training**

The ministerial training college is very important to Assembly for All Nations. Its work must therefore be supported by the churches. Every church shall contribute 5% of its monthly income to All Nations Bible College (ANBC).

vi. **Ministers' Benefit Fund**

This fund holds money for pastors to receive when they retire from ministry. Every local church shall make its contribution to the fund in accordance with Part 9, Section 3 of the principal Bylaws of Assembly for All Nations.

vii. **Building Committee**

The Building Committee is responsible for raising funds to construct the church's headquarters in Lilongwe. Every church shall contribute 2% to this fund each month.

PART 4

PASTORS' WIVES

A pastor's wife shall support her husband's ministry. She shall also serve as an adviser to the Women's Ministry in the local church. Church members shall accord the pastor's wife the same respect they give to the pastor. The pastor's wife is also expected to treat the church respectfully and avoid quarrelling with its members. She is expected to undertake a one-year course at a Bible school.

If the Lead Pastor's wife is recognised as a minister in her own right and holds ministerial credentials, she may be appointed as an assisting pastor, but not as a co-pastor with the Lead Pastor. However, she shall cease to serve as an assisting pastor if her husband is disciplined or transferred to another church. If her husband, who was the Lead Pastor, dies, she shall continue as an assisting pastor at that church.

PART 5

CODE OF CONDUCT

Section 1 — This section shall be read together with Parts 18 and 19 of the Assembly for All Nations International Constitution. It clarifies matters that may not have been stated clearly in those Parts.

Section 2 — This Code of Conduct provides guidelines and standards of proper behaviour for members of Assembly for All Nations. Each country and community has its own culture, distinct from others. Nevertheless, there is a Christian way of life that reflects Christ. It demonstrates our commitment to God regardless of cultural differences. Deliberate violation of this Code of Conduct may therefore constitute sufficient grounds for discipline. The Local Church Board of Administration shall determine whether disciplinary action is necessary.

Section 3 — Improper conduct and an impure way of life may give rise to disciplinary action. Such conduct includes:

- i. Wife beating.
- ii. Habitual borrowing.
- iii. Failure to repay debts.
- iv. Habitual begging.
- v. Making romantic advances towards, or becoming romantically involved with, a person whom one is counselling.
- vi. Failure to maintain confidentiality.
- vii. Failure to exercise sound judgement in matters of sexual conduct.
- viii. Gossiping and falsely accusing others of things they have not done.
- ix. Being found to have committed adultery, or creating an appearance of wrongdoing, such as being found in an inappropriate place at an inappropriate time with a woman or man (1 Thessalonians 5:22); behaving indecently towards a woman or man, including touching breasts, thighs or genitals, or forcing a woman or man to engage in improper acts.
- x. Being found guilty by a civil court.

- xi. Membership of secret societies.
- xii. Engaging in corruption inside or outside the church.
- xiii. Failure to pay tithes for three months in any year.

Section 4 — A Local Church Pastor Who Disobeys Church Leaders

A local pastor shall be subject to correction by the Cluster, District or Division for persistent disobedience to leaders, or for refusing a transfer even when the relationship between the church and the pastor has broken down. Correction may also be warranted where the church has failed to grow after the pastor has served there for five years or more.

Section 5 — Local Church Members Who Disobey Church Leaders

Church members may be disciplined for the following reasons:

- i. Rebellion.
- ii. Lack of a sense of ownership and responsibility for the church.
- iii. Disrespectful criticism of leaders.
- iv. Refusal to heed the counsel of leaders.
- v. Seeking to remove a pastor from a church without following church procedures.
- vi. Treating leaders rudely in speech or conduct.
- vii. Creating divisions in the church.
- viii. Inciting disorder within or outside the church.
- ix. Opposing the beliefs of Assembly for All Nations.

Section 6 — Misuse of the House of God

- i. Using the house of God for business or other activities that may bring the name of Jesus into disrepute.
- ii. Neglecting the care of the house of God.

Section 7 — Violations of Proper Christian Conduct

- i. A member shall show kindness to an incoming pastor after the previous pastor has transferred to another church.
- ii. A member shall not disparage the work of a new pastor by comparing it with the work of the former pastor.
- iii. A member shall not promote another pastor's merits in order to bring that pastor to the church.
- iv. A member shall not form factions within the church.
- v. A member shall not instigate rebellion against the pastor of the church.
- vi. A member shall not disparage a fellow church member.

PART 6

DISCIPLINE (in accordance with Part 19 of the Bylaws)

Section 1 — Nature and Purpose of Discipline

Discipline shall be administered in accordance with the Word of God, and the church is responsible for administering it. Its purpose is to bring honour to God, preserve the holiness and integrity of ministry, and lead those disciplined to repentance and restoration.

Discipline shall aim to restore the minister or member and to protect the spiritual life of the church. It shall seek to save and correct, and shall be administered with compassion.

Section 2 — Procedure for Disciplining a Local Church Member

- i. The Local Assembly Board of Administration shall hear cases involving members of the local church and impose discipline in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of Assembly for All Nations.
- ii. If a member is dissatisfied with the decision of the local church tribunal, the accused person or complainant has the right to appeal to the Cluster tribunal. Such cases shall be heard by a tribunal appointed for that purpose. Appeal tribunals shall exist at both Cluster and District levels.

Appointment of Appeal Tribunals

- i. The Cluster or District Board of Administration shall appoint two experienced pastors and two spiritually mature members from that area to constitute an appeal tribunal.
- ii. An appeal shall be heard within 30 days of the date on which it is lodged.
- iii. Appeal tribunals shall be appointed for four-year terms, corresponding to the terms of the Cluster or District Boards of Administration. National and Division leaders may intervene in difficult cases that Cluster and District tribunals cannot resolve, but such intervention shall be for the purpose of providing assistance only.
- iv. A case shall be heard within 30 days of its receipt. If it is not heard within 30 days, an appeal may be made to a higher tribunal.
- v. A member found to have exceeded the prescribed limits shall be expelled from Assembly for All Nations. After expulsion, that member shall not be permitted to join another Assembly for All Nations church.

Section 3 — Restoration of an Expelled Member

If an expelled member wishes to return to Assembly for All Nations, the decision to readmit the person shall depend on whether the member has genuinely repented.

Where this is the case, the following procedure shall apply:

- a. The member shall write a letter requesting readmission.
- b. The letter shall be sent to the body that expelled the member.
- c. Upon receiving the letter, that body shall invite the member for an interview and examination.
- d. If satisfied that the member has repented, the body shall grant provisional readmission for a period of six months, but not exceeding one year, at a church of the member's choice. The pastors of that church shall then give their recommendation on whether the member should be fully readmitted.

Section 4 — Duration and Requirements of Member Discipline

- i. The period leading to restoration shall not exceed six months, except where the offence involves adultery, sexual relations between unmarried persons, sexual relations between men or between women, sexual relations with an animal or with one's own child, or similar conduct. In such cases, the disciplinary period shall exceed six months but shall not exceed twelve months.
- ii. A member under discipline shall faithfully attend all church meetings and participate in other church activities, but shall not exercise any leadership responsibility.

- iii. During the disciplinary period, the member shall be permitted to receive Holy Communion because the member is born again and should remain in fellowship with fellow believers in the Lord. The member must, however, demonstrate genuine repentance.
- iv. Every member under discipline shall continue to pay tithes to the church.
- v. If a member dies while under discipline, the full Christian funeral rites shall be conducted, but the circumstances of the member's standing shall be explained.
- vi. Restoration shall depend on the offender's demonstration of repentance and participation in church activities, as provided in subsections (ii) and (iii) above.
- vii. Funeral of a person who had not been admitted as a member. If a pastor is invited to conduct the funeral of a non-member, the pastor shall use the opportunity to reach others who are lost. Church members, however, shall not be obliged to take the lead as they would at a member's funeral. The reason for the pastor's participation shall also be explained. Songs may or may not be sung. All arrangements shall follow the decision of the church elders according to the circumstances of each case.

PART 7

AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

(Part 30 of the Assembly for All Nations Constitution)

This Constitution may be amended at a duly convened General Assembly of Assembly for All Nations, provided that the General Secretary has first circulated the proposed amendments in writing to District Assemblies through the Divisions at least three months before the General Assembly. An amendment shall require the approval, by vote, of two-thirds of those present at the meeting.