



## **INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP |**

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## Involuntary Removal Introduction

This document is created to clarify the separate processes for involuntary removal of churches and the involuntary removal of pastors from the Covenant roster. A decision to remove a church from the roster is independent of the process for disciplining or seeking removal of a pastor's credential. This is a short summary of these distinct processes with additional detail in the following pages.

### INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL OF CHURCHES

First, it is important to differentiate between the involuntary and voluntary removal of a church from Covenant membership. Typically churches who find themselves at odds with the positions, policies, and practices of the Covenant church voluntarily withdraw their membership. Every year, a few churches choose to make this decision for a range of reasons—some related to theological fit in a variety of areas. The Covenant Church grieves these losses but blesses these churches in their transition to new homes, with the understanding there is always an opportunity to reapply for membership through mutual discernment, if circumstances change. It is significant to note that the involuntary removal of a church is a rare occasion, with the first and only process to date taking place in 2019.

When a church chooses not to abide by the position, policies, and practices of the Covenant Church but does not voluntarily withdraw membership, the regional conference may initiate a process to discern whether the church is out of harmony and if there is a possibility of helping to shepherd the church back into harmony. In this phase, conference leadership engages with the church's pastor(s) and leaders. If, through prayerful work and conversation, the conference believes the church is actively out of harmony with the position, policies, and practices of the Covenant Church, then the Conference Executive Board makes a report to the Covenant Executive Board. This process at the conference level is usually the result of many conversations that may span months or even years.

After a report is made to the Covenant Executive Board (CEB), the CEB may initiate its own investigation and engagement with church leaders. This is a careful process in which the CEB examines

the evidence, engages in conversations, and makes prayerful discernment. Each of these steps is taken with great care in the hopes that the church may choose to live within the position, policies and practices of the Covenant church or choose voluntary withdrawal. If it is discerned that the church is out of harmony and does not intend to withdraw voluntarily, then the CEB makes a recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Covenant Church to remove the church from the roster of churches. It is up to the Annual Meeting to make the final decision. This is called the involuntary removal process and is outlined in the Covenant Bylaws.

These actions are taken soberly and prayerfully. They are difficult decisions, costly processes, and disruptive to the life of the Covenant Church. We pray continuously that we will remain centered on the person of Jesus, asking for the Spirit's leading, and seeking for God's redemptive purposes to be served.

### **INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL OF PASTORS/MINISTERS**

As with our churches, it has been typical for pastors who find themselves at odds with the positions, policies, and practices of the Covenant Church to voluntarily resign or transfer their ministerial credentials. Every year, a few pastors choose one of these paths for a variety of reasons, some related to theological fit in a variety of areas and sometimes for the requirements of a different denomination they are called to serve. The Covenant Church processes the departures, sometimes with grief and sometimes with mutual gratitude for ongoing kingdom contribution made possible by a new call. We pray for these pastors in the time of their leaving, with the understanding that there is always an opportunity to reapply for reinstatement, through mutual discernment, if circumstances change. As with our churches, it is significant to note that the involuntary removal of a pastor is a rare occurrence.

A concern about behaviors that are inconsistent with guidelines, rules, or policy can be brought to the attention of Develop Leaders/Ordered Ministry staff through self-reporting, complaints, or by direct observation. The matter is sometimes brought first to the conference superintendent and sometimes to the Develop Leaders/Ordered Ministry staff. In any case, the executive minister and the conference superintendent mutually inform each other of situations that arise. If the charge appears valid, and if immediate suspension is required, they will also first consult with the president of the Covenant, and the matter will be brought to the Board of Ordered Ministry. When suspension results, it is a suspension of the Covenant's endorsement of the minister. A full suspension requires the cessation of

all ministerial practices in all settings. During a suspension, matters of continuation of salary or employment remain with the local congregation.

The Board of Ordered Ministry meets with the pastor and further discerns an appropriate pathway of care and discipline. The goal of the process is to care for the pastor and, in the case of practices that are at odds with Ministerium guidelines and policies, restoration of harmonious commitment to abide by the guidelines for Covenant ministers. If a pastor chooses not to abide by the decisions of the Board of Ordered Ministry, the Board may move to recommend involuntary removal of the pastor's ministerial credential. Such a decision is never taken lightly, nor without ample opportunity for the pastor to come back into alignment with the guidelines.

The recommendation of the Board of Ordered Ministry is forwarded to the Annual Meeting of the Ministerium and requires a 2/3 vote before being referred to the Covenant Annual Meeting for final action as outlined in the Ministerium Constitution (article VI, section 6.2) and Bylaws (article V) and the Covenant Constitution (article XIII, section 13.1) and Bylaws (article X, section 10.4.b.iv).

These actions are taken soberly and prayerfully. They are difficult and expensive processes, and they are disruptive to the life of the Ministerium and the Covenant Church. We pray continuously that we will remain centered on the person of Jesus, asking for the Spirit's leading and seeking for God's redemptive purposes to be served.



## Action on Involuntary Removal from Membership of Awaken Covenant Church

### BACKGROUND ON PROCESS FOR ENGAGEMENT | AWAKEN COVENANT CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, MN, WITH COVENANT EXECUTIVE BOARD

After significant discussion, prayer, and discernment, the Covenant Executive Board (CEB) has advanced to the 2023 Annual Meeting the involuntary removal of Awaken Covenant Church from the Covenant roster of churches. The CEB takes this action soberly.

Awaken Covenant Church agrees that they have adopted policies and practices that are inconsistent with the Evangelical Covenant Church's Human Sexuality Guidelines and the Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers and same-sex weddings have been performed with the support of the congregation. In multiple conversations with both the Northwest Conference (NWC) and the CEB, Awaken Covenant Church has been resolute that they do not intend to bring the congregation into harmony with the Covenant's discerned position. This is sufficient reason within Covenant policy to recommend removal of a church from the Covenant roster of churches. Further, Awaken Covenant Church has disregarded its pledge to support the principles, policies, programs, and institutions of the Covenant (Evangelical Covenant Church Constitution Article IV, Section 4.3) by refusing to comply with the terms of suspension required of its pastor, Rev. Micah Witham, by the Evangelical Covenant Church Board of the Ordered Ministry. Despite Awaken's misalignment with the denomination, Awaken does not intend to voluntarily withdraw their membership from the Evangelical Covenant Church.

This document provides the timeline of the Evangelical Covenant Church's engagement with Awaken Covenant Church and provides the background for the CEB's report and recommendation at the Annual Meeting.

## PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE | AWAKEN COVENANT CHURCH OF ST. PAUL, MN, WITH COVENANT EXECUTIVE BOARD

**February 20, 2022** – The Covenant Executive Board (CEB) received an email from the chair of the Northwest Conference (NWC) Executive Board, reporting their recommendation that Awaken Covenant Church be investigated for being out of harmony with the Covenant. The email pointed to the congregation’s adoption of a “Statement Regarding the Affirmation of Freedom in Christ: As it Relates to Human Sexuality” stating that “Awaken will support its Pastors as they follow their conscience and faith-filled convictions regarding their participation in same-sex marriage ceremonies (e.g., officiating, praying, or attending)....” The NWC found that the statement is in contravention of the Evangelical Covenant Church’s Human Sexuality Guidelines and Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers.” The email also noted that Awaken’s pastors have conducted same-sex weddings with the congregation’s full support. The NWC reported that the Awaken congregation has failed to recognize and adhere to the authority and direction of the Covenant Board of the Ordered Ministry by refusing to support and comply with terms of the suspension required of its pastor, Rev. Micah Witham.

**March 12, 2022** – The NWC superintendent and Executive Board chair met in person with the CEB in executive session to share their process, to present the recommendation, and to answer questions. The NWC reported that they had engaged in a lengthy process of listening to the values, hopes, and concerns of Awaken leadership, beginning in 2017. When it became clear that Awaken was not in harmony with the Covenant’s theological beliefs and practices, the NWC urged Awaken to return to harmony or to seek voluntary withdrawal. In both cases, the church and its leadership have communicated that they would not adhere to the position and policies of the Evangelical Covenant Church, and communicated they had no intention of voluntarily withdrawing.

The NWC representatives provided the CEB with copies of its communications with Awaken, as well as copies of other documents, to substantiate its recommendation. As required by Covenant Bylaws (Article IV, Section 4.4, ii), the NWC presented a report from the NWC Executive Board charging that Awaken appeared to be out of harmony with the Evangelical Covenant Church and recommended that Awaken Covenant Church be investigated for possible removal from the Covenant roster of churches. Following the engagement with the NWC representatives, the CEB prayed, deliberated, and voted to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct its investigation as permitted by the Covenant Bylaws (Article IV, Section 4.4, ii).

