

CHAPTER I

D-1.0000

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

PREAMBLE

D-1.0101
Church
Discipline

Church discipline is the church's exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. The church's disciplinary process exists not as a substitute for the secular judicial system, but to do what the secular judicial system cannot do. The purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to uphold the dignity of those who have been harmed by disciplinary offenses; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. In all respects, all participants are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process, and it is the intention of these rules so to provide.

D-1.0102
Power Vested in
Christ's Church

The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.

D-1.0103
Conciliate and
Mediate

The traditional biblical obligation to conciliate, mediate, and adjust differences without strife is not diminished by these Rules of Discipline. Although the Rules of Discipline describe the way in which judicial process within the church, when necessary, shall be conducted, it is not their intent or purpose to encourage judicial process of any kind or to make it more expensive or difficult. The biblical duty of church people to "come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court ..." (Matthew 5:25) is not abated or diminished. It remains the duty of every church member to try (prayerfully and seriously) to bring about an adjustment or settlement of the quarrel, complaint, delinquency, or irregularity asserted, and to avoid formal proceedings under the Rules of Discipline unless, after prayerful deliberation, they are determined to be necessary to preserve the purity and purposes of the church.