

**Bylaws of**  
**Religious Association**  
**VEREINTE KIRCHE GOTTES e. V.**  
**(United Church of God-Germany)**

**Last Revision: May 3, 1999**

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# **Bylaws of the Religious Association “Vereinte Kirche Gottes e. V.” (United Church of God-Germany)**

## **§ 1 Name and Legal Form**

1. The religious association is a Christian church bearing the name “Vereinte Kirche Gottes e.V.” (United Church of God-Germany).
2. It is a private religious association in the state of Northrhine-Westfalia in the Federal Republic of Germany.
3. The Church in Northrhine-Westfalia represents the members in other states of the Federal Republic of Germany. If the Vereinte Kirche Gottes should establish its own corporations in other federal states of the Federal Republic of Germany, then the Board of Directors of the Church in Northrhine-Westfalia will become the Board of Directors of the corporations in these other federal states.
4. The members of the church view the legal corporation Vereinte Kirche Gottes e.V. (e.V. = registered association) as a tool to accomplish the commission given to his church by Jesus Christ.

## **§ 2 Location of Business**

1. The business location of the Church is 53589 Niederkassel.
2. The business location can be changed by a board resolution.

## **§ 3 Association**

1. The Vereinte Kirche Gottes is associated with the parent church “United Church of God, *an International Association*”, a charitable organization registered in the state of California, subsequently referred to as “United Church of God” in these Bylaws.
2. The Vereinte Kirche Gottes in Northrhine-Westfalia is the official representative of the United Church of God in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Vereinte Kirche Gottes represents the members of the United Church of God in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland for as long as there are no corporations in Austria or German-speaking Switzerland recognized by the United Church of God.

Corporations in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland recognized by the United Church of God will only be founded after consultation between the Board of Directors of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes and Council of Elders of the United Church of God.

3. The Constitution - and the foundational beliefs contained therein - of the United Church of God, as ratified by the General Conference of Elders (“General Conference”), form the foundational beliefs and practices of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.
4. If the continuation of the recognized faith of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, as expressed in Article 2 and sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.1.10, 2.1.12, 2.1.19 and 2.1.20 of the Constitution of the United Church of God, should be threatened by the association, then under these circumstances this association can be partially or completely dissolved. A partial or total dissolution of the association requires a board resolution that must be confirmed by the Ministerial Assembly and the Member Assembly. A 3/4 majority vote is required. A quorum for this purpose shall be established with a 3/4 participation for all three internal branches as defined in § 6.
5. After a corresponding resolution of the Board of Directors of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes the Vereinte Kirche Gottes will also recognize the “Rules of Association” ratified by the General Conference in addition to the Constitution of the United Church of God as binding for the associational relationship and for cooperation.
6. Ordinations of elders of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes are agreed upon mutually by the Ministerial Assembly of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes and the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, and performed by a representative of the Ministerial Assembly of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.

A revocation of an ordination of an elder of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, initiated by the Ministerial Assembly of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, must be confirmed by the Council of Elders of the United Church of God.

In order to protect the integrity of all members of the international association of the United Church of God, the internal branches of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes agree to recognize the revocation of the ordination of an elder of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes initiated by the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, for as long as the associational relationship according to section 1 exists.

7. Ordinations of deacons and deaconesses of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes and their revocation are handled according to the guidelines of the United Church of God.
8. Ordinations of elders, deacons and deaconesses recognized by the United Church of God but not performed by the Vereinte Kirche Gottes are recognized by the Vereinte Kirche Gottes. After consultation with the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, the Board of Directors reserves the right to determine if and to what extent ordained people are able to serve within the area of jurisdiction of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.
9. In all cases of temporary unresolved conflict between the internal branches of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, the Board of Directors of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes shall solicit suggestions for solutions from the Council of Elders of the United Church of God.

In cases of temporary unresolved conflict the internal branches involved of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes may mutually resolve by separate resolutions with a simple majority to seek binding arbitration through the Council of Elders of the United Church of God.

In cases of temporary unresolved conflict that threaten the business functioning capability of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes the internal branches involved are required to seeking binding arbitration through the Council of Elders of the United Church of God.

#### **§ 4 Purpose**

1. The direct and sole purpose of the church is

a) **the spreading of the Word of God, in accordance with the Bible**, in the Federal Republic of Germany, in other German-speaking countries and in all the world, with the goal of:

teaching as many people as possible, irrespective of race, nationality and origin, about the gospel of the Kingdom of God and to help them live according to the principles of the Word of God (the Bible).

This can be accomplished through the spoken and printed word, through television and radio programs, video and audio recordings and all other suitable means, as well as through local church congregations.

After consultation with the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, the Board of Directors reserves the right to determine how the spreading of the Word of God is to be adjusted to the cultural needs of the German-language region.

b) **the shepherding of the faithful** by ordained elders appointed by the Ministerial Assembly, in the form of church services, conducting annual biblical festivals, Bible studies, seminars, youth work, personal visitation, baptisms, wedding ceremonies, funerals and other services, such as promote the care of the flock according to the Bible.

After consultation with the Council of Elders of the United Church of God, the Board of Directors reserves the right to determine how the shepherding of the faithful according to the Bible is to be adjusted to the cultural and special needs of the German-language region.

c) **the support of needy persons** in the area of operation of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes as defined in § 4, Section 1a), including church members, who as a result of their social circumstances (including war, expulsion, refugee status) or because of their physical, mental or emotional condition, or their economic situation, are in need of financial or material support.

3. To achieve the purpose according to § 4
  - a) the church can found a charitable foundation and/or other organizations which can fulfill duties of the Church and also assume cultural duties;
  - b) local church congregations according to § 11 are to be founded, and instructional centers can be founded where people can be trained to fulfill these purposes.
  - c) support can be provided for other organizations affiliated with the United Church of God located outside the area of operation of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.
4. To achieve the purpose according to §4 Section 1c)
  - a) one-time, repeated or regular support can be given to needy individuals;
  - b) other humanitarian organisations can be supported;
  - c) a special assistance fund can be established.

### **§ 5 Financing**

1. The required funding for the purposes of the church are raised:
  - a) by voluntary contributions,
  - b) by the voluntary giving of the biblical tithe by the members of the Vereinite Kirche Gottes or other persons.
2. A regular internal audit and an external audit by an independent auditor are to be established.
3. The Board of Directors and/or the Director is required to seek competent advice in economic matters.
4. An annual financial report in suitable form in accordance with § 7 Section 12 is to be made available to the membership.

### **§ 6 Internal Branches**

The internal branches of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes are:

1. Board of Directors (§7), 2. Ministerial Assembly (§8), 3. Member Assembly (§9).

## **§ 7 Board of Directors**

1. The Board of Directors of the church consists of a chairman and six other members, for a total of seven persons.
2. The members of the Board of Directors determine by a 2/3 majority vote from among themselves the chairman. The chairman shall be elected by a simple majority on the third ballot, if a 2/3 majority cannot be reached during the first two ballots.

The chairman must be and remain a recognized, ordained elder residing in the area of jurisdiction of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes in order to be able to occupy his office as chairman.

3. The Ministerial Assembly appoints the members of the Board of Directors according to a nomination procedure approved by the Board of Directors. The nomination procedure and subsequent resolutions by the Board of Directors to amend the procedure must be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Ministerial Assembly and by a simple majority of the Member Assembly.
4. All members nominated for the Board of Directors must have been baptized members of the Church for at least seven years, must be at least 30 years old and without reproach within and without the Church.

Members of the Board of Directors must be and remain respected members of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, in order to exercise their office.

Members of the Board of Directors must support the Constitution ratified by the General Conference of the United Church of God. Members of the board must support the “Rules of Association” of the United Church of God ratified by the General Conference, after the board of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes has also ratified the “Rules of Association”.

If one of these points should become questionable, the Board of Directors shall be decided by a 2/3 majority vote whether a member of the Board of Directors may remain on the board.

5. In the case of a premature vacancy on the board, the board shall elect a replacement to serve until the next regular election of the Board of Directors.
6. The Board of Directors decides all matters of the Church.

A quorum for the Board of Directors exists, if the chairman and at least 2/3 (3/4 in the case of resolutions according to § 3 Section 4 and § 13 Section 1) of the other board members are present. The Board of Directors decides by a 2/3 majority vote. Resolutions regarding the dissolution of association (§ 3 Section 4) and dissolution of the Church (§ 13 Section 1) require a 3/4 majority vote.

The spouses of board members are allowed to participate in board meetings without the right to vote, if and for as long as they are eligible to participate in the Member Assembly in accordance with § 9 Section 1. At the request of a board member the Board of Directors by a 2/3 majority vote may limit or suspend the right of attendance for spouses of board members when this appears to be appropriate if there are confidential or personal matters to be discussed.

The President and the member of the Council of Elders of the United Church of God are eligible to participate without the right to vote in meetings of the Board of Directors.

7. Board members are not paid for their work on the board. Compensation for attending board meetings and/or expenses incurred in performing duties may be reimbursed in accordance with the corresponding guidelines.

To the extent permitted by law, this corporation may indemnify its officers, employees and other persons permitted by law against all expenses, judgments, fines, legal expenses and other financial demands arising from their work for the corporation.

8. The Church shall be represented for legal and other purposes jointly by the chairman and another member of the board. The board may designate other official representatives.
9. The chairman and the other members of the board shall be elected initially for one year, followed by a term of two years, and then for three year terms.
10. The chairman of the Board of Directors, as the Director, conducts the day-to-day operations of the Church according to these by-laws and the order of business of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, and the resolutions of the Board of Directors.

The chairman also conducts the meetings of the Ministerial Assembly.

The office of the chairman of the board may be separated from that of the Director by a board resolution when the size of the Church and the amount of work make this decision appropriate.

11. The Board of Directors may form project committees, which may include those who are not members of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors may also form committees on a need basis consisting of members of the Church. Men and women shall be appointed to such committees.

12. The Board of Directors is required to create an annual report of activity from the previous calendar year, which shall show activity according to the purpose of the Church and which shall provide simple recognition of how Church funds were utilized. This report shall be made available to all members.

13. The hiring of full-time elders or a major change in the job duties of a full-time elder must be confirmed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Ministerial Assembly.
14. Prior to a corresponding board resolution, proposed terminations of elders employed by the Vereinte Kirche Gottes are to be discussed with the Council of Elders of the United Church of God.
15. The Board of Directors is required to consider suggestions made by a majority vote of the Ministerial Assembly, and to explain a rejection of such suggestions. If the Ministerial Assembly insists on its suggestion after receiving the explanation for the rejection, then a solution must be sought in accordance with § 3 Section 9.
16. Within the framework of existing ordinances the Board of Directors shall issue its own order of business. The order of business is to be made available to all members.

### **§ 8 Ministerial Assembly**

1. All recognized ordained elders of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes in accordance with § 3 Section 6 and Section 8 are members of the Ministerial Assembly. An elder's membership in the Ministerial Assembly shall continue as long as he remains a member of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes and is eligible to exercise the office of an elder.

An elder in these by-laws means a servant of God ordained in accordance with biblical criteria.

2. Wives of elders may participate in the meetings of the Ministerial Assembly if and for as long as they are eligible to participate in the Member Assembly in accordance with § 9 Section 1. Only the ordained elders are eligible to vote. The chairman may limit or suspend the right of attendance for wives when this appears to be appropriate if there are confidential or personal matters to be discussed.
3. A quorum of the Ministerial Assembly exists when 2/3 of the elders (3/4 of the elders in the case of board resolutions in accordance with § 3 Section 4 or § 13 Section 1) are present.

With the exception of section 7 and 8 below, decisions of the Ministerial Assembly are to be made by a two-thirds majority vote.

4. Meetings of the Ministerial Assembly are presided by the chairman of the board.

The Ministerial Assembly shall be convened by the chairman of the Board of Directors:

- a) at least once a year;
- b) for the nomination of the members of the Board of Directors according to the procedure to be determined by the board according to § 7 Section 3;

- c) for the approval of the nominating procedure for the appointment of the Board of Directors to be determined by the Board of Directors and for the approval of later board resolutions to amend that procedure according to § 7 Section 3;
- d) prior to major, foundational decisions involving work in the Church;
- e) for the approval of the hiring of a full-time elder or a major change in the job duties of a full-time elder according § 7 Section 13;
- f) prior to any change in these by-laws according to § 12 Section 3;
- g) upon the majority request of the elders;
- h) prior to the dissolution of the association according to § 3 Section 4;
- i) prior to the dissolution of the Church according to § 13 Section 1.
- j) for decisions involving the disfellowshipment of a member according to § 10 Section 5.

Points e) and j) may be delegated to a committee of elders by the Ministerial Assembly.

- 5. A meeting agenda containing the items for discussion is to be submitted in a timely fashion to all conference members.
- 6. The same order of business used for meetings of the Board of Directors according to § 7 Section 16 shall be used for conducting meetings of the Ministerial Assembly.
- 7. The Board of Directors is required to discuss and provide a reason for rejection for suggestions made by a majority of the Ministerial Assembly.

Suggestions to be considered during a meeting of the Ministerial Assembly must be proposed by at least one fourth (1/4) of the elders.

- 8. The Ministerial Assembly can initiate an early nomination of the Board of Directors by a three fourths majority resolution.

### **§ 9 Member Assembly**

- 1. All members of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes listed in the official membership list according to § 10 Section 2 and who are not disfellowshipped or suspended are eligible to participate in the Member Assembly or its written deliberations.
- 2. The Member Assembly shall be convened by the chairman of the Board of Directors:
  - a) if the Board of Directors recommends a dissolution of the associational relationship according to § 3 Section 4;
  - b) if the Board of Directors recommends major changes in these by-laws according to § 12 Section 3;
  - c) if the Board of Directors recommends the dissolution of the church according to § 13 Section 1;

- d) to approve a change in the nomination procedure for the Board of Directors according to § 7 Section 3;

The required quorum for points a) and c) shall be three-fourths (3/4), for point b) two-thirds (2/3), and for point d) a simple majority.

The Member Assembly shall decide changes in the by-laws according to § 12 Section 3 by a two-thirds (2/3) majority; the dissolution of the association according to § 3 Section 4 or the dissolution of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes according to § 13 Section 1 by a three-fourths (3/4) majority and the approval of a change in the nomination procedure for the Board of Directors according to § 7 Section 3 by a simple majority of the votes cast.

3. Members of the Member Assembly may submit suggestions for nominations to the Board of Directors in accordance with a procedure to be determined by the Board of Directors in accordance with § 7 Section 3.
4. The votes of the Member Assembly according to section 2 b) and e) and the solicitation of nominations for the Board of Directors in accordance with section 3 may be determined by written means.
5. The minutes of resolutions approved by the Member Assembly according to section 2 shall be confirmed by the signatures of the chairman of the Board of Directors and by a member of the Member Assembly designated by the chairman of the Board of Directors.
6. Written notice of decisions to be made according to section 2 b) and d) must be mailed at least four weeks prior to the ballot deadline. The date of the postmark shall establish validity. To be eligible for consideration, a ballot may not have a postmark later than the ballot deadline.

Written notice of decisions to be made according to section 2 a) and c) must be mailed at least twelve weeks prior to the meeting date. The postmark of the written notice shall establish its validity.

### **§ 10 Membership**

1. Any person of legal religious age, regardless of race, nationality or origin, may become a member of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.
2. Membership is determined by a person's voluntary biblical baptism recognized by the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.

Unclear cases re: membership shall be decided by the Ministerial Assembly in accordance with the practice of the United Church of God.

Members of the United Church of God who become resident in the area of jurisdiction of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, are automatically members of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.

3. All members according to section 2 are to be recorded in a membership list. The creation and continual maintenance of this list shall be provided for by the Ministerial Assembly.

This list is the official document that determines the eligibility to participate in the Member Assembly according to § 9 Section 1.

4. Members are entitled to exercise freedom of conscience. In order to comply with the biblical injunction concerning unity of fellowship, members of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes respect their common faith and unity as expressed in the following documents:
  - a) the currently valid constitution of the United Church of God;
  - b) these by-laws of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes.

5. A member may terminate his/her membership in writing at any time without having to state the reasons. In order to maintain the membership list properly according to section 2, the termination of membership should be submitted in writing to one of the elders.

If a member should not declare the termination of membership in writing but make clear through repeated absence from the meetings of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes that the member is no longer interested in continuing the membership, then after one year the elder responsible for the member shall initiate the cancellation of the member's membership in the Ministerial Assembly's membership list. The member shall be given prior notice of this action.

6. A member may be disfellowshipped according to biblical criteria. A disfellowship of a member decided upon by the responsible elder must be confirmed by the Ministerial Assembly or by a ministerial committee authorized by the Ministerial Assembly. The decision for disfellowshipment shall be rendered on the basis of a 2/3 majority vote. Prior to the final confirmation of the disfellowshipment by the Ministerial Assembly or a committee of the Ministerial Assembly the member has the right to a counseling with a neutral representative of the Ministerial Assembly.

If a member is not in agreement with this decision, he may appeal the decision in accordance with a procedure to be developed and implemented by mutual consent of the Ministerial Assembly of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes and the Council of Elders of the United Church of God. Such member shall be considered suspended from fellowship pending a final decision.

If the committee confirms the disfellowship, the Ministerial Assembly is required to give corresponding written notice to the Board of Directors.

6. Baptismal and disfellowship procedures are conducted in accordance with the corresponding pastoral instructions.

7. Meetings of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes such as church services, Bible studies, etc., in accordance with § 4 Section 1 b) are private meetings of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes. The Vereinte Kirche Gottes welcomes all guests, friends and supporters at such meetings who wish to worship God with the Vereinte Kirche Gottes in peace.

### **§ 11 Local Church Congregations**

1. Each assembly of members of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes recognized by the Board of Directors of the United Church of God is a local church congregation.
2. Each local church congregation is lead by an elder assigned by the Vereinte Kirche Gottes, who is assisted by deacons and deaconesses and other elders.
3. Each local church congregation may form one or more church councils. These church councils shall assist the ministry in serving the local church, the entire church, and, as the opportunity arises, the local community.
4. Matters of concern for local congregations may be presented to the Board of Directors by the local church pastor or a delegate of the local church council duly authorized by the local church pastor.

This provision shall not limit each member's individual right to contact a member of the Board of Directors directly.

### **§ 12 Change of By-Laws**

1. Resolutions of the Board of Directors pertaining to changes in the by-laws and the dissolution of the Church are to be reported to the tax authorities having local jurisdiction.
2. Changes in the by-laws pertaining to the purpose of the Church require the approval of the tax authorities having local jurisdiction for tax-exempt organisations.
3. Major changes in the by-laws approved by a corresponding resolution of the Board of Directors require the approval of a 2/3 majority vote of the Ministerial Assembly and the Member Assembly.

Exempted from this provision are changes in the by-laws pertaining to § 2 (Business Location), minor changes in wording and other minor alterations.

### **§ 13 Dissolution**

1. A resolution of the Board of Directors for the dissolution of the Church shall require a 3/4 majority vote of the Board of Directors, the Ministerial Assembly and the member conference.

2. Following the dissolution or revocation of the Church, or in the case of the removal of its declared purpose, the remaining assets shall be distributed to a public corporation or to a recognized charitable organization, group of people or assets with the stipulation that the assets distributed be utilized to pursue exclusively and directly a purpose in agreement with the purposes stated in § 4. In cases of disagreement a relief organization such as UNICEF is to be selected.

If the dissolution of the Church occurs at a time when a branch of the Vereinte Kirche Gottes is already in existence in another state of the Federal Republic of Germany, then the assets of the Church are to be transferred preferably to the branch.

#### **§ 14 Charitable Purposes**

1. The Church is engaged exclusively and directly in religious, charitable and non-profit activities in accordance with the section “tax-exempt purposes” of the tax regulations.
2. The Church is not active for profit and does not pursue self-serving economic goals.
3. The resources of the Church may be used only for purposes in accordance with these by-laws.
4. A distribution of resources to the membership of the Church is prohibited.
5. The Church may not favor any person in terms of administrative expenses that are foreign to the purpose of the Church or by providing unreasonably high compensation.

# Nomination of Board of Directors

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*United Church of God-Germany • Bylaws • § 7 Board of Directors, Section 3*

## **EXCERPT FROM THE BYLAWS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD-GERMANY**

### **§ 7 Board of Directors**

3. The Ministerial Assembly appoints the members of the Board of Directors according to a nomination procedure approved by the Board of Directors. The nomination procedure and subsequent resolutions by the Board of Directors to amend the procedure must be approved by a 2/3 majority of the Ministerial Assembly and by a simple majority of the Member Assembly.

### **NOMINATION PROCEDURE**

1. All members of United Church of God-Germany may nominate up to seven persons for the new Board of Directors.
2. The Ministerial Assembly shall chose from among the fourteen candidates nominated by the Member Assembly with the most votes.
3. If the Ministerial Assembly has less than three members, then additional persons from the outgoing Board of Directors shall by selected by lots to augment the Ministerial Assembly to ensure a final selection by at least persons.
4. The nomination procedure shall also take place according to points 1-8 of the selection process determined by resolutions of the Board of Directors dated April 1996 and May 1996.
5. The Board of Directors shall appoint two members from the Member Assembly who shall confirm the appointment results of the Ministerial Assembly.

### **SELECTION PROCESS BOARD RESOLUTIONS OF APRIL 1996 AND MAY 1996**

By resolution the Board of Directors has established the following selection process for the Board of Directors:

1. Determination of those who are willing to be nominated for the Board of Directors.
2. Compilation of a list of candidates resulting from the determination according to Point 1.

## Nomination of Board of Directors

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*United Church of God-Germany • Bylaws • § 7 Board of Directors, Section 3*

3. Distribution of the list of candidates to all registered members. Each member may nominate up to seven persons.
4. The fourteen persons nominated by the members according to Point 2 of the Nomination Procedure are entered into a list by the Chairman of the Board of Directors and a member.
5. Each member of the Ministerial Assembly may nominate up to seven persons from the list of eligible candidates.
6. The names of all persons named by the Ministerial Assembly according to Point 5 are entered into a final list of candidates. Each member of the Ministerial Assembly selects seven persons from this final list.
7. The seven candidates with the most votes are confirmed as the new Board of Directors, provided that each person selected accepts his selection.
8. These seven Board members select the new chairman according to § 7, section 2 of the Bylaws.