

TWELFTH BUSINESS MEETING

Sixty-First General Conference Session, June 9, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

THOMAS L LEMON: Good evening, I wanted to present these brief thoughts with you from the New Living Translation, a letter from Paul and Timothy to the servants of Christ Jesus. In writing he says, “To all of God's special team in,” dare we say, St Louis, Missouri? The Bible says in Philippi, “who belong to Christ Jesus, including leaders. May God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make all my requests for all of you with joy. For you have been my partners in spreading the good news about Christ, from the time you first heard it until now, and I am certain that God, who began a good work within you, will continue this work until it is finally finished on the day of Jesus Christ.” We'll stop there. I look across this group, and it has dwindled a little bit. We've got the faithful remnant here tonight. I look at you and I want to say, “My dear friends,” —Some of you I've never met, but I consider you my friends—we are on this journey with Jesus Christ that will end in the day when He returns. Well, actually, it will transition, and the journey will continue in a different place, in a different set of circumstances. I want to be in relationship with Him and you on that day, so that we can enjoy the joy of our Lord together. As we begin this meeting tonight, may we begin it with the grace and the peace, that the Apostle Paul wished, prayed, and sought God's blessings for, for his church at Philippi. We pray that for our group here tonight in St Louis. I have asked a new friend of mine that I just met a while ago, Stanley Fernandes, from our South American Division, if he would come to microphone 1 and have prayer for this evening. Would you stand with me as we pray.

[Prayer by Stanley Botti Fernandes.]

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. You may be seated. We are going to spend our time this evening on the *Church Manual*. Some of the things have been referred back, and will be brought forward again.

Some are new things that we haven't seen before. I'm looking to Gerson Santos who will be on hand as the secretary of our *Church Manual* Committee. They've been working on these changes and adaptations since the last gestation in San Antonio. Gerson, if you will please take us forward into our agenda this evening.

GERSON P SANTOS: I'll be glad to do that, Mr. Chair. Good evening, everyone. I need to say a couple words of gratitude to you who have been so patient. For you walking through this long list with us. We were able to present all 37 items to you. We have several items that were referred back to the committee. We met during lunchtime and now we're bringing them back to you. Before I present that, I'd like to say a few words of gratitude to our *Church Manual* Committee. We met several times during the quinquennium, and this agenda was prepared a long time ago, because we were planning to meet in 2020. This was actually the meeting that we will have today, two years later. This is why, we live in a very unique time, when the quinquennium is now three years. So, this is going to be very fast. We still have a few times to meet with our committee during this next term. Some of the items that I'm going to present to you from the *Church Manual* Committee are not complete. We received many good contributions from here on the floor, by e-mail, and from those who came before the committee during lunchtime to present their ideas and contributions. We are very thankful for everything that we've heard. I try to the best of my ability to take notes of every observation and comment that was presented here through e-mail, and also during the committee. However, as you can imagine, because we have a large number of items to discuss in just a period of an hour and a half, it was impossible for us to integrate all observations. There are very few that you may see that are not contemplated in this presentation that we will bring to you now. For that, I want to tell you, it's not lost. We still have the notes. Next time we meet with the *Church Manual* Committee, we will present this back to the committee. Some of those comments or observations were so important that we didn't want to take them lightly. We really want to spend time considering how we can incorporate those suggestions and

recommendations in a way that will look good in our *Church Manual*, be easy to understand, and be practical to apply in our local churches. The bottom line is this: preparing a document will make it easier to be implemented at the local church, under the leadership of our pastors and elders, in each one of our congregations.

So, having said that, Pastor Chair, the first item referred back was 405 in our list in the previous agenda. Which is 427-22. It's about Business Meetings and the rationale is to clarify some of the organizational aspects of the church business meetings. Okay. In this document you can see "When and How the Nominating Committee is Appointed—The nominating committee should be appointed early in the closing quarter of the election term and should report at least three weeks before the final Sabbath of the election term, except in the case of a standing nominating committee which functions year-round." As you can see, we had a few changes that came from your recommendations. The next page, page 4, paragraph numbered 3 "In the case of a standing committee, the board may fill any vacancies in their membership, or the organizing committee may choose to nominate a new list of members to the nominating committee, for election by the church in business session." We edited this paragraph and one of the major observations was about the term, and we covered that. Also, what happens to the few vacant positions in the committee. Number 2, beginning with "The organizing committee" on line 28. Let me start from line 27. "Every effort should be made to ensure fair representation in the composition of the nominating committee representing a range of age groups and genders and limiting representation to no more than two members from the same immediate family." We spent quite a bit of time making it as clear as possible and trying to describe our intention. I think it came out very good. So, thanks for the suggestions you gave to us. Well, Pastor Chair, these are the changes that were made on item 405 in our agenda, 427 is the reference number, and I move we accept this recommendation.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Do we have support for that? Yes. Okay. The discussion can begin now if you choose. I don't see anyone going to the mic.

GERSON P SANTOS: Sorry, I jumped ahead of the game here. Actually, I presented both 405 and 412, showing the last and the next page. I apologize for that. We can take one at a time. It would be more appropriate. So, let's start with 405, which is page 2 in your agenda. There is just one change there. And the change as you can see is, "should be" instead of "typically," and, the pastor, an elder "chosen by the pastor" or "his designee." That is the way we are presenting, and that is the one I moved, 405, which is reference number 427. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Do you have any questions on this one on page 2, how business meetings "should be" announced a week or two . . . and an elder "chosen by the pastor" or "his designee." Microphone 2, Jeroen Tuinstra, Belgian-Luxembourg Conference.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: Just a question of clarification. Are we now voting on both documents in one go, or just the first one?

THOMAS L LEMON: Just 405.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: Nothing else?

THOMAS L LEMON: Not the next one.

JEROEN TUINSTRA: Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: We got a little bit out of sequence here but that's okay. Alright, I don't see anyone else at a microphone and there is no one online. I will call for the vote. I would point out to you that we will have fewer numbers in our voting tonight because of our attendance. We have worn you out. Frankly, we've worn us out, too.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, the ballot is up. We have two minutes to vote.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, you know how to do this. Prayerfully consider "yes" or "no" and then push "submit." It won't go anywhere unless you push "submit." I want to say a word of appreciation to our organist who keeps a calm, steady sound going to soothe us as we wait through the voting process. I have appreciated that very much.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: We have 899 “yes” votes. That's 99.1 percent. And 8 “no” votes, which is .9 percent. The changes that we have just referred to are made. Now we'll go to page 3, and you've already heard Elder Santos' presentation on that. Brother Gerson, did you want to say more, or shall we just go ahead and take the motion and then get the discussion started?

GERSON P SANTOS: I believe it's pretty clear, Pastor Chair. I already explained. We made just three small corrections due to the observations we received.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We have in the queue number 4, Abraham Dalu.

ABRAHAM DALU: The question is just a clarification on the term “immediate family.” It may not have the same meaning outside of the United States. Cousins and so forth in some other parts of the world may be taken as immediate family. If clarification can be provided, then I would really appreciate that. Thank you.

GERSON P SANTOS: Mr. Chair, if I may. Thank you. I believe this is an excellent observation. That's the reason in the *Church Manual* latitude is given for different divisions of the world to work in the notes—that is a section at the end of the *Church Manual*—where the world divisions can make special observations or definitions of something that could be more like a Western description and wouldn't make much sense in another cultural. So, because this document is prepared for the worldwide family, this is what we come with. And we decided in the committee that this was the best way to describe in a simple way what our intention was. Of course, in some cultures, cousins will be very close, immediate families, and other cultures this wouldn't be. This is something that we'll leave to the divisions and the common sense of the leaders and the pastors in the field to decide. Again, Pastor Chair, that's the best definition we could give during the short time we had.

This would not prevent you submitting to your division a request for us to review in the future. By the way, Pastor Chair, the only way we can revisit an item is if you accept it. If you do not accept it

and you send it back, we could not work on that. If you accept, then we can work and make it better, according to your preference.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We will move to microphone number 1. This is Ruben Barros Godoy.

RUBEN BARROS GODOY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like clarification. If my church decides for the standing nominating committee, let's suppose that during the year some decisions are made, do we need to present the decisions to the church committee or directly to the church members for approval? I tried to understand, but I didn't get it.

THOMAS L LEMON: Brother Santos?

GERSON P SANTOS: To the best of my knowledge, I understand that the final word is from the church when they meet in a business meeting. In this case, the report will come from the nominating committee, but it has to be presented to the church.

RUBEN BARROS GODOY: Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: We now move to microphone number 2, Jaanus-Janari Kogerman from the Estonian Conference.

JAANUS-JANARI KOGERMAN: Thank you, Chair. The clarification to the previous delegate was quite good. I do believe that this will help us know how to process that kind of situation in real life.

I do have a slight technical correction and I don't know how the chair would like to proceed with this. In page 4, line 17, point number 3, it talks about standing nominating committee, which is not part of the organizing committee. If the chair would approve, I move an amendment to delete point number 3 from line 17 to make it clear and readable.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I don't want to change things on the floor here particularly. I think numbers 1 and 2 talk about how the nominating committee is chosen annually or biannually. Number 3 talks about the standing committee and it simply says there, "The board may fill vacancies in

their membership.” Numbers 1 and 2 apply to what you have on the page before. Number 3 is for when it's a little different and you have a standing nominating committee. I don't think I see a real problem here. It makes a lot of sense to me, but that's my judgment. I don't think we really need to make a change here.

JAANUS-JANARI KOGERMAN: May I reply?

THOMAS L LEMON: Yes.

JAANUS-JANARI KOGERMAN: Points 1 and 2 are not talking about nominating committee but an organizing committee, which is a different body in a local church. Point 3 is talking about a nominating committee which is not an organizing committee and therefore it is misleading. I do not see a huge problem but maybe it can be referred to the committee for later discussion.

THOMAS L LEMON: If this will work for you, we will delete number 3 and create it as a stand-alone paragraph.

JAANUS-JANARI KOGERMAN: Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Jeff Scoggins, please, at microphone number 7.

JEFF SCOGGINS: It is anticipated that there will be questions on how the process works in more detail. That has already been supplied to the Ministerial Association, so that if this is adopted, they are ready to provide extra information and supplemental explanations for how this process can work.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you, Elder Scoggins. We'll call for the display of the motion required and ask you to vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: The ballot is open. You have two minutes.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: We have a passage of the motion to amend the *Church Manual*, chapter 9, with 952 votes “yes,” 98.6 percent, 14 votes or 1.4 percent “no” votes. So that motion carries. And move on, then, to item number 413.

GERSON P SANTOS: That's correct, Mr. Chair. Item number 413. It's about the term of office. The rationale, as you remember, this amendment allows three-year terms of office in exceptional circumstances, if approved by the conference. The reason for that, as you can imagine, could be political unrest, catastrophic unrest, pastoral transition time, who knows, another pandemic coming. We don't know what the future will bring. "In exceptional circumstances, and in consultation with the conference, the term of office may be extended an additional year." I move it, Pastor Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Is there support for that? I see support, hear support. That's good. Questions on this one? Looking around. I don't see anybody coming to the microphones. We have no one in the queue. I'm assuming from that that you're prepared to vote, and assumptions can be dangerous, but I think we're okay this time. So, Brother Parliamentarian, if you would display the ballot, we will move forward.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. The ballot is open. The body has two minutes.

[Voting]

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. The balloting is closing now, and we'll have the results. Looks like about 959 ballots cast. Alright, Mr. Chairman. The results are there.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, 948 votes "yes," 98.9 percent, 11 votes "no," 1.1 percent. So that carries. I might say to the body, you may recall referring back item number 408, and that is not going to be discussed tonight. The committee reviewed that and has chosen to table it and will bring it back at our next time together. I don't think it will be this Session. But you may be wondering about that. The committee has looked at it carefully and decided they weren't ready to bring it back just yet. So, with that in mind we'll move on to the next one. Brother Santos.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. The next one is 421 in this new agenda, which is item 443, in the reference number. It's regarding the Youth Ministries, as you recall this morning. We studied this at the committee; we heard from several people, especially the leadership from the Youth

Department. We are bringing this back to you on page 7, on the new agenda, line 42. We decided to stay with the recommendation that came from the Youth Department. Again, it's not just from the General Conference Youth Department. The report was made that world divisions participated in this revision. On the top of page 9, you can see there, we spoke about the change on "advisor" and "sponsor." Then the last part of the paragraph, we have a full stop after "members of the church board." It's just to simplify the language and make it easy for people to understand. There was another recommendation that you gave to us earlier today and I believe, Pastor Chair, this is it. The rest is the same that we presented this morning, and we really appreciate the contribution you gave to us. I move we accept the changes, Pastor Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Is there support for that? I see your support. Thank you very much. We have two people going to the microphone. Xolisa Lefume from the Cape Conference, South Africa-Indian Ocean Division, on Zoom.

XOLISA LEFUME: Thank you, Chair. My apologies, there was confusion between myself and the Zoom coordinator. I wanted to speak when we were still dealing with elections and regular standing and nominating committee and organizing committee. So, I need you to guide me, Chair, if I may make that comment. It is not necessarily seeking to make changes now but may be taken as an advisement that may be effected in the next Session, but I think it is pertinent that I raise it.

THOMAS L LEMON: If you can hold on that until we finish this item, and then I'll let you bring that up, okay—so we don't have two items going on at the same time.

XOLISA LEFUME: That would be fine.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. Microphone number 2, Niklas Rantanen.

NIKLAS RANTANEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I come to the microphone with a heavy heart. If the recommendation is passed as it is presented, thousands of young adults all over the world could be left outside our youth ministries. I spoke about the upper age limit yesterday here on the floor, and today at

the committee. I'm not sure if I wasn't able to present myself clearly, or if the *Church Manual* Committee is not fully aware how literal the *Church Manual* is read and applied in local churches. We are now literally ruling out all young adults above the age of 30 that are not students. And if the committee's solution to deal with this issue is to hope that the local churches don't follow the *Church Manual* letter to letter, that is very confusing.

In any case, my mind is on the mission, and that mission includes all young adults that are older than 30 as well. I assume my opinion has been heard, and I will give up trying to amend the motion. Thus, I must speak against it. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. We move now to Magulilo Mwakalonge, East-Central Africa Division. This is at microphone number 3. Thank you.

MAGULILO MWAKALONGE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm standing to support the motion and to try to remove some fears on the limitations of the age. We have always had some limitations, even in the current *Church Manual*. When we speak of up to 30 plus, it is a limitation. It's not meant to remove anybody from the youth ministries, but it is giving an age bracket for leaders to plan for. And my understanding is 30 years and above, 31 and above, they're still welcome to the youth ministries, they're still there to do some leadership roles. But there must be some age bracket for youth leaders to do planning, to know what kind of programs they should prepare, what kind of materials they should prepare. When it was left at 30 plus, plus, plus, plus, it was very difficult for leaders to know who we are preparing materials for?

So, I support this move and as one of those who are dealing with young people. I like what the Church is doing, and I want to ask the body to support the move and vote for it. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. Move on to microphone number 2 and Petronia Genebago, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, please.

PETRONIO GENEBAJO: Yes, I agree with the previous speaker, and since I think all voices have been heard, I move to call for the previous question.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. That's not debatable. Must pass by two-thirds. Okay. There was one other person in line for this, but maybe he wanted to make the same motion? Okay. We'll move on, then, and first we'll vote on the call of the question and then we'll vote on the main motion.

TODD MCFARLAND: The ballot is open. The body has two minutes.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. We have 958 "yes" votes to cease debate and 33 "no" votes. Thank you. We do have a point of order at microphone number 2, Johannes Bochmann, the Berlin-Central German Conference in the EUD.

JOHANNES BOCHMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure if this is exactly a point of order in the exact meaning of the word. In an effort to assist the chair and the parliamentarian, may I suggest that when someone intends to call the previous question, that you give us some advice as to how many people are still willing to speak on the substance matter. I believe we just lost two minutes for basically nothing. So, I believe that could help. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. There were a couple in line before. Okay. Are you ready to vote on the main motion, then? We will display that in a moment, and we will try to give you a little more time and a little more guidance when we have a call-the-previous-question motion. Okay. This is to amend the *Church Manual*, chapter 8, Local Church Officers and Organizations, page 104, found in the Session agenda. That's what we've been talking about.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. The main motion is open, 421. The body has two minutes.

[Voting]

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. We're stopping the polling, 1,004 votes have been cast, with the results here shortly.

THOMAS L LEMON: There we go, 940 votes "yes" to amend and 64 votes "no," so the amendment is made. Now, I promised Xolisa Lefume that we'd come back to his election question, and I would ask you to be brief and then we'll move forward. Zoom number 101.

XOLISA LEFUME: Thank you for your indulgence. Chair, I wanted to speak on the link that seems to exist between regular standing and faithfulness in attending tithe and election to office. On the *Church Manual*, hard copy, 19th edition, if you read on page 71, the last paragraph, it says "Members in regular standing are eligible for election to leadership position in the church where they hold membership." Triple 1 says with regards to members who should serve in the nominating committee, "Only members in regular standing should be chosen to serve on the nominating committee." But it does not speak of offerings. When a person is elected to office, it says on page 72, "All officers shall set an example in the manner of returning a faithful tithe to the church. Anyone who fails to set such an example shall not be elected to church office." Whereas, tithe is taken to the storehouse, all of it, and there is nothing that remains with the local church. So, if a person only returns tithe and does not give offering, they are not supporting their local church, but they are returning the tithe which goes to the storehouse which is the conference. So, I think the *Church Manual* should be explicit and add also giving of offerings because tithe and offerings are Siamese twins. If you only return tithe, you are still robbing God. If you only give offering, you are still robbing God. It must be both. So, I feel that should be both for eligibility to election to a church position.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. I'm going to stop you there because that was not under consideration here tonight. We were only looking at the changes that were offered as a result of the conversations we had earlier, and that was not part of it. So, thank you, Brother Lefume, but we're

going to move on to point of order number 2, Stefan Giuliani. Microphone number 2, Stefan Giuliani. I can't hear you. I'm sorry.

STEFAN GIULIANI: Okay. Is it better now?

THOMAS L LEMON: Yes.

STEFAN GIULIANI: Alright, thank you. I would just ask for you to repeat the item that was tabled by the committee. I missed that one before.

THOMAS L LEMON: 408.

STEFAN GIULIANI: Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, Brother Gerson, please, continue.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. The next item we will look over is 422. It is in your agenda, it's reference number 434-22, and this is kind of a consequence of the actions we took yesterday and a little while ago, regarding the Possibility Ministries, the Youth Ministries. So, it's just an adjustment of the membership, or those we consider officers in the local church; actually, the composition of the church board. So, Pastor Chair, I move we accept this recommendation because it's a consequence of the actions that we already took.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Is there support for that? Thank you. Any comments or questions on this one? It's a listing of the church board as adjusted by previous actions we have taken. Microphone number 6, Flaviano Dalisay, Southeastern California Conference, North America.

FLAVIANO DALISAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like to point out to be mindful, if the motion passes, on the possible inappropriateness of the presence of a very young board member when in closed session topics are discussed that would be inappropriate for a very young person to be there, especially in some parts of the world.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I don't see anybody else either on Zoom or in line here. So we will proceed then to the vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. We are opening the balloting here.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. Again, don't be afraid to move around a little bit.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, the ballot is open. The body has two minutes.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We are making good progress, and I appreciate the body for that this evening.

[Voting]

TODD MCFARLAND: Alright, Mr. Chairman. We are closing, and the display will be here momentarily.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. We have a few more people coming back from supper. Thank you for coming back to join us. There are 1,029 "yes" votes, 16 "no" votes; so, the motion is done, and the amendment is made. We'll move on then to the next item, brother Gerson.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. Item 427. It is about Redemptive Membership Auditing. As you remember before, a recommendation was made to change to "Redemptive Membership Review" as it appears on page 14. We changed that in two places. Pastor Chair, I move to accept these changes.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. You've seen this before. Do we have support? A second for this? Thank you. I don't see anybody coming to the microphone yet, and no Zoom people have contacted us. So, we will post the motion, Brother Parliamentarian, and proceed to the vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: Thank you, Pastor. We are opening up the ballot now.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: The amendment carried with 1,013 "yes" votes, 11 "no" votes. We'll move on, brother Gerson, to the next item, if you would, please.

GERSON P SANTOS: Of course. Number 428. In order to be consistent with the previous action that we just took a few seconds ago, you can see on page 15 the item number 427 on line 15, we are

changing the word “audit” to “review” process to be consistent with the previous action. I move, Pastor Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: We have a motion and a second. I don't see anybody coming to the microphone and I have no one in the Zoom queue, so I'm ready to vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, the ballot is opening now. Also, Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make clear, I know on the slide on the last one. . .

THOMAS L LEMON: Microphone number 5, we have opened the ballot so I'm not sure we can take questions at this time.

TODD MCFARLAND: The ballot is open, Mr. Chairman.

THOMAS L LEMON: Denise Isaac, Chesapeake Conference.

DENISE ISAAC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just had a question, if we are changing the word from “auditing” to “review,” should not the title of this section be changed from “auditing” to “review”?

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Our parliamentarian will address that.

DENISE ISAAC: Thank you.

TODD MCFARLAND: Ma'am, you interrupted what I was just about to say, which is even though the title said “audit” instead of “review” that's because we were reusing the title slides. What is voted will be “review” and not “audit.” So, I apologize for the lack of changing, but that is just because we reused the slide in the ballot.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. So, we will go straight to the voting then.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: The amendment has passed 1,052 “yes” votes, 8 “no” votes. We will continue, then. Please

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. Item number 429. It has the same reference number, 429, about making disciples. As you remember, this is a new chapter talking about the

importance of disciple making. And we reviewed several observations that were presented to contribute and increase clarity. The committee spent quite a lot of time on this. One of the changes we brought is on page 16, lines 25 to 29. There is a revision on the introductory paragraph describing the gospel commission's emphasis on making disciples.

And I need to explain this, Pastor Chair, that we received several interesting, deep thoughts, and contributions for this chapter. As you can imagine, we have a full chapter. To incorporate several good suggestions would take a long time. And the committee decided to collect that information for future revision, but we are recommending that we accept this new chapter and, of course, in the future it can be improved with some new recommendations that we received from you. But it is the desire of the committee to submit this to you again. I move, Pastor Chair, we accept the recommendation.

THOMAS L LEMON: We have the motion and support. Maybe you're getting tired. Maybe you understand clearly, and you want to move forward. The chair can't read your minds, but we can read your actions. So, we will go ahead and place the ballot.

TODD MCFARLAND: The ballot is now open, and you have two minutes.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: The chair appreciates your patience. Our votes are before you, 1,042 "yes" votes, 16 "no" votes. So, that motion is also adopted. Okay, brother Gerson, please.

GERSON P SANTOS: We are almost there. So, item number 431, the reference number is 408. "No Additional Tests of Fellowship." That was the original title. We had a few observations here, and we are bringing back from the committee a recommendation to change the title of this section to "No Additional Tests of Membership." To be consistent, "The authority to establish tests of membership rests with the General Conference Session." I move, Pastor Chair, we accept this.

THOMAS L LEMON: You have the motion before you, and a second. I have a speaker at microphone number 7, Dr. Wahlen, General Conference.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Thank you, Brother Chairman. I support this motion. I think it's a very helpful change and makes it much clearer. So, I'm in favor of this. I'm also wondering while I'm here if I could ask whether the item that we had many suggestions for, "A Divinely Appointed Ministry," could be handled on the same basis as the one we just voted. That is, we will take it as it is and those suggestions that were made can be incorporated in future drafts.

THOMAS L LEMON: I'm not sure I am following you, Elder Wahlen, I'm sorry.

CLINTON WAHLEN: OK, we just voted a segment on making disciples. Gerson said there wasn't time to process all the suggestions, but that they would be processed in time in the future. Could we handle the "Divinely Appointed Ministry" statement the same way? Because a lot of work went into that and many good suggestions were made.

THOMAS L LEMON: We're not prepared to bring 408 which is the one you're talking about for a vote tonight. So, I understand, but the committee is not bringing that for a change tonight.

CLINTON WAHLEN: Thank you very much.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay. Number 2, Jaanus-Janari Kogerman.

JAANUS-JANARI KOGERMAN: I do wonder that I have downloaded the revised agenda, and it says notice of disfellowship still. I do wonder that, the text on the screen is actually correct, or the one in the agenda. If this is on the screen, then maybe we can later on receive a revised and updated agenda. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Brother Gerson will address that. Thank you very much.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thanks for the careful observation on the agenda, and the speaker has correctly identified this difference. As you remember, we had a very tight schedule to revise items, prepare the agenda, and bring it back to you. So, the recommended item we are voting is the one you see on the screen. On the agenda we used the same title, but we are revising this, and you have this on the screen. I believe there is no doubt about this now. Is it clear? Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I don't have anyone else in the queue. So, Brother Parliamentarian, if you would go ahead and move the ballot forward for us, we will proceed to the vote.

TODD MCFARLAND: We are moving the ballot forward, and I will just advise the body that the issue that was in the one is also in the ballot. The ballot title has remained unchanged from "Fellowship," but what you are voting is the word "Membership." Please accept our apologies—on the tight time schedule those changes did not get made, but it is "Membership." So, Mr. Chairman, the ballot is now open; the body has two minutes.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. And again, like we've said all along. The day is long, the evening is, as the Bible says, far spent. If you want to move around a little bit, that's perfectly okay. I see some stretching. That's good.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: I am looking at our Zoom display up here and seeing people from all over the world in all the time zones, and we want to recognize your faithfulness in being here meeting after meeting after meeting as well.

Okay. We will see the display of the vote—1,047 "yes," 12 "no," and that passes. We are getting closer to the end, and I thank you for working with us in an expeditious way. We'll move then to the next item, Brother Santos.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. The next item is item number 435, reference number 439. It's about the "Purposes of Organization." We took into consideration some of the recommendations you gave before and the committee met, and we edited the third paragraph on page 22, lines 34 to 39. There are several minor additions to this paragraph to make it clearer and, as you remember, some of the suggestions were made on this paragraph. Also, on line 41, "The church is a missionary community and its organization exists to fulfill this purpose." We have some editorial work done there also. Pastor Chair, I move to accept this item.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Do we have support for that? Yes, we have support. Stephan Sigg, German Swiss Conference. Microphone number 1.

STEPHAN SIGG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to express my appreciation for this section, especially my appreciation of the first paragraph, which displays a very open and mission-oriented approach. I just wanted to highlight the fact that this attitude or this approach does not only apply to fields across cultural or fields where we face different religions, but also this applies more and more to contexts like the country that I represent, Switzerland, which is a very secular place. So, we need this same approach also in these contexts as well. So, I wanted just to express my appreciation for this approach. Thanks.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. We don't have anyone else in the queue, so, we'll go ahead and post the ballot. And when the timer comes up you can begin voting.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: We are ready to close the voting. Okay, 1,038 "yes," 9 "no." That amendment is passed. I have mic number 2, Stefan Giuliani.

STEFAN GIULIANI: I wanted to come back to the agenda item that was tabled by the committee, 408, as you explained before. I was wondering why this decision was made by the committee, since I do not remember any grave objections during our session here on the floor. Honestly, I feel it is a loss that this agenda item would not become part of the *Church Manual*, and I regret that decision.

THOMAS L LEMON: Do you want to address that, Gerson, please.

GERSON P SANTOS: Of course, I'd love to because I have the same feeling. I think it's too bad that we don't have time to address that item. We had a few observations in different parts of the document. It was a long document. Because there were minor revisions in other parts of that section, it became extremely complicated for us. In just a few minutes, we already ran out of time during the committee. We decided that those items should not be taken lightly. I wish we had done differently, but

it was referred back to the committee, and then was recommended to be tabled. I feel the same feeling you're representing. But I believe at this point this is the best way to move forward. I'd like to suggest maybe a different approach next time, but we don't have time to discuss this right now.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you, microphone number 2, David Butcher, South Australian Conference, South Pacific Division.

DAVID BUTCHER: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, was this 408 or 417 that was raised just then?

THOMAS L LEMON: It is 408.

DAVID BUTCHER: Okay, is that the one where it talks about conference presidents and secretary, et cetera? My thoughts, Mr. Chair, are similar to what is being said. The first part about the role of the minister being evangelistic training and equipping, I fully endorse, and I think it would be a loss not to have that voted through at this time. I guess my key concern, as has been shared, and I do appreciate the way in which it was handled in the study committee, was that there's one thing in this document, in this particular article, that is not in line with the *GC Working Policy*, and it would be very simple to fix.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. We have a point of order, microphone number 2, Hilde Huru, North Norway Conference.

HILDE HURU: Mr. Chair, I'm not certain this is a point of order, but it didn't fit under the other categories. It's a request or a question because for many of us, this is our first General Conference Session. It's a request that next time there is a Session, we will receive the *Rules of Order* together with the agenda. Because, for many of us, we never had a chance to read it. We got it in our bags when we came late Sunday evening, and we started the process of our meetings and it's all been so compact the whole time. So, we never had a chance to do that. That would make it so much easier for us to do things in the correct way from the floor. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. The point is well taken. We have two more items to bring to you and we return to Elder Santos for those.

GERSON P SANTOS: Thank you, Pastor Chair. Yes. We are almost there. We have finished with items that were referred back to the committee. So, we are done with this agenda. This is good news, right? But we still have two items left from the general agenda. I'd like to go back to those items. It's item 436. This is the first one we want to deal with. You'll see on the screen, reference number 402, about the proper method for payment or money by members. Item 436, the second to the last on the general agenda. I want to highlight for you that on page 109, the rationale of this recommendation in this amendment includes the use of electronic payments as a proper method of returning tithes and offerings.

As you can imagine, most of the world is already doing that. In lines 16 and 17, we want to add those possibilities. "The treasurer should urge that all money paid in by members, other than the regular church collection, be placed in tithe and offering envelopes, unless an alternative method approved by the conference, such as electronic payments, has been implemented."

I move, Pastor Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Do we have support for that? I see several seconds. Any questions, comments, observations? I see no one moving towards the microphone, no one on Zoom, so Brother Parliamentarian we will move—Okay, it just came up. Mic number two, Petronia Genebago, South Asia-Pacific Division.

PETRONIO GENEBAO: Mr. Chair, just a suggestion. I hope the Church can also find a way on giving receipts electronically or effectively, because I have experience that it sometimes takes time to receive the receipt from funds the church has already accepted or received in tithes and offerings that we have given them.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. Okay. If you're ready to vote, we're ready to post the ballot.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, we are opening the ballot now. There are two minutes to vote.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: I'm tempted to do some talking while you are voting, but maybe I will just refrain from that and let you do some thinking on your own. The messages you have heard today, the conversations you have had today, can be a blessing to you going forward for many weeks to come. These kinds of Sessions can be so inspiring. Sometimes the business takes a little longer than we sometimes think it should, sometimes it takes not as long as we think it should, but we are here to further the work of the Lord, to worship and praise Him, and that is a memory that you can take with you for a long time to come.

THOMAS L LEMON: Okay, 1,017 "yes," 8 "no." The amendment is passed. Brother Gerson, we have one more.

GERSON P SANTOS: Yes, we do. We made it. Last item, number 437. The reference number is 418. I don't know how many of you have seen it, but in the first chapter in the *Church Manual*, you have some very important information about the history, about the need, the purpose of the *Church Manual*. There are some very important definitions of terms used here.

One of them is the use of "church." When you see "Church" with a capital letter, it means that we are referring to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When you see conference, mission, section, for these we use just the word "conference." And this item uses the same rationale and uses the reference for a local church that could also apply for a company. Instead of describing if this is a company or this is a church, when you have the item on page 110, lines 19 and 20, "References to a local church will also generally apply to a company."

So, for clarity and for editorial purposes it will be much easier for us to have this throughout the *Church Manual*, and I move that we accept the recommendation from the *Church Manual* Committee.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you for your motion. I heard a second. Any questions on this? Mic number 7, please, Chung-Taik Park, Korean Union Conference.

CHUNG-TAIK PARK: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Even one term is important. My suggestion may or may not be related to this motion, but I would like to make one suggestion to the *Church Manual* Committee. The purpose of the church organization is always the same. Therefore, please study not only the traditional church or physical church but also online church. Please study the possibility of inclusion in the *Church Manual*. If possible, please try to include it. Reference to a local church will then also generally apply to a company and online churches, something like that. One of the important concerns in my country indeed is about online church, because the COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot. We want to go to the data world, "I will go" and "We will go." In my opinion, there are three types of churches, online church, and second is a hybrid church, like this Session. Lastly, is an online church. It is a church that has been planted as an online church in the data world, only for the missions. I would like to suggest to the *Church Manual* Committee to research and study about the online church. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. That is not really germane to this particular motion, but your suggestions are well made and well taken. Thank you very, very much. Number 6, Flaviano Dalisay, Southeastern California Conference, North America.

FLAVIANO DALISAY: Thank you, sir. I would just like to get clarification in line 19, where it says, "References to a local church will also generally apply to a company." What would that mean in instances where, for example, a company cannot elect and ordain elders and deacons?

THOMAS L LEMON: If I might answer that, and Gerson, please feel free to correct me. I think that comes under the definition, or under the umbrella, of the word "generally." There is some flexibility in there, and I think that would cover your concern. But, Gerson, if you want to add commentary, please.

GERSON P SANTOS: