

CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT METHODISTS

Article I. Name

This Association shall be called: the Association of Independent Methodists and may be referred to as the "Association".

Article II. Purpose

In obedient response to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39), the purpose of the Association of Independent Methodists is to proclaim the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and calling believers to scriptural holiness as a message to be declared, a doctrine to be believed, an experience to be received, and a lifestyle to be demonstrated.

Our objective shall be to gather believers into a transformational congregation through new church development and developing, encouraging and resourcing the leaders of churches.

In addition to the above stated Purpose and Objectives, the corporation shall also have such powers as are now or may hereafter be granted by the Mississippi Nonprofit Corporation Act, Miss. Code of 1972 sec. 79-11-101, et seq.

Transformational Congregations:

1. Turn observers into connected participants-Worship
2. Turn members into involved ministers-Ministry/Service
3. Turn outsiders into belonging insiders-Outreach/Missions
4. Turn attenders into family members-Fellowship
5. Turn believers into mature followers of Christ-Discipleship
6. Turn pew warmers into dynamic leaders -Leadership
7. Turn givers into joyful stewards-Stewardship

Article III. Membership

Section 1. Eligibility of Membership

To be a member church of the Association of Independent Methodists, a local self-governing church must be Wesleyan-Arminian and in doctrinal harmony with the AIM Articles of Belief and Rules of Discipline, have a constitution that is not in conflict with the Association, and affirm that the Bible is the infallible, inspired, and authoritative Word of God.

Section 2. Process of Membership

Out of the Association's desire to welcome likeminded brothers and sisters in the Lord, any eligible church whose members vote to join the Association of Independent Methodists shall notify the AIM Office and submit a Discerning Associate application with the required documents. The AIM Executive Committee shall examine the eligible church's application and documents, and upon approval, the eligible church shall then become a Discerning Associate in the Association of Independent Methodists with all its benefits and responsibilities.

Discerning Associate membership is a two-year period of mutual understanding between the Discerning Associate and the Association, during which both parties may discern the advisability and desirability of an ecclesial relationship. During this period of discernment, the Discerning Associate may and should send representatives to AIM Annual Meetings, camps, retreats, training events, and other activities, fully participating in the life and ministries of AIM. Representatives of the Executive Committee shall meet with the Discerning Associate, speaking to both the congregation and its Board about the merits, responsibilities, and benefits of becoming a Covenantal Associate, sharing any resources or opportunities that are available to the Discerning Associate, encouraging and assisting them toward greater congregational health.

Prior to the end of this two-year period of discernment, both the Discerning Associate and the Executive Committee shall evaluate the relationship concerning the mutual desirability to enter covenant together. If it is agreeable to both parties, the Discerning Associate may establish a covenantal relationship with the Association by voting to become a Covenantal Associate, at which point the Association shall vote as to whether to receive them into covenantal membership at the following Annual Meeting of the Association. A covenant shall then be signed by both the eligible church and the Association of Independent Methodists and will later be celebrated in a worship service with the congregation of the newly-received Covenantal Associate.

All Covenantal Associate churches are asked to reaffirm and renew their covenant with the Association each year during their congregational Annual Meeting.

Approved church plants, after their launch, are considered member churches in the Association of Independent Methodists if approved by the Church Health and Multiplication Committee.

Section 3. Types of Membership

A. Discerning Associates

Discerning Associates have applied for membership and have been approved by the AIM Executive Committee. Discerning Associates have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a member church. Discerning Associates have full voting rights within the Association with the exception of any votes concerning changes to the AIM Constitution, Rules of Discipline, and Articles of Belief.

B. Covenantal Associates

Covenantal Associates have signed a covenant with the Association of Independent Methodists. Covenantal Associates have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a member church. Only Covenantal Associates may vote on changes to the AIM Constitution, Rules of Discipline, and Articles of Belief; therefore, a quorum is based upon the percentage of Covenantal Associates present.

C. Church Plant Associates

Church Plant Associates have all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a member church. Church Plant Associates may not vote on changes to the AIM Constitution, Rules of Discipline, or Articles of Belief.

Church Plant Associates are eligible to become Covenantal Associates when they are self-supporting and self-governing. They are self-supporting in that they can fund their mission from the offerings of their members. They are self-governing in that they have leadership in place to lead the ministry of their church into the future.