**July 2022** – Members of the CEB ad hoc committee reviewed documents from the NWC Executive Board, Awaken Covenant Church’s website, constitution, bylaws, and additional open letters that had been sent to the CEB and other bodies by Awaken Chair Art Morrow.

**August 16, 2022** – Leaders from Awaken Covenant Church and the ad hoc committee of the CEB met virtually and discussed the recommendations regarding the church being out of harmony. During this 75-minute honest conversation, the ad hoc committee sought to listen to the church leadership respond to the charges. Awaken leaders, including Chair Art Morrow, agreed that the charges brought by the NWC accurately reflect the congregation’s position and practices and stated that Awaken would not pursue voluntary removal.

**October 8, 2022** – The CEB met in person with Awaken Covenant Church representatives, Rev. Micah Witham and Chair Art Morrow, in executive session. After respectful conversation, Rev. Witham and Chair Morrow made it clear the church would not live within the Covenant’s theological position and would not voluntarily withdraw from membership. Following this engagement, the CEB prayerfully deliberated at length and adopted a motion to advance to the 2023 Annual Meeting the involuntary removal of Awaken Covenant Church from the Covenant roster of churches.

**October 9, 2022** – CEB Chair Tim Rodgers called Awaken Chair Art Morrow to share the motion of the CEB to advance Awaken Covenant Church to the 2023 Annual Meeting.

**April 12, 2023** – CEB Chair Tim Rodgers contacted Awaken Covenant Church Chair Art Morrow to make a final appeal for the church to seek voluntary withdrawal. Mr. Morrow indicated that the church leadership continues to affirm its position and feels strongly about proceeding to Gather to contest Awaken’s removal from Covenant church membership. The 40-minute conversation ended in mutual prayer for Awaken Covenant Church and for Gather 2023.



## Action on Involuntary Removal from Membership of Quest Church

### BACKGROUND ON PROCESS FOR ENGAGEMENT | QUEST CHURCH OF SEATTLE, WA WITH COVENANT EXECUTIVE BOARD

After significant prayer, discussion, and discernment, the Covenant Executive Board (CEB) has advanced to the 2023 Annual Meeting the involuntary removal of Quest Church from the Covenant roster of churches. The CEB takes this action soberly.

Quest Church agrees that they have adopted policies and practices that are inconsistent with the Evangelical Covenant Church's Human Sexuality Guidelines and the Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers and a same-sex wedding has been performed at the church. In multiple conversations with both the Pacific Northwest Conference (PNWC) and the CEB, Quest Church has indicated that they are firm in their intentions not to bring the congregation into harmony with the Covenant's discerned position. This is sufficient reason within Covenant polity to recommend removal of a church from the Covenant roster of churches. Further, Quest Church has failed to recognize and adhere to the authority and direction of the Covenant Board of the Ordered Ministry by refusing to support and comply with terms of the suspension of its pastor, Rev. Gail Song Bantum, and has disregarded its pledge to support the principles, policies, programs, and institutions of the Covenant (Evangelical Covenant Church Constitution Article IV, Section 4.3). Despite Quest's misalignment with the denomination, as of April 30, 2023, Quest does not intend to voluntarily withdraw their membership from the Evangelical Covenant Church.

This document provides the timeline of the Evangelical Covenant Church's engagement with Quest Church and provides background for the CEB's report and recommendation to the Annual Meeting.



## PROCESS AND ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE | QUEST CHURCH OF SEATTLE, WA WITH COVENANT EXECUTIVE BOARD

**January 5, 2022** – The CEB received an email from the Chair of the PNWC Executive Board, reporting that the board had determined that Quest Church appeared to be out of harmony.

**February 27, 2022** – As required by Covenant Bylaws (Article IV, Section 4.4, ii), the PNWC superintendent and chair submitted a report to the CEB demonstrating that Quest Church appeared to be out of harmony with the denominational convictions and expectations concerning human sexuality, behavior of pastors, and shared life together. The PNWC superintendent became aware in September 2020 that Quest Church intended to move toward becoming fully LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming. By year end 2020, the Quest elder board had voted to allow their pastor to perform weddings, inconsistent with the Covenant’s sexuality and marriage ethics, and announced this change at Quest’s annual meeting in January 2021. The efforts of the conference and superintendent to bring the church back into harmony with the Covenant were exhausted. The leaders of Quest Church expressed that their convictions were resolute and that they would not voluntarily withdraw from the Covenant roster of churches.

**March 11, 2022** – The PNWC superintendent and Executive Board treasurer met with the CEB in executive session to share their process, present their board’s recommendations, and answer questions. They provided the CEB with communications from Quest related to their recommendation in addition to their verbal report and recommended that Quest Church be investigated for possible removal from the Covenant roster of churches.

Following the engagement with the PNWC representatives, the CEB prayed, deliberated, and voted to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct its investigation as permitted by the Covenant Bylaws (Article IV, Section 4.4, ii)

**June 2022** – Members of the ad hoc committee gathered virtually to pray, to review Quest’s website and review again the documentation provided by the PNWC Executive Board. Included in the documentation was a letter from Quest’s elder board (January 21, 2022) stating that Quest would not comply with the terms of their pastor’s suspension.

**July 16, 2022** – The ad hoc committee sent a letter to Quest Church’s elder board, stating the purpose of the committee and inviting them to a virtual engagement with the committee and an in-person

engagement at the October Covenant Executive Board meeting in Chicago, in compliance with the Covenant Bylaws (Section 4.4).

**July 29, 2022** – In a letter dated July 29, 2022, Donnie Griffin, chair of the Quest elder board, responded asking for clarification of the meaning of “out of harmony” and invited the ad hoc committee to join them virtually for their scheduled elder board meeting on September 8, 2022.

**August 23, 2022** – The ad hoc committee responded in a letter to provide further definition of “out of harmony” to include that the church does not affirm and support the Covenant’s position on human sexuality adopted in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2004 by the Annual Meeting (“celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in heterosexual marriage as the Christian standard”), does not affirm and support the Covenant’s guideline to refrain from using their building to host a same-sex wedding, and the church does not affirm and support the Covenant’s prohibition of clergy officiating and participating in a same-sex wedding.

**September 8, 2022** – The ad hoc committee of the CEB met virtually with the Quest Church leadership team. During this engagement, the ad hoc committee sought to listen to Quest’s leadership respond to the charges. Chair Donnie Griffin and Pastor Gail Song Bantum, along with other Quest leaders, stated unequivocally that they are fully open and affirming, that Pastor Bantum had performed a same-sex wedding at Quest Church over the summer, and that they agreed that they were not in alignment with the Covenant’s position and guidelines as outlined in the letter of August 23, 2022. Despite Quest’s misalignment with the denomination, the congregation’s leaders indicated they were not interested in pursuing voluntary withdrawal from the Covenant roster of churches.

CEB Chair Tim Rodgers reiterated the invitation for Quest Church representatives to address the CEB at their October 2022 meeting and defend Quest per Covenant Bylaws (Section 4.4b.). Quest leaders requested further clarification around the nature of the engagement with the CEB at the October board meeting. Pastor Bantum responded that Quest has shared their values, mission, and vision, and they have no intent to change. The leaders would discuss if there was any point in meeting with the CEB.

**September 23, 2022** – CEB Chair Tim Rodgers sent a letter to Quest Church’s chair and elders clarifying again the purpose of the meeting with the CEB and inviting their representatives to attend. The letter explained that, as outlined in the Involuntary Removal Process and in the Covenant bylaws

(section 4.4b.), the board must provide Quest the opportunity to respond before the Covenant Executive Board to out of harmony concerns with respect to the Covenant's position on human sexuality as adopted in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2004 by the Annual Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to satisfy that requirement, allowing Quest to engage with the full board on this topic. The letter clarified that the meeting would not directly address the Covenant's position on human sexuality as that is outside the purview of the CEB. Included in the letter was a request for a response to the invitation to attend the CEB October meeting by September 30, 2022.

**October 8, 2022** – Quest Church did not reply to the invitation to come to the October meeting of the CEB, which was held October 7-9, 2022. In executive session, the CEB prayed and deliberated at length before adopting a motion to advance to the 2023 Annual Meeting the involuntary removal of Quest Church from the Covenant roster of churches.

