

## **Sovereign Grace Churches Council of Elders Meeting Minutes**

Indianapolis, Indiana, October 24, 2016

1. Mark Prater, executive director of Sovereign Grace Churches, called to order the sixth meeting of the Council of Elders on Monday, October 24, 2016, at the Indianapolis Marriott East, IN.
2. Mark Prater recognized four new churches joining Sovereign Grace. The churches joining are Sovereign Grace Church of Tagbilaran City (Philippines), Grace Redeemer Church (Shillong, India), Kings Cross Church (Manchester, NH), and Christ's Covenant Church (Winona Lake, IN).
3. Mark Prater held a roll call to establish a quorum. 70 of 76 delegates, representing 68 Sovereign Grace Churches, were present, representing a quorum.
4. **Approval of Agenda.**  
Mark Prater presented the following proposed agenda for the meeting that was approved by voice vote.
  - a) Recognize new churches that have joined SGC since the last Council of Elders meeting.
  - b) Roll call. Confirm we have a quorum.
  - c) Motion to approve the meeting agenda.
  - d) State of the Union for Sovereign Grace Churches.
  - e) Recognize the Rules Committee. Brief review of the Roberts Rules of Order.
  - f) Conduct the vote for the Executive Committee candidates (2 seats to fill).
  - g) Conduct the affirmation vote for the Polity Committee candidate (1 seat to fill).
  - h) Conduct the affirmation vote for the Theology Committee candidate (1 seat to fill).
  - i) Conduct the affirmation vote for the SG Court of Appeals (2 seats to fill).
  - j) Discuss and affirm the proposed amendments to the Book of Church Order.
  - k) Update from the Theology Committee regarding the SG Statement of Faith.
  - l) Leadership Team Strategic Initiatives Update.
  - m) Present and affirm the Sovereign Grace budget for fiscal year 2016-2017.
  - n) Other Business.
  - o) Motion to adjourn.
5. **State of the Union of Sovereign Grace Churches**  
Mark Prater gave the annual State of the Union of Sovereign Grace Churches.
6. **Recognize the Rules Committee**  
The rules committee has three members chosen from the polity committee. The members for this meeting are Paul Buckley, Daniel Baker, and Marty Machowski. Marty gave a brief overview of Robert's Rules of Order.
7. **Vote for Executive Committee Members**  
Mark Prater conducted a written ballot vote for two open executive committee positions. The nominees were Wayne Brooks, Orlando, FL; Andy Farmer, Glen Mills, PA; Larry Malament, Clarksburg, MD; and Jimmy Cannon, Joppa, MD. Wayne Brooks and Andy Farmer were elected to serve.
8. **Affirmation Vote for Polity Committee Member**

**Sovereign Grace Churches Council of Elders Meeting Minutes**  
Indianapolis, Indiana, October 24, 2016

Joel Peabody (Westminster, CO) was affirmed by written ballot vote to be a member of the Polity Committee.

9. **Affirmation Vote for Theology Committee Member**

Shawn Woo (Cambridge, MA) was affirmed by written ballot vote to be a member of the Theology Committee.

10. **Affirmation Vote for SG Court of Appeals Members**

Scott Crook (Chaska, MN) and Joe Calabello (Jacksonville, FL) were affirmed by written ballot vote to be members of the SG Court of Appeals.

11. **Proposed Amendments to the Book of Church Order (BCO)**

Phil Sasser, chair of the Polity Committee, presented proposed amendments to the Book of Church Order. Amendments to the BCO are governed by Section 15.3.3 and require a simple majority vote to be adopted. All 24 amendments were approved (as amended) by either unanimous consent or majority vote. The approved amendments are attached.

12. **Theology Committee Update.**

Jeff Purswell, Theology Committee chair, presented an update on the statement of faith development. A motion to accept the prior year's revised report on sections 1-3 of the statement of faith was approved by voice vote. Josh Blount presented an update on the ordination process.

13. **Leadership Team Strategic Initiatives Update**

Mark Prater reviewed several Leadership Team initiatives and Rich Richardson gave an update on Global Missions work.

14. **Present and Affirm the Sovereign Grace Churches budget for fiscal year 2016-2017.**

Mark Prater presented the attached budget that was approved by the executive committee on July 29, 2016 for affirmation by the Council of Elders. Ken Mellinger, on behalf of the executive committee, also endorsed the budget for approval. The budget was affirmed by voice vote.

15. **Other Business**

Mark updated the Council of Elders on dates for the next two Council of Elders meetings that were approved by the executive committee and to be immediately followed by the Pastors Conference.

- a) October 2, 2017 in Orlando, FL
- b) October 1, 2018 in Orlando, FL

16. **Motion to Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned in the evening by voice vote.

**AMENDMENT 1**

BCO SECTION: 15.2.1

PROPOSAL: Need clear mandate for Executive Director to draft the agenda for the CoE meeting. This will be added at the end of the current BCO-15.2.1.

*Proposed wording:*

*The Executive Director will draft an agenda for the Council of Elders meeting, approved by the leadership team, and sent to all Council members thirty days prior to the scheduled Council of Elders Meeting.*

RATIONALE: Currently an agenda is not required for our annual Council of Elders meeting. A detailed agenda is required for a "Special Meeting" of the Council, BCO-15.2.4. Mark Prater has followed the Special Meeting guidelines and has sent out an agenda 30 days in advance to all Council of Elder's meetings. Mark agrees we should require the same procedure for our regularly scheduled CoE meetings. The agenda for a "Special Meeting" is controlled by whoever calls for the meeting. This amendment is to specify that for our regular, annual meeting that the Executive Director has this responsibility.