Section 4. Language of Covenant

Having agreed to enter covenant together, both the Covenantal Associate and the Association of Independent Methodists shall sign a covenantal document pledging their fidelity to one another and agreeing together upon the following terms of their relationship:

We are committed to be a vibrant association of self-governing churches that live by the authority of Holy Scripture, identify with the spiritual heritage of the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition so that we can strengthen one another's local ministry, support and create missional opportunities that can bring people to saving faith, grow holy disciples of Jesus Christ, and transform communities with the values of the Kingdom of God.

—The Tuscaloosa Declaration of the Association of Independent Methodists

Agreeing to establish a mutually-beneficial and mutually-responsible partnership by which we may, together, seek to fulfill the aforementioned commitment, may it be known that we hereby enter covenant together.

Seeking together to fulfill this desire and realize this vision, we, the undersigned church agree to support the fellowship and ministries of the Association with our active participation, doctrinal faithfulness, and regular, free-will giving.

In pursuit of the same, we, the Association of Independent Methodists agree to support the life and ministries of the undersigned church by offering assistance and encouragement, extending opportunities for the development of pastoral and lay leadership, nurturing congregational health, and fostering an atmosphere of dynamic and transformative growth in holy-love.

Section 5. Member Responsibilities

1. To send representation from the member church to the Annual Meeting.
2. To financially support the work of the Association of Independent Methodists.
3. To participate in the ministries and programs of the Association of Independent Methodists.
4. To send to the AIM Office any changes made to the member church's constitution.
5. To extend a call to a minister who may be licensed or ordained by the Association of Independent Methodists.

Section 6. Member Benefits

A. Member Church Benefits

1. Fellowship

The Association of Independent Methodists is a fellowship of locally autonomous Wesleyan-Arminian churches. By voluntarily participating in this Association, a church benefits from mutual encouragement and fellowship from like-minded churches.

2. Support

The Association of Independent Methodists exists to assist its Member Churches. A Member Church benefits from the support it receives from other Member Churches and from the AIM Office. The Association utilizes its resources and experience to benefit its Member Churches. The Association assists Member Churches in some of the following ways: Pulpit Supply, Pastoral Search, Conflict Resolution, Church Consultation, Pastoral Encouragement, Leadership Training, Missions Programs (home and worldwide) and other ministries and programs.

3. Outreach

The Association of Independent Methodists is an extension of the Member Church's ministry. Member Churches benefit by expanding their ministry through assisting other Member Churches, providing opportunities for young people called from their church into the Gospel Ministry, and starting new Independent Methodist Churches; thus, they are a part of something much bigger than themselves.

4. Programming

The Association sponsors events throughout the year that a Member Church may choose to participate in. Member Churches are given an opportunity to give input for this programming yet they are not exclusively responsible for planning these events. Therefore, Member Churches may participate in a well-planned program with shared investment and will reap a great benefit.

5. Association

The Association of Independent Methodists is a group of locally autonomous Wesleyan-Arminian Churches that cooperate to advance the cause of Jesus Christ. By voluntarily participating in this Association, churches benefit from mutual interdependence without losing their identity or local control.

B. Association Benefits

1. Effective Stewardship

The Association wants to grow and expand. It is more cost effective for other non-aligned Wesleyan-Arminian Churches to join the Association than for the Association to plant new churches in those locations.

The more churches there are in the Association of Independent Methodists, the lower the cost for each individual Member Church. The more churches that there are in the Association, the more opportunities there will be to serve in the Association.

2. Synergy

The more churches that are in the Association, the more that can be accomplished for the Kingdom of God. The Association can do more together than we ever could accomplish individually. Each new Member Church brings with it new energy, experience, and resources.

3. Effective Cooperation

The more new churches that join the Association the greater the network expands. As the network expands so does its influences. Each new Member Church brings with it new experiences, new resources, and new leaders that will be able not only to help the Member Church but will be able to be utilized within the Association.

Section 7. Terminations and Withdrawals

A. Terminations

1. Reasons for Termination

It is the belief of the Association of Independent Methodists that each Member Church should be an active participant. Therefore, termination of a Member Church may occur because of the following:

- a. Failure to adhere to the Articles of Belief.
- b. Failure to pay supporting contributions for more than one year.
- c. Failure to secure licensing or ordination of a minister.
- d. Failure to send representatives to the Annual Meeting for two (2) years.

2. Termination Process

The Executive Committee is authorized to serve as a fact-finding body to investigate any of the above complaints alleged against a Member Church. The Member Church shall be notified by the Executive Committee of the charges and findings at least ninety (90) days prior to the next meeting of the Annual Meeting; wherein the Annual Meeting shall evaluate such evidence, and by a majority vote (one vote per church present and voting) may reject the charges against said Member Church or may terminate said church's membership. The member church shall have the right to respond to the complaints alleged at each level of the termination process.

3. Results of Termination

Termination as a Member Church of the Association of Independent Methodists in no way infringes on the independence, freedom, property, or future of the given Member Church. There will be no property loss to the Member Church and no attempt by the Association to direct in any way a church that has been terminated as a member. The Association merely subscribes to the belief that we cannot profitably walk together unless we are in agreement.

B. Withdrawals

A Member Church may withdraw from the Association of Independent Methodists at any official church meeting where the majority of the local church membership supports the motion to withdraw from the Association of Independent Methodists. Each Member Church must follow the stipulated guidelines in their own local church's constitution. Withdrawal from the Association in no way infringes on the independence, freedom,

property or future of the given Member Church. There will be no property loss to the Member Church and no attempt by the Association to direct in any way a church that has withdrawn from the Association. The Association merely subscribes to the belief that we cannot profitably walk together unless we are in agreement.

Article IV. Powers

This Association, through its Executive Committee shall have the power to: (1) enunciate policy agreed upon by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the member churches of the Association present and voting at any official meeting, (2) serve as the clearing house for information of interest to the member churches, (3) represent the member churches of the Association at State and National levels, (4) perform such service as member churches may require and resources may permit. RESERVATION: Nothing in the Constitution shall authorize the Association of Independent Methodists, herein established, to direct, instruct, or control actions of the member churches. Powers not specifically delegated to the Association are reserved to member church.

Article V. Officers

Section 1. Qualifications for Elected Officers

Only members of a Covenantal Associate are eligible to serve as officers of the Association.

Section 2. Association Officers

The officers of the Association shall be: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Officers of the Association shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association for a term of three years and may be elected to succeed themselves in office, but not more than two consecutive terms. The terms of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary are staggered so only one officer is elected each year. The Executive Committee may fill by appointment unexpired terms when vacancies occur.

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee and meetings of the Association. He shall appoint a Nominating Committee to nominate the appropriate Officers and Committee Chairman. He shall be an ex-officio member of the committees set forth in this constitution.

In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall assume the responsibilities of the President until a new President is elected.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for all monies and assets of the Association. He shall be bonded at the expense of the Association in an amount fixed by the Executive Committee.

The Secretary shall be responsible for keeping official records of the Association and Minutes of the Executive Committee and the Association Meetings.

Section 3. Termination of Officers

A. Reasons to terminate

Officers for the Association of Independent Methodists may be terminated for the following reasons: (1) Failure to carry out stated duties or malfeasance in office, (2) Moral failure, (3) Espousing doctrine contrary to the stated Articles of Belief.

B. Procedure to terminate

The President shall appoint a Committee to serve as a fact-finding body to investigate any charges or complaints alleged against any Officer, if the President is the accused officer then the Treasurer shall appoint this committee. Their findings will be presented to the Executive Committee. The officer shall be notified of the charges alleged against him and he shall be invited to be present and to present his evidence when the findings are presented to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall evaluate such evidence and may reject the charge or may terminate the officer. Any officer having been terminated has the right and privilege to appeal to the Annual Meeting. If an appeal is made to the Annual Meeting, this matter will be handled as an agenda item in the business session. The President shall present the steps that the Association has taken in this matter, then the Chairman of the Fact-Finding Committee shall present the evidence against the Officer, then the Officer will present his case. At that point there will be an immediate Roll Call vote, there will be no discussion on this matter. The vote will be either to sustain the decision of the Executive Committee to terminate the Officer or to overturn their decision. A "yes" vote is to sustain the Executive Committee's decision to terminate, a "no" vote is to overturn the Executive Committee's decision to terminate the Officer. Each Member Church is entitled to one (1) vote and there are no fractional votes.

Article VI. Committees

Section 1. Executive Committee

A. Election of Chairman, Selection of Committee Members, and Meetings

There shall be an Executive Committee. The Chairman shall be the President of the Association of Independent Methodists. The Officers of the Association of Independent Methodists, and the Chairman of the Standing Committees, shall serve as the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall meet as often as necessary to transact the business of the Association on the call of the President, or on call of a majority of the Executive Committee.

B. Duties and Responsibilities

The Executive Committee shall have responsibility for supervising the operations of the Association subject to the policies, rules and regulations of the Annual Meeting.

The Executive Committee shall approve employment of all personnel, and fix all salaries subject to approval of the Annual Meeting.

At each Annual Meeting of the Association, the Executive Committee shall make a recommendation on all policy decisions to be made, projects to be inaugurated, committee work performed, and will report on major activities engaged in since the last Association Meeting.

All actions of the Executive Committee are subject to the will of the Association at its Annual Meeting.

Any actions required of the Association shall be carried out by the Executive Committee if it considers that failure to act would be detrimental to the welfare of the Association except those actions prohibited or tabled at an Annual Meeting or other special meeting of the Association.

The Executive Committee coordinates the work of the Association within and between the various regions in the Association of Independent Methodists.

Section 2. Standing Committees

A. Church Health and Multiplication

1. Election of Chairman, Selection of Committee Members, and Meetings

There shall be a committee on Church Health and Multiplication. The Chairman shall be a member of a Covenantal Associate duly elected at the AIM Annual Meeting. The Chairman shall select members at large to be approved by the Executive Committee. The Committee on Church Health and Multiplication shall meet at least once a year and on the call of the Committee Chairman.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Church Health and Multiplication Committee oversees all church planting efforts for the Association of Independent Methodists which includes the recruiting, assessing, training, and coaching of church planters. The Church Health and Multiplication Committee will work with a member church and/or churches or a church planter to start new churches on behalf of the Association of Independent Methodists.

The Church Health and Multiplication Committee oversees all church health efforts for the Association of Independent Methodists. The Church Health and Multiplication Committee comes alongside interested member churches to assist them in maintaining or restoring church health which includes assessing a congregation's church health, working with church leadership to develop a church health plan, and holding church leadership accountable to implement the church action plan.

The Church Health and Multiplication Committee shall report its actions to the AIM Executive Committee and to the Annual Meeting.

B. Pastor-Parish Relations

1. Election of Chairman, Selection of Committee Members, and Meetings

There shall be a committee on Pastor-Parish Relations. The Chairman shall be a member of a Covenantal Associate duly elected at the AIM Annual Meeting. The Chairman shall select members at large to be approved by the Executive Committee. The Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations shall meet at least once a year and on the call of the Committee Chairman.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall follow the established guidelines in the credentialing of ministers within the Association of Independent Methodists.

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall recommend policies to Member Churches in recognizing those who are called to preach and shall give proper guidance in their training to be a minister.

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall monitor the progress of training of each credentialed minister to ensure that the credentialed minister fulfills the training requirement for that credentialing category.

Credentialed ministers are life-long learners. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee monitors the continuing education of each credentialed minister. This helps to ensure that our credentialed ministers sharpen existing skills and add new skills in a constantly changing ministry environment.

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee is responsible for offering mediation when conflicts arise in a member church.

The Pastor-Parish Committee shall report its actions to the AIM Executive Committee and to the Annual Meeting.

C. Finance and Stewardship

1. Election of Chairman, Selection of Committee Members, and Meetings

There shall be a committee on Finance and Stewardship. The Association Treasurer shall be its chairman. The AIM Executive Committee shall appoint members at large from Member Churches necessary to expedite the work of this committee. The President of this Association shall serve as an ex-officio member. The Committee on Finance and Stewardship shall meet at least once a year and on the call of the Committee Chairman.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall be responsible for auditing, budgeting, and financial planning. It shall supervise the acquisition, maintenance and disposal of the Association's monies and other assets.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall investigate, recommend and supervise the promotion of a pension and insurance plan for the ministers of the churches and other full-time employees of the churches and the Association.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall report to the Executive Committee on a monthly basis and to the AIM Annual Meeting on an annual basis.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall develop and implement a plan to raise funds for the Association of Independent Methodists to meet its short-term needs.

The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall develop and implement a plan to raise long-term funds through trusts, wills, annuities, and bequests. The Finance and Stewardship Committee shall assist Member Churches with their Stewardship and Capital Improvement Campaigns.

D. Missions

1. Election of Chairman, Selection of Committee Members, and Meetings

There shall be a committee on Missions. The Chairman shall be a member of a Covenantal Associate duly elected at the AIM Annual Meeting. The Chairman shall select members at large to be approved by the Executive Committee. The Committee on Missions shall meet at least once a year and on the call of the Committee Chairman.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The Missions Committee oversees all matters concerning missions for the Association of Independent Methodists. The Missions Committee encourages active participation of member churches in the cause of missions.

The Missions Committee is responsible on the behalf of the Association of Independent Methodists to communicate with members of the Association of Independent Methodists serving as missionaries. They offer support and encouragement to the missionaries and request updates on their activities and needs. The Missions Committee communicates to our member churches providing updates on our missionaries' activities and opportunities to support them.

The Missions Committee is responsible to communicate opportunities for member churches and individuals for personal involvement in missions which includes short-term mission trips, long-term mission trips, and support of individuals or couples serving as missionaries.

The Missions Committee shall report its actions to the AIM Executive Committee and to the Annual Meeting.

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees

The Executive Committee may create special committees as needed. Such committees shall be designated by name, its objectives defined and its duties and responsibilities specified.

Article VII. Meetings

Section 1. Annual Meeting

The Association shall meet annually on a date and a location to be fixed by the Executive Committee. SPECIAL MEETINGS may be called by the Executive Committee or on petition of 20% of the member churches of the Association. Member churches must receive a ninety (90) day written notice of the Annual Meeting or any SPECIAL MEETING of the Association.

The Annual Meeting is the highlight of the Association each year. Each member church is expected to be an active participant in the Association of Independent Methodists and to bring their pastor, lay leader, and at least three (3) elected delegates to the Annual Meeting. Each member church is entitled to one (1) vote at the Annual Meeting and any Special Meeting. There shall be no fractional votes.

The Annual Meeting of the Association of Independent Methodists is the governing body of the Association.

Section 2. Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee shall meet as often as necessary to transact the business of the Association on the call of the President, or on call of a majority of the Executive Committee.

All actions of the Executive Committee are subject to the will of the Association at its Annual Meeting.

Any actions required of the Association, and left undone, shall be carried out by the Executive Committee if it considers that failure to act would be detrimental to the welfare of the Association except those actions prohibited or tabled at the Annual Meeting or other Special Meetings of the Association.

The Executive Committee coordinates the work of the Association within and between the various regions in the Association of Independent Methodists.

Section 3. Committee Meetings

Committees shall meet as at least once a year and as often as necessary to transact the business of said committee on call of the committee chairman.

Section 4. Guidelines For Meetings

- A. Adequate notice shall be given for all meetings. Written notice shall be given to the Pastor, Lay Leader, and Chairman of the Board for each Member Church. For regular committee meetings adequate notice will be deemed sufficient when announcement is made by the appropriate members, at a previous meeting of the group, or its superior group in the organizational structure, and such notice placed in the Minutes.
- B. A majority of the officers elected and actively serving in the Association at the time, shall constitute a quorum for the business of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee may establish quorums for all other meetings.

- C. Every meeting shall have a program or agenda established by the appropriate officer or Board. The purpose of special meetings shall be announced in the call.
- D. Minutes shall be kept and filed at the AIM Office of all meetings as a permanent record.

Article VIII. Ministers/Credentialing

We believe that the ministers of the Association of Independent Methodists determine to a great degree the spirituality and the future of the Association. A call to the Christian Ministry is a call to prepare. Preparation is a lifelong process with the Minister of the gospel always attempting to improve the gifts and talents the Lord has given.

Section 1. Credentialing Process

- A. When a member of a church senses a call to preach or to some other form of Christian service, the pastor of the local church counsels the prospective minister concerning the opportunities and requirements of the ministry; if the pastor is persuaded that the person possesses gifts, graces, and promise of usefulness, the pastor shall guide that person toward qualifying. In the event that a local church is without a pastor, an advisory committee from the local church shall be selected to confer with the potential candidate. This advisory committee shall enlist the assistance of the AIM President, Chairman of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, or another Elder within AIM in assessing the potential candidate's calling.
- B. After the candidate has been admitted to the credentialing process by completing and submitting an Application for Credentials to the Association, this application will be processed and reviewed by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee along with any and all pertinent references. A Ministerial Interview will then be scheduled, and if approved, the candidate will receive an Associate Minister license. (Typically, candidates are encouraged to prepare for ministry by attending an approved college, university, or seminary, but candidates may petition the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to enter a Course of Study track of preparation.)
- C. The Associate Minister shall be assigned a mentor and is expected to begin or continue training for and gathering experience in ministry. To maintain credentials, the Associate Minister is expected to be actively involved in ministry or in preparation for ministry.
- D. After the successful completion of Associate Minister requirements, a second Ministerial Interview may be scheduled, and if approved, the Associate Minister may become an Ordained Minister.
- E. The Ordained Minister will be given specific assignments which must be completed in a timely fashion. The Ordained Minister will also complete a Ministry Assessment and other tests.
- F. After the successful completion of the Ordained Minister requirements and having gained ten years of experience in ministry within the Association, a third Ministerial Interview may be scheduled. If approved, the Ordained Minister will become an Ordained Elder with the Association.

Section 2. Credentialing Categories

A. Associate Minister

This is the entry level for credentials within the Association of Independent Methodists. Associate Ministers have elemental training and minimal experience. While holding active credentials, an Associate Minister is authorized to preach within any AIM member church and its extended ministries and, under the supervision of the local pastor or an assigned mentor, assist in the administration of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion and assist in the officiation of weddings and funerals. In order to maintain active credentials, an Associate Minister is required to meet with assigned mentor quarterly, discussing ministry in general and personal progress as a minister in particular, and report annually to the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. If seeking ordination, an Associate Minister is also required to complete assignments prescribed by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee unless actively completing ministerial courses through a college, university, or seminary approved by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, must gain at least two years of practical experience in ministry under the supervision of a mentor assigned or approved by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and must meet with the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee for assessment. Failure to serve in active ministry or to continue on-going preparation as a minister are grounds for being terminated as an Associate Minister.

B. Ordained Minister

An Ordained Minister (or its equivalent) with another denomination or an Associate Minister (having successfully completed all requirements for advancement in the credentialing process) may be eligible for Ordination. Ordained Ministers have moderate training and limited experience. While holding active credentials, an Ordained Minister is authorized to preach within any AIM member church and its extended ministries, pastor any Member Church or serve in any Approved Ministry of the Association, administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, and officiate weddings and funerals. In order to maintain active credentials, an Ordained Minister is required to report annually to the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee concerning personal, relational, and ministerial growth and experience and attend the Annual Meeting of the Association each year unless an absence has been excused by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. In order to advance credentials, an Ordained Minister is also required to complete assignments prescribed by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee unless actively completing ministerial courses through a college, university, or seminary approved by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, gain at least ten years of practical experience in pastoral ministry within the Association and meet with the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee for assessment. Ordained Ministers shall report annually to the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee concerning their progress toward completion of the credentialing requirements. Failure to serve in active ministry or to continue on-going preparation as a minister are grounds for being terminated as an Ordained Minister.

C. Ordained Elder

An Ordained Minister (having successfully completed all requirements for advancement in the credentialing process) may be eligible for Ordination as an Elder within the Association. Ordained Elders are thoroughly trained and have substantial experience in ministry. While holding active credentials, an Ordained Elder is authorized to preach within any AIM member church and its extended ministries, pastor any Member Church or serve in any Approved Ministry of the Association, administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, officiate weddings and funerals, and mentor Associate Ministers as appointed or approved by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. In order to maintain active credentials, an Ordained Elder is required to report annually to the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee concerning personal, relational, and ministerial growth and experience and attend the Annual Meeting of the Association each year unless an absence has been excused by the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. Failure to serve in active ministry or to continue on-going preparation as a minister are grounds for being terminated as an Ordained Elder.

Section 3. Transfers

Ministers in good standing from other denominations who desire to unite with the Association of Independent Methodists may be recognized and received, provided they subscribe to the AIM Articles of Belief and Constitution. If satisfied by the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (credentials are in order and/or have been surrendered to the former licensing body, doctrinal agreement with the Association is clear, and gifts, graces, and usefulness in ministry are manifested), then proper and appropriate credentials shall be issued based upon training and experience. Most ministers may be transferred as Ordained Ministers.

Ministers transferring from another denomination must receive prior approval before being considered as a pastoral candidate by Member Churches.

Section 4. Ministerial Interviews

The Ministerial Interview is the centerpiece of the credentialing process. A call to preach is a call to prepare. The Ministerial Interview monitors the progress a candidate is making toward preparation for ministry.

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee meets quarterly for the expressed purpose of interviewing, examining, and assessing applicants for credentials. All eligible applicants will have submitted a completed Application for Credentials and any other required information for review not less than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

The purpose of a Ministerial Interview is three-fold: first, it serves as a screening tool, ensuring that each candidate is of good moral character, is in doctrinal agreement with our Articles of Belief, and is gifted and graced for ministry; second, it serves as an empowering tool, assisting candidates to clarify, understand, and articulate God's call upon their lives and how they can best use their respective gifts, passions, personality, values, experiences, and vision; third it clarifies

how the candidate may be able to contribute to the vision and mission of AIM. The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee continues a mentoring process for each ministerial candidate.

The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee has a moral and ethical obligation to see that each Minister of the Association is properly trained and equipped. The Ministerial Interview is the best vehicle used to monitor that process.

When the examination of the candidate is completed, the credentialing body deliberates and decides whether or not to issue the candidate the appropriate credentials. If approved, the body will make arrangements for those credentials to be issued.

Section 5. Approved Ministries

The Association of Independent Methodists desires that its Ministerial Roll be actively involved in the ministry of the Association and its Member Churches. The Association also wants to expand its influence into other areas of ministry. Approved Ministry status allows a minister who has credentials with the Association of Independent Methodists to continue to hold active credentials with AIM while being involved in a ministry beyond AIM's jurisdiction. The Association of Independent Methodists cooperates with other Wesleyan-Arminian denominations wherein AIM-credentialed ministers may pastor a congregation of another denomination while maintaining AIM credentials.

Ministers desiring Approved Ministry status must request such status from the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. Those having Approved Ministry status shall still report to the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee on an annual basis in order to maintain that status. Whenever possible they are expected to participate in AIM programs, meetings, and activities.

Section 6. Retired and Inactive Ministers

Ministers on retired status will continue to hold valid credentials if they are involved in a Member Church or Association activities.

The credentials of any Minister leaving the ministry of AIM shall be surrendered to the Executive Committee of the Association. These credentials will be filed in the AIM Office and may be re-issued upon approval by the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee if said minister desires to again enter active ministry within the Association.

Section 7. Suspensions

The President or his representative in cooperation with the support of the leadership of the Member Church has the responsibility to temporarily suspend the pastoral responsibilities of any AIM Minister when there are serious accusations made against said Minister that, if these accusations were true, would be grounds for termination of the Minister's credentials. Under such circumstances, the President shall bring in the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to assist with a preliminary investigation to see if there is any merit to the charges raised.

The President, in cooperation with the leadership of the Member Church, has the responsibility to temporarily suspend the pastoral responsibilities of any AIM Minister in the midst of a serious

personal crisis which, if not resolved or given help, would cause long-term damage to the Member Church being pastored.

Section 8. Restorations

Termination or suspension of a minister's credentials is a last course of action to be taken by the Association. The Association, through the AIM Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, shall do everything within its power to restore one of its Ministers.

Galatians 6:1 tells us that those who are spiritual shall restore one who is overtaken by sin. Therefore, when a Minister of the Association is in danger of being suspended or terminated, the AIM Pastor-Parish Committee shall work with said Minister, designing a workable plan for restoration, if at all possible.

Section 9. Terminations

Termination of the credentials of a Minister of the Association may be for the following reasons: failure to adhere to the Articles of Belief of the Association; failure to participate in AIM activities and meetings; failure to complete assigned work in the credentialing process; or any act or behavior which places the Minister in violation of the vows of Ordination.

Section 10. Divorce

Ministers who make application to receive credentials from the Association who have divorce in their background need to be aware that this area of their Application for Credentials will be thoroughly reviewed.

Ministers who have credentials with the Association must notify the President immediately if divorce proceedings have begun, whether by the Minister or the Minister's spouse. At that time the Minister may be subject to a temporary suspension. Failure to notify the President are grounds for the termination of ministerial credentials.

Article X. Parliamentary Authority

Roberts Rules of Order, Revised, shall be the Parliamentary Authority of this Association.

Article XI. Amendments

Any proposed amendment to this Constitution must be submitted in writing, through the Executive Committee, to the member churches at least ninety (90) days prior to the Annual Meeting. A three-fourths (3/4) majority of the Covenantal Associates present and voting at the Annual Meeting must favor the adoption of an Amendment before such Amendment is made a part of the Constitution, provided a quorum of fifty-one percent (51%) or more of the Covenantal Associates are represented.