**October 10, 2022** – CEB Chair Tim Rodgers called Quest chair Donnie Griffin to share the motion of the CEB to advance Quest Church to the 2023 Annual Meeting.

**April 13, 2023** – CEB Chair Tim Rodgers contacted Quest chair Donnie Griffin to make a final appeal for the congregation to seek voluntary withdrawal. Mr. Griffin indicated that Quest was not ready to make a commitment regarding voluntary versus involuntary removal. Mr. Rodgers and Mr. Griffin committed to continue in mutual prayer for Quest and Gather.



## Involuntary Membership Removal Process (IRP) in Text

### MINISTERIAL PROCESS:

1. Minister engages in contested action
2. Conference informs Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders (EM of OM-DL)
3. EM of OM-DL investigates
  - a. If determined necessary, EM of OM-DL and President of Evangelical Covenant Church, in consultation with Superintendent, suspends Minister.
4. The Board of Ordered Ministry (BoOM) deliberates charges, considers testimonies and evidence
  - a. Does BoOM recommend removal?
    - i. No: Care and discipline continues. Process concludes.
    - ii. Yes: BoOM notifies Minister that will recommend removal of credentials to Ministerium (typically performed by OM-DL Team or EM of OM-DL). Continue to Step 5.
5. Does Minister decide to contest removal?
  - a. No: Minister's name is placed on agenda for removal at Ministerium Annual Meeting and Covenant Annual Meeting. Process concludes.
  - b. Yes: Minister submits intent to contest in writing to President of Ministerium and BoOM
    - i. Minister provides written consent to make case details public. Continue to Steps 6 and 7 simultaneously.
6. President of Ministerium receives letter from Minister.
  - a. Executive Officers of Ministerium notify Ministerium in writing, including BoOM's charges against Minister (at least 60 days before Ministerium Annual Meeting). Continue to Step 8.
7. BoOM receives letter from Minister

- a. Covenant President informs Annual Meeting Officers of potential action
  - b. Annual Meeting Officers discern when to inform Annual Meeting delegates
8. At least one month prior to Ministerium Annual Meeting, President of Ministerium submits motion to establish timeframes for Contested Credentials Hearing to Minister and BoOM
- a. Minister receives notification
  - b. BoOM receives notification
9. MINISTERIUM ANNUAL MEETING - Contested Credentials Hearing
- a. President of Ministerium presides over Contested Credentials Hearing
  - b. Questions or points of order must be submitted to President of Ministerium in writing
  - c. BoOM presents first at each stage
    - i. *Opening statements*
      - 1. BoOM opening statements
      - 2. Minister's opening statements
    - ii. *Witness testimony*
      - 1. BoOM witness testimony
      - 2. Minister's witness testimony
    - iii. *Closing statements*
      - 1. BoOM closing statements
      - 2. Minister's closing statements
  - d. Deliberation
    - i. Minister of contested credentials and BoOM presenters leave room
  - e. Vote
  - f. 2/3 vote reached?
    - i. No: Matter returns to BoOM
    - ii. Yes: BoOM submits recommendation with concurrence of Ministerium to Covenant Annual Meeting
10. COVENANT ANNUAL MEETING
- a. The Standing Rules determine overall debate times and process.
  - b. Minister presents rationale why credential should not be removed
  - c. BoOM / Ministerium rebuts

- d. Annual Meeting debates until question is called
- e. Annual Meeting votes on recommendation
- f. 2/3 vote reached?
  - i. No: Minister retains credential and matter returns to BoOM for further care and discipline. Continue to Step 10g.
  - ii. Yes: Minister is removed from roster of Covenant ministers. Continue to Step 10g.
- g. OM-DL team writes communication to Minister on outcome

### CHURCH PROCESS:

1. Church engages in contested action
2. Allegation of Out of Harmony is communicated to Conference Executive Board by another Church or Minister within conference - OR - Church determines it will request IRP process
3. Superintendent and Conference Chair inform Conference Executive Board and begin inquiry, conciliation, or mitigation process
  - a. Conference Executive Board informs Covenant President and Executive Minister of Start and Strengthen Churches (EM of SSC) in writing that Conference Executive Board is working with Church and of the possibility of an IRP process
    - i. Covenant President receives notification
      1. President informs Covenant Executive Board (CEB) chair
      2. CEB is informed
    - ii. EM of SSC receives notification
  - b. Conference Executive Board establishes Ad Hoc Committee that address concerns with Church and keeps Conference Executive Board abreast of developments
    - i. Ad Hoc Committee determines if claim has any credibility, if claim was resolved or claim is not credible
    - ii. Conference Executive Board Ad Hoc Committee brings back findings to same board
4. Claim resolved?
  - a. Yes: Conference Executive Board informs Church and any individuals involved in matter of resolution. Process concludes.
  - b. No: Does Church decide to contest removal?

- i. No: Church informs Conference Executive Board of pursuit of voluntary membership removal. Process moves to voluntary removal.
    - ii. Yes: Conference Executive Board informs Covenant President, EM of SSC, and Church.
      - 1. Church receives notification
      - 2. EM of SSC receives notification
      - 3. Covenant President receives notification
        - a. President informs CEB Chair
        - b. CEB Officers discuss matter and process.
          - i. CEB Chair informs CEB of pending matters
5. CEB may form an Ad Hoc Committee to work with Church on the IRP recommendation or advance matter directly to AM for IRP
- a. If CEB decides to advance matter directly to AM for IRP, continue to Step 7. Otherwise continue to Step 5b.
  - b. CEB may seek to guide Church back into harmony (through meetings, communication, and visits with Church)
  - c. Does CEB discern congregation is out of harmony?
    - i. No: If concerns raised are resolved, then CEB notifies Conference Executive Board and Church that IRP recommendation is not advancing to AM. Process concludes.
    - ii. Yes: CEB concurs with Conference Executive Board recommendation and advances matter to AM
      - 1. CEB informs Conference Executive Board, Church and AM Officers of outcome
6. AM Officers inform denomination of IRP recommendation by April.
7. COVENANT ANNUAL MEETING
- a. The Standing Rules determine overall debate times and process.
  - b. Church presents rationale why it should not be removed from the roster of member churches
  - c. CEB rebuts
  - d. AM debates until question is called

- e. AM votes on recommendation
  - f. 2/3 vote reached?
    - i. NO: Continue to Step 8.
    - ii. YES: Church is removed from roster of congregations. Continue to Step 8
8. Governance team writes communication to Church and Conference Executive Board of the decision reached

## ACRONYMS

AM	Covenant Annual Meeting
BoOM	Board of Ordered Ministry
CEB	Covenant Executive Board
ConfExBd	Conference Executive Board
EM of OM-DL	Executive Minister of Ordered Ministry and Develop Leaders
EM of SSC	Executive Minister of Start and Strengthen Churches
IRP	Involuntary Removal Process
OM-DL Team	Ordered Ministry / Develop Leaders Team (Staff)





## Excerpt from 2022 Covenant Constitution and Bylaws

### ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

#### SECTION 4.4. INVOLUNTARY DISMISSAL FROM MEMBERSHIP.

a. Charges that a congregation is out of harmony with the Covenant shall be presented to its conference executive board, which shall immediately inform the Executive Board of the Covenant and the president of the Covenant of the charges.

i. If the conference executive board finds the charges to be credible, the conference executive board shall seek to guide the congregation into harmony with the Covenant. The conference executive board shall then make a report and recommendation to the Executive Board of the Covenant and the president of the Covenant.

ii. The Executive Board of the Covenant shall independently consider the credibility of the charges based on all the information and recommendations available to it. The Executive Board of the Covenant may then, at its initiative and in communication with the regional conference, seek to guide the congregation into harmony with the Covenant. If the Executive Board of the Covenant determines that the congregation is and remains out of harmony with the Covenant, the Executive Board of the Covenant shall make a report and recommendation to the Annual Meeting of the Covenant.

iii. The Annual Meeting shall vote on the recommendation of the Executive Board.

iv. If a congregation is dismissed from membership in the Covenant by action of the Annual Meeting of the Covenant, its membership in the regional conference shall also be terminated.

b. In all cases, congregations shall have opportunity to defend themselves before the conference executive board, the Executive Board of the Covenant, and the Annual Meeting of the Covenant.

c. The Executive Board of the Covenant shall make special provision for charges made against a member congregation that is not located within a regional conference.