**AMENDMENT 2**

BCO SECTION: 23.1

PROPOSAL: Change section title from "Excommunication" to "Principles of Church Discipline in a Local Church"

RATIONALE: It seems odd and inaccurate to label BCO-23.1, "Excommunication," since the section provides an overview of the entire discipline process.

**AMENDMENT 3**

BCO SECTION: 24.2.6

PROPOSAL: Change section heading to "The Panel" and move to 24.5 (renumber what follows)

RATIONALE: Correct 24.2.6, which is currently mistitled and misplaced

**AMENDMENT 4**

BCO SECTION: 15.3.6

PROPOSAL: Replace current BCO-15.3.6 with the language below. This amendment creates a way for Executive Committee candidates to be added by the Nominating Committee if a candidate withdraws his name within the 40 days required prior to the Council of Elders.

*Current Wording:*

*15.3.6 Election of the members of the Executive Committee*

*15.3.6.1 The candidates are nominated by the Sovereign Grace Nominating Committee and elected by the Council of Elders. The Nominating Committee shall put forward at least twice as many candidates as there are open seats on the Executive Committee.*

*15.3.6.2 Each candidate must be elected by a simple majority vote of those present and voting at the convened Council of Elders. Run-offs may be necessary.*

*Proposed Wording:*

*15.3.6 Election of the members of the Executive Committee*

*15.3.6.1 The candidates are nominated by the Sovereign Grace Nominating Committee and elected by the Council of Elders. The Nominating Committee shall put forward at least twice as many candidates as there are open seats on the Executive Committee.*

*15.3.6.2 Should any candidate withdraw after selection by the Nominating Committee and before the Council of Elders election, an exception to the 40-day requirement shall be made and the Nominating Committee should seek to fill the slot if possible. If unable to find a replacement the ballot shall simply have a reduced number of candidates. If there are not enough candidates to fill the empty slots, the Executive Committee may appoint members who shall serve until the next election, where they shall need to be elected to continue serving. Terms shall be adjusted to ensure no more than three Executive Committee slots are up for election in each future election.*

*15.3.6.3 Each candidate must be elected by a simple majority vote of those present and voting at the convened Council of Elders. Run-offs may be necessary.*

RATIONALE: We need to outline how we handle situations where a candidate withdraws his name after selection by the Nominating Committee and the unlikely situation where there are not enough candidates to fill the slots open for election.

**AMENDMENT 5**

BCO SECTION: 15.4.2.1 (a new section under current BCO-15.4.2)

PROPOSAL: Add new language to expedite Council of Elders' business.

*Proposed wording:*

*15.4.2.1 While in session, in order to conduct necessary business, the Council of Elders may suspend a Book of Church Order procedural rule with a two-thirds majority vote.*

RATIONALE: We need a mechanism to override procedural rules contained in the BCO itself when compliance with an existing BCO requirement cannot be fulfilled in session (for example, rules regarding nominations during a current election). Since Roberts Rules are a lower authority than the BCO suspending the rules via Roberts Rules cannot be used to override stated rules contained in the BCO itself.

### **AMENDMENT 6**

BCO SECTION: 18.4.6

PROPOSAL: Replace current 18.4.6 (make sure BCO uses title "Director for Global Missions" consistently, e.g., 13.2.4-13.2.5).

*Current wording:*

*Leads our global missions efforts by casting vision, providing theological discernment, and implementing strategic plans in coordination with our global partners.*

*Proposed wording:*

*Leads our global missions efforts by casting vision, providing theological discernment, and implementing strategic plans in coordination with our global partners. The Director of Global Missions also directs global church planting and adoptions.*

RATIONALE: As Sovereign Grace becomes a larger global family of churches there needs to be some parameters for the Sovereign Grace Director of Global Missions. The defined role should give latitude for how the Director of Global Missions engages a potential church adoption or church planter.

**AMENDMENT 7**

BCO SECTION: 18.4.10 (added after current BCO-18.4.9)

PROPOSAL: Define the functions and limitations of Leadership Team-related ad hoc committees. Such committees are for advice and assistance and not the exercise of authority.

*Proposed wording:*

*18.4.10 Leadership Team Committees and Teams*

*18.4.10.1 In order to support the functions of the Leadership Team, its members may establish committees or teams.*

*18.4.10.2 Members of committees or teams do not need to be nominated by any nominating committee. They may be selected by the Leadership Team or its members.*

*18.4.10.3 Committees or teams may not be empowered with any authority that has already been allocated to other formal committees or offices as defined in the Book of Church Order. They serve in an advisory and assistant capacity, not in the stead of any member of the Leadership Team.*

RATIONALE: Currently Leadership Team members are employing ad hoc teams. It is prudent to clearly define the roles, requirements and limitations of these committees and their members.

**AMENDMENT 8**

BCO SECTION: 19

PROPOSAL: Introduce changes to section 19 to allow for full partnership for churches not currently operating under the current partnership agreement, BCO-19 but involved in a provisional region.

This includes changing the current BCO-19 to BCO-19B and adding an entire new section, BCO-19A (**see Appendix at end**). Changes have been made in this proposal in sections 19.2; 19.3.1; and 19.3.2.

RATIONALE: Churches outside the United States who for every reason are considered a member of Sovereign Grace Churches currently have no official Partnership Agreement. We need to have a Partnership Agreement that provides for churches outside of the current United States-specific Partnership Agreement in BCO 19.

**AMENDMENT 9**

BCO SECTION: 13.1.3 (Replace current BCO-13.1.3)

PROPOSAL: Introduce changes to section 13 to define provisional regions and how they work under the BCO.

*Proposed wording:*

*13.1.3 New and Provisional Regions*

*13.1.3.1 New regions may be formed around the world. This will be facilitated by the Leadership Team.*

*13.1.3.2 Provisional regions may be formed around the world. A provisional region is one that is operating with certain authorized exceptions to Book of Church Order according to BCO-19A (proposed). This will be facilitated by the Leadership Team subject to the approval of a simple majority of the Council of Elders.*

RATIONALE: Allowance is made for the formation of new regions under the direction of the Leadership Team according to BCO-13.1.3. This change defines provisional regions as an option under this section that will allow better transition of churches into new regions and full partnership in SGC.

**AMENDMENT 10**

BCO SECTION: 13.2.2.1

PROPOSAL: Make the Sovereign Grace Court of Appeals the committee that trains our RJRC members.

*Current wording:*

*Each Regional Assembly of Elders will appoint a qualified sitting Judicial Review Committee that is trained in ecclesiastical law and procedure by the Sovereign Grace Polity Committee. This training must be completed within 18 months of being appointed to the Regional Judicial Review Committee.*

*Proposed wording:*

*Each Regional Assembly of Elders will appoint a qualified sitting Judicial Review Committee that is trained in ecclesiastical law and procedure by the Sovereign Grace Court of Appeals or their delegates. This training must be completed within 18 months of being appointed to the Regional Judicial Review Committee.*

RATIONALE: Makes more sense to have a judicial body train our adjudicators rather than a committee entrusted with the care of SG documents.

**AMENDMENT 11**

BCO SECTION: 13.2.4.2

PROPOSAL: Bring more definition to exploratory works that are not yet churches but are also not traditional church plants. Add the following after current 13.2.4.1 and renumber following sections:

*Proposed wording:*

*13.2.4.2: Churches beginning exploratory Sovereign Grace church planting initiatives such as campuses, mission churches, or other Sovereign Grace works, will communicate the plans and intentions of such works to the Regional Leader and the Regional Church Planting Committee prior to their start.*

*13.2.4.2.a The Regional Leader and Regional Church Planting Committee will work together with the initiating church to develop an appropriate approach for informing the region of the work. This may include steps up to and including a formal report at the Regional Assembly of Elders and opportunity for the Regional Assembly of Elders to comment on and affirm the exploratory work as part of the larger regional mission strategy.*

*13.2.4.2.b The Regional Church Planting Committee is responsible for guiding an exploratory work to best position it for its eventual approval as a new church in the region. The Regional Church Planting Committee will guide the process in accordance with church planting and adoption provisions of the Book of Church Order so that the Regional Assembly of Elders may have confidence that all new churches and pastors have been appropriately evaluated and vetted for approval by the region.*

RATIONALE: Churches in Sovereign Grace are using non-traditional church planting methods but are not always engaging the region, even though they desire the new churches remain in Sovereign Grace. It seems wise to adjust the BCO to speak to non-traditional church planting.

**AMENDMENT 12**

BCO SECTION: 13.2.7.2 (added after current BCO-13.2.7.1 and later section renumbered)

PROPOSAL: Make a way for Regional Assemblies to establish committees.

*Proposed wording:*

*13.2.7.2 In order to facilitate unofficial functions every Region may establish ad hoc committees or working groups:*



*13.2.7.2.a Members of an ad hoc committee do not need to be nominated by the Regional Nominating Committee.*

*13.2.7.2.b The purpose of an ad hoc committee should be defined and its duration specified.*

*13.2.7.2.c Ad hoc committees may not be empowered with authority that has already been allocated to other formal committees or offices of the Region as defined in the Book of Church Order.*

*13.2.7.2.d These ad hoc committees are to serve short term purposes. Any committee designed to serve more than one year must be approved by the Regional Assembly of Elders and the members of such a committee must be elected by simple majority vote of Regional Assembly of Elders.*

*13.2.7.2.e The creation of ad hoc committees, its members, its purpose, and its duration shall be recorded in the Regional meeting official minutes.*

RATIONALE: Regional Assemblies are strictly limited in their official prerogatives to those defined in the BCO (BCO-13.2). Regional Assemblies should be able to establish ad hoc committees to facilitate other Regional objectives outside those defined by the BCO so long as they do not overlap or usurp the stated functions and defined roles in the BCO.

### **AMENDMENT 13**

BCO SECTION: 23.2.1

PROPOSAL: Add two sentences at the end of the section for clarity and completeness.

*Current wording:*

*A disciplined member may appeal the elders' decision and the church's action to their Regional Judicial Review Committee. Appeal must be made within 30 days. The Regional Judicial Review Committee is required to hear the appeal of any excommunicated church member; the Committee may not decline to take up the case.*

*Proposed wording:*

*A disciplined member may appeal the elders' decision and the church's action to their Regional Judicial Review Committee. The Regional Judicial Review Committee is required to hear the appeal of any excommunicated church member; the Committee may not decline to take up the case. It is the responsibility of the local eldership to communicate to an excommunicated*

*member the right to appeal. An appeal must be made within 30 days of being notified by the elders of their excommunication and right to appeal.*

RATIONALE: BCO-23.2.1 as it stood lacked a couple important elements.

#### **AMENDMENT 14**

BCO SECTION: 24.1

PROPOSAL: To clarify the process in the case of an elder who *confesses* to serious sins. These two paragraphs replace the current 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph in BCO-24.1.

*Proposed wording:*

*Should an elder confess to serious sin or even be accused of such sins, either the accused elder or the other local elders will immediately contact both the Regional Leader and the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee.*

*Should an elder confess to serious sin, and agree to resign from his position, the local elders should immediately contact the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee in order for him to appoint a Moderator of Just Cause to review the situation and any resignation agreement in order to confirm that a trial is not necessary. Should the moderator determine the process and agreement are fair and freely agreed upon, the eldership will follow the guidelines contained in BCO-24.8.4.*

RATIONALE: Need clear steps at this first stage of the process. Whose duty it is is currently unclear in the BCO.

#### **AMENDMENT 15**

BCO SECTION: New Section 24.1.1

PROPOSAL: Enable unaccused elders to act quickly with respect to an elder accused of certain serious sins:

*Proposed language:*

*Should an elder be accused of serious criminal or scandalous sin the remaining elders may, at their own discretion, temporarily suspend the accused elder from his office and its duties with or without pay until an Adjudicatory Panel rules on the matter. In a case where the eldership decides to suspend pay, if the elder is ultimately cleared of the charges, he must receive his withheld pay in full. Two unaccused elders are required to approve this action. If there are not two remaining unaccused elders the Judicial Review Committee will supply a second elder or in the case of a single elder, who is accused, the Judicial Review*

*Committee will supply two. In the situation where there is only one elder and he is the accused, the Regional Assembly will assume responsibility for the care of the church. The Regional Leader will coordinate that care. The financial assets of the church remain under the control of the local church officers or their delegates.*

RATIONALE: In the case of scandal, the elders need to be able to act quickly.

**AMENDMENT 16**

BCO SECTION: 24.2.1.4

PROPOSAL: Create a way to deal with elders who are criminally charged by civil authorities. This will be added after the current BCO-24.2.1.3.

*Proposed wording:*

*24.2.1.4 Criminal offenses*

*In the event that an elder is charged with a crime by civil authorities, the local elders must immediately notify the Chairman of the Regional Judicial Review Committee. The local church's eldership will appoint one of its member elders as Moderator of Just Cause. In the case where the local church only has one elder and he is charged with a crime, the Chairman of the Region's Judicial Review Committee will appoint one of the committee's members to be the Moderator of Just Cause. Should the Moderator determine that there is enough evidence to establish just cause for a trial, either one of the local elders or the Chairman of the Region's Judicial Review Committee must file a corresponding charge (BCO-24.2.5) for a local or Regional Panel to evaluate. In the case where there is only one elder and the Regional Judicial Review Committee provides the Moderator of Just Cause, the Chairman of the Regional Judicial Review Committee will file a charge.*

RATIONALE: When an elder is charged criminally, certain procedures should be automatic.

**AMENDMENT 17**

BCO SECTION: 24.3

PROPOSAL: To replace the entire existing 24.3 with the following:

*Proposed wording:*

*24.3 Moderator of Just Cause Pretrial Procedures*

*When a charge is made against an elder at the local church level, the uncharged elders should appoint one of their number to be the Moderator of Just Cause in order to make the determination of whether or not there is sufficient justification for a trial. If, after appropriate recusals, there aren't enough remaining uncharged elders to serve as Moderator of Just Cause, then the Chairman of the Region's Judicial Review Committee should be contacted in order that he may appoint a Moderator of Just Cause from the Judicial Review Committee. The Moderator of Just Cause's responsibilities are:*

*24.3.1 To receive the formal, written charges directly from the accuser or the local elders who received the charge. Along with the charge, the accuser shall submit in writing a description of all the existing evidence that the plaintiff plans to bring forward in support of the charge. The written description should include information regarding the witnesses: their name(s), address or contact information, local church affiliation, a brief description of what they will share;*

*24.3.2 To communicate directly with the accuser until a Panel is appointed at which time the Moderator of the Panel shall communicate with the parties;*

*24.3.3 To make sure that the accuser has already fulfilled his/her responsibility in Matthew 18:15-16, including that a copy of written charges has already been presented to the defendant;*

*24.3.4 To make sure that the fundamental requirements for bringing a charge (BCO-24.2) have been met;*

*24.3.5 To inform the plaintiff of the seriousness of bringing a charge against an elder while not intimidating him/her;*

*24.3.6 To inform the plaintiff of the possible outcomes of bringing a charge against an elder and asking the plaintiff what outcomes he/she desires;*

*24.3.7 To ascertain if there are any witnesses who will substantiate the charge(s), identify those witnesses, and to personally talk to those witnesses to determine the nature and content of their testimony;*

*24.3.8 To determine, after examining the evidence, whether or not there is sufficient cause for a trial;*

*24.3.9 To recommend mediation instead of a trial to the plaintiff and the defendant if appropriate and mutually agreeable. If either party does not agree then the process proceeds to trial. If during an agreed upon mediation, should the defendant confess to and repent of the charges brought by the plaintiff and agree to the remedy sought by the plaintiff then*

*the matter does not have to be adjudicated and the eldership will apply the appropriate result (BCO 24.8) and the matter is closed.*

*24.3.10 Once the Moderator of Just Cause has reached a determination he must communicate to each of the parties with a formal written decision using the format from Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure. Decisions are not to be emailed. The summary of decision should be easily understood. The technical aspects of the decision should be left in the Basis of Decision.*

*24.3.11 If the decision is to go to trial, the Moderator of Just Cause will serve as an advisor to the person bringing the charge on procedural matters.*

*24.3.12 If the decision is to go to trial, the Moderator of Just Cause must inform the remaining elders of the local church, the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee, and the Regional Leader.*

*24.3.13 Should the Moderator of Just Cause find that the charge has merit he will report such to the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee and to the Regional Leader. The Regional Leader will conduct a blind draw to select a three-judge Panel to hear the case.*

*24.3.14 The Regional Leader will ensure that there is pastoral care for the defendant, and appoint an advisor/pastor to the plaintiff.*

*24.3.15 The Panel will then select one of their number to be the moderator of the Panel. He is responsible for communicating with each of the parties, ensuring that the minutes of the trial proceedings are being kept, that order is maintained, and that the Book of Church Order and Rules of Procedure for Adjudications are being followed.*

*24.3.16 The moderator of the Panel may hold a pretrial conference with the parties if he deems it necessary. There must not be ex parte conversations between the members of the Panel and the parties. Further trial direction and procedures are found in the Rules of Procedure for Adjudications.*

RATIONALE: Given the importance of role of the Moderator of Just Cause, the BCO and/or the Rules of Procedure should give clear instruction about the MJC responsibilities.

**AMENDMENT 18**

BCO SECTION: 24.5.2

PROPOSAL: More guidance is needed with respect to communication about certain adjudications, especially very public and scandalous ones. This will be added after 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of 24.5.2.

*Proposed wording:*

*In the event of a public offense (BCO-24.2.1.1) that is also scandalous in nature, particularly if it is both criminal and public, the local eldership will seek input from the Chairman of the Judicial Review Committee concerning communications to the church about the process and status of the disciplinary process. Protecting the defendant's rights to due process must be maintained, yet, when the matter is also already public, caring for the church will require some communication. Exceptions to rules regarding the timing of such communications, as described in the Book of Church Order (e.g., BCO-24.5.2; 24.5.5) and the Rules of Procedure (BCO-34.8), may be adjusted at the discretion of the Chairman, for the sake of caring for the church.*

RATIONALE: Since an adjudication process can take months to complete, when a charge against an elder is scandalous and publicly known, cautious disclosure of the process of discipline may at times be necessary. The church should not be left completely in the dark under such conditions. By giving the Panel some discretion on communication matters related to the status of a disciplinary process, we can ensure due process while also providing some relief to the church.

### **AMENDMENT 19**

BCO SECTION: 24.5.2

PROPOSAL: We need to designate how pastoral care will happen with an accused elder. This will add a new BCO-24.5.2 and renumber the rest of BCO-24.5.

*Proposed wording:*

*24.5.2 The Priority of Pastoral Care for the Defendant*

*When an elder is accused, the Regional Leader shall have the responsibility to appoint an elder from either the church or from the Regional Assembly of Elders to provide pastoral care for the parties and their families.*

RATIONALE: In a small church with a small number of elders and one possibly charging the other, the Region may need to provide a pastor for each of the parties.

### **AMENDMENT 20**

BCO SECTION: 24.7.1

PROPOSAL: Amend second-to-last paragraph in BCO-24.7.1

*Current wording:*

*If the elder is found guilty of the charges, the case will be made known to the local Sovereign Grace church and therefore becomes a public matter. Further, the case and its results will be made known to the Regional Assembly of Elders and the Sovereign Grace Director of Church Development. In some instances, the identity of the plaintiff or key witnesses should not be disclosed to the wider public. This determination will be made by the presiding Panel, Committee, or Court.*

*Proposed wording:*

*After the trial has been held and the Panel has written their decision, the results of the case will be made known to the local church, the Regional Assembly of Elders, and the Sovereign Grace Director of Church Development and therefore becomes a public matter. This is true regardless of whether appeals are made. In some instances, the identity of the plaintiff or key witnesses should not be disclosed to the wider public. This determination will be made by the presiding Panel, Committee, or Court.*

RATIONALE: Remove ambiguity of the timetable for making a guilty decision known to the church (and the public).

## **AMENDMENT 21**

BCO SECTION: 24.8.5

PROPOSAL: Replace BCO-24.8.5 with new language and a new heading ("Church Discipline").

*Current wording:*

*24.8.5 Excommunication*

*The defendant is found to be at fault and is not repentant.*

*Proposed wording:*

*24.8.5 Church Discipline*

*If the defendant is found to be a fault and is not repentant, then the local elders must apply their church discipline process in an appropriate manner. This process may ultimately lead to excommunication if the defendant remains unrepentant.*

RATIONALE: It should be the local church that performs the final step of excommunication and not the panel.

**AMENDMENT 22**

BCO SECTION: 24.10

PROPOSAL: Specify how communication is to happen in certain judicial matters.

*Current wording:*

*Communication for the discipline of a qualified pastor will be handled by the local church and according to the wisdom of its eldership. However, any judgment involving suspension or removal from office must be reported in writing to the Regional Assembly of Elders and Director of Church Development of the Sovereign Grace Leadership Team because it affects a man's fitness for office and broader service within Sovereign Grace.*

*Proposed wording:*

*Communication for the discipline of a qualified pastor will be handled by the local church, according to the wisdom of its eldership. The entire and unedited written decision of the Panel will be sent to the local elders, the Regional Leader, the Chairman of the Regional Judicial Review Committee and to the Leadership Team of Sovereign Grace Churches. An appropriate summary of the decision which includes the pertinent information will also be written by the Panel for distribution to the local church and the Regional Assembly of elders, and upon request, sent to other Sovereign Grace elders. Any elder from within the Region may request the entire and unedited written decision from the Regional Leader.*

RATIONALE: Full disclosure of trial results needs to be limited due to the confidential testimony of witnesses. But enough information needs to be given to the church when an elder is publicly rebuked or removed from office.

**AMENDMENT 23**

BCO SECTION: 24.11

PROPOSAL: Grant to the Adjudicating Panel the right to extend an extra 30 days to either party to file an appeal.

*Proposed wording:*

*Either the plaintiff or defendant may appeal the Panel's judgment to the Regional Judicial Review Committee within 30 days. The plaintiff or defendant may further appeal the decision of the Regional Judicial Review Committee to the Sovereign*



*Grace Court of Appeal within 30 days. If the decision of a Panel is overturned by a Regional Judicial Review Committee, the local elders on that Panel also have the right to appeal the decision to the Sovereign Grace Court of Appeal. An adjudicating Panel may grant an extension to either party of up to 30 additional days to file an appeal if it deems it appropriate.*

RATIONALE: There could be extenuating circumstances that might make it wise to extend the appeal window.

**AMENDMENT 24**

BCO SECTION: 25.2.7

PROPOSAL: Clarify who decides a judicial matter and who executes that decision (local elders).

*Proposed wording:*

*When the Regional Judicial Review Committee has the original jurisdiction in the case of an accused elder when the local eldership is too small to adequately deal with the matter, once their Panel renders a decision, the execution of that decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the unaccused local elder(s). Should there be no unaccused elders, the execution of the decision shall be the exclusive responsibility of the Judicial Review Committee.*

RATIONALE: We need to clarify the lines of authority when the Judicial Review Committee acts in the stead of a local eldership.

**Appendix: Amendment 8 to Section 19A**

19A Partnership Agreement – Provisional Regions<sup>11</sup>

19.1 Preamble

The Sovereign Grace churches together voluntarily form a unified ecclesiastical body (Sovereign Grace Churches) to glorify God as an expression of the bride of Christ. The churches share spiritual and material resources for the furtherance of our common mission, under a common government, which guards our fidelity to our common Statement of Faith and standards of corporate holiness. A local church (Church Partner) joins itself to the Sovereign Grace Churches when its elders, representing the Church Partner, enter into this Partnership Agreement with Sovereign Grace Churches, represented by its Executive Director, and its Regional Assembly of Elders, represented by the Regional Leader of the provisional region.

19.2 The Partnership Commitments

19.2.1 The Commitments of the Regional Assembly of Elders

The Regional Assembly of Elders recognizes that the terms and conditions of this Partnership Agreement are an integral part of The Book of Church Order of the Sovereign Grace Churches (BCO), and promises to uphold its commitments in the BCO among which are 1) to responsibly steward its role in the examination and approval of elder candidates for ordination in the Church Partner, 2) to pursue justice, righteousness, and holiness as it adjudicates conflicts involving the Church Partner, 3) to coordinate and support church planting and outreach within the provisional region, and 4) to care for the Church Partner and her elders in time of need. Any aspects of the BCO that cannot be upheld because of national or local requirements and limitations shall be specified, documented and authorized by the Sovereign Grace Churches Leadership Team in cooperation with the Church Partner. The document containing the exceptions must be approved by a simple majority of the Council of Elders. No exceptions to the Statement of Faith will be granted.

19.2.2 The Commitments of Sovereign Grace Churches

Sovereign Grace Churches, on behalf of the Sovereign Grace Churches Council of Elders (Council of Elders) recognizes that the terms and conditions of this Partnership Agreement are an integral part of the BCO and promises to uphold its commitments in the BCO among which are 1) to steward the Statement of Faith by pursuing sound, biblical doctrine that includes Reformed Soteriology and Continuationist Pneumatology, 2) to maintain the BCO and to ensure its consistent implementation throughout all Regions, 3) to provide theological education via the Pastors College and

training opportunities to the elders of every Church Partner, 4) to coordinate all Regions in the planting of churches globally as God would grant the resources to do so, and 5) to vigorously maintain and promote all of the unique values of Sovereign Grace Churches including elder governed/led polity, complementarian roles in the home and church, and gospel-centered doctrine and preaching. Any aspects of the BCO that cannot be upheld because of national or local requirements and limitations shall be specified, documented and authorized by the Sovereign Grace Churches Leadership Team in cooperation with the Church Partner. The document containing the exceptions must be approved by a simple majority of the Council of Elders. No exceptions to the Statement of Faith will be granted.

19.2.3 The Commitments of the Church Partner

The Church Partner recognizes that the terms and conditions of this Partnership Agreement are an integral part of the BCO, and promises to uphold its commitments contained in the BCO among which are 1) to subscribe to the Statement of Faith (as articulated in Sections 9 and 13), 2) to submit to the BCO as articulated in Sections 9 and 13, with appropriate exceptions for provisional regions, 3) to actively participate in the Regional Assembly of Elders and Council of Elders, and 4) to actively support the mission and values of Sovereign Grace Churches in spirit, through participation, and by giving financially. Any aspects of the BCO that cannot be upheld because of national or local requirements and limitations shall be specified, documented and authorized by the Sovereign Grace Churches Leadership Team in cooperation with the Church Partner. The document containing the exceptions must be approved by a simple majority of the Council of Elders. No exceptions to the Statement of Faith will be granted.

19.3 Terms and Conditions of Partnership

19.3.1 Declarations of Intentions

19.3.1.1 This Agreement does not constitute a formation of a corporation (whether for profit or not-for-profit), a limited liability company, a charitable trust, a charitable incorporated company, a legal partnership, a joint venture, or any other type of social enterprise or legal entity, an employment-employee relationship, an independent contractor/consultant relationship nor any similar entity as defined by the civil laws of each Party's respective government.

19.3.1.2 Each Party's execution of this Agreement does not confer to any other party hereto the legal right to or any interest in such executing party's real property, personal property, intellectual property, employees, or responsibility or liability for such party's debts, claims, or liabilities.

19.3.1.3 Entering into this Agreement is entirely voluntary, which means that nothing herein is intended to prevent any Church Partner from leaving, as described in the BCO.

19.3.1.4 Notwithstanding this Agreement, the Church Partner shall continue to be solely responsible to fulfill its corporate purposes, as currently described by its governing documents, and to operate in a manner consistent with its status as Church within its locale.

19.3.2 Partnership Giving Plan

19.3.2.1 To fund this partnership in church planting, church development, and global mission efforts, each Church Partner commits to a goal of giving 10% of their annual general (non-designated) fund giving. The particular distribution of this money will be determined by the Sovereign Grace Churches Leadership Team in cooperation with the church partner and any provisional region.

19.3.2.2 The Church Partner agrees to share fairly and proportionally in the expenses of any Regional Assembly of Elders events and activities in which its elders participate, or to make other arrangements in collaboration with, and with the consent of, the other Church Partners.

19.3.3 Intellectual Property

19.3.3.1 The Church Partner agrees to respect copyright ownership of all materials owned and/or licensed by Sovereign Grace Churches and to abide by its policies and procedures for using such materials.

19.3.3.2 The Church Partner acknowledges that the **Sovereign Grace®** name and logo are trademarks owned by Sovereign Grace Churches. Sovereign Grace Churches grants to each Church Partner a nonexclusive license to use the **Sovereign Grace®** name and logo to identify its affiliation with Sovereign Grace Churches.

19.3.4 Indemnification

19.3.4.1 Each Church Partner will be responsible for determining its own risk management strategy, including maintaining appropriate levels of insurance coverage, implementing a safe and prudent child protection policy, and other measures.

19.3.4.2 As independent and autonomously governed entities, each Church Partner acknowledges and understands it is solely responsible for all respective claims, loss, damage, liability, or expenses occasioned or claimed by reason of acts or neglects of its own employees, independent contractors, invitees, or guests.

19.4 Signature Document

19.4.1 The Executive Director, on behalf of Sovereign Grace Churches  
*I, the undersigned Executive Director of Sovereign Grace Churches, having prayerfully and soberly considered this Partnership Agreement, with God as witness, representing the Council of Elders, enter into it assuming all of the responsibilities and privileges described therein.*

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_, *Executive Director, Sovereign Grace Churches*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

19.4.2 The Regional Leader, on behalf of the Regional Assembly of Elders  
*I, the undersigned Regional Leader, having prayerfully and soberly considered this Partnership Agreement, with God as witness, representing all the elders in the Region enter into it assuming all of the responsibilities and privileges described herein.*

Sovereign Grace Region: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_, *Regional Leader*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

19.4.3 The Local Elders, on behalf of the Church Partner

*We, the current undersigned elders, having prayerfully and soberly considered this Partnership Agreement, with God as witness, enter into it, on behalf of the Church Partner, assuming all of the responsibilities and privileges described herein.*

Church Name:

City/State:

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sovereign Grace Churches Book of Church Order**  
Approved Amendments, October 24, 2016

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[1] This Partnership Agreement is for Church Partners without a current national or region-specific Partnership Agreement who nevertheless wish to confirm their full partnership with Sovereign Grace Churches.

**SOVEREIGN GRACE CHURCHES**  
**Comparative Budget for FY2016-2017**

	2017 Budget	2016 Actual	2016 Budget
<b>Revenue</b>			
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	\$ 36,200	\$ 55,125	\$ 30,400
CHURCH GIVING-CENTRAL	\$ 1,152,000	\$ 1,094,919	\$ 1,006,700
INDIVIDUAL GIVING	\$ 325,000	\$ 317,600	\$ 390,000
DESIGNATED GIVING	\$ -	\$ 16,000	\$ -
PASTORAL TRAINING	\$ 87,500	\$ 102,200	\$ 80,500
EVENTS	\$ 181,800	\$ 238,853	\$ 252,100
MINISTRY RESOURCES	\$ 447,200	\$ 461,865	\$ 467,000
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 2,229,700</b>	<b>\$ 2,286,562</b>	<b>\$ 2,226,700</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	\$ 264,200	\$ 230,248	\$ 235,682
FUND RAISING	\$ 51,500	\$ 39,525	\$ 54,300
PASTORAL TRAINING	\$ 441,300	\$ 404,970	\$ 388,818
EVENTS	\$ 282,500	\$ 233,393	\$ 251,126
MINISTRY RESOURCES	\$ 555,000	\$ 528,184	\$ 598,828
CENTRAL MISSION	\$ 397,800	\$ 347,145	\$ 334,402
CHURCH PLANTING	\$ 157,700	\$ 117,834	\$ 119,500
GLOBAL MISSION	\$ 179,700	\$ 170,534	\$ 164,044
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 2,329,700</b>	<b>\$ 2,071,832</b>	<b>\$ 2,146,700</b>
<b>NET INCOME(LOSS)</b>	<b>\$ (100,000)</b>	<b>\$ 214,730</b>	<b>\$ 80,000</b>

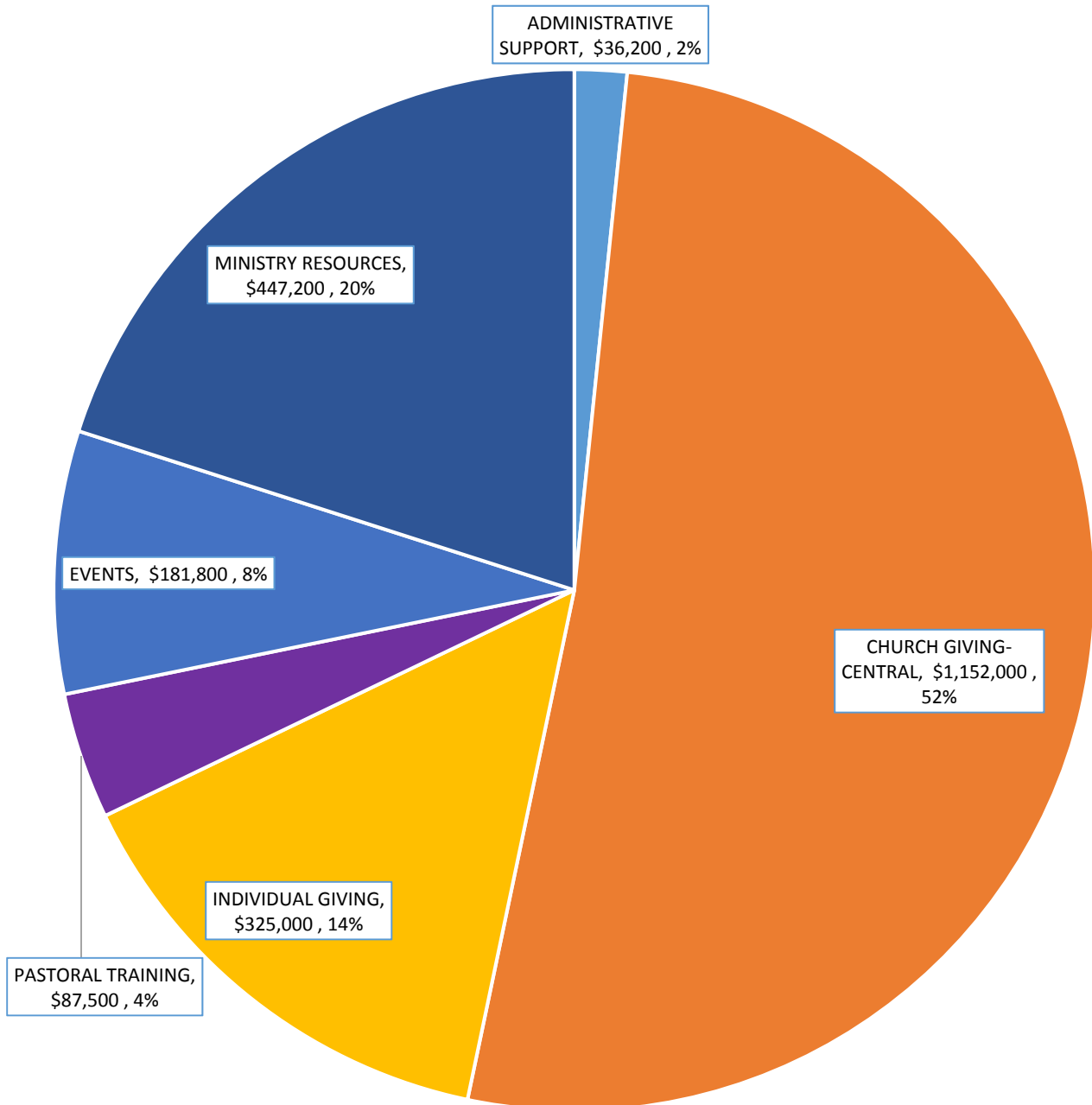
The budget approved in FY16 was based on the goal of achieving a break even budget for the two year period of FY16-17. The two year budget currently proposed estimates a \$115k surplus.

Church Region activity (revenues and expenses) is not included. Any surpluses are carried over for investment in each region. See separate page for detail. FY16 total giving including regions is \$1844k, an increase of \$277k (18%) from FY15 total giving.

For the FY2016 actual, depreciation, a non-cash expense of \$74k, is not included in the calculations above. An estimated overhead allocation to programs of \$212k is included in the FY17 budget to reflect what will be presented in our audited financial statements.



Sovereign Grace Churches  
FY2017 BUDGET  
\$2,229,700 Source of Funding  
(excluding Regions)



# Sovereign Grace Churches

## FY2017 BUDGET

\$2,329,700 Funding Outlays  
(excluding Regions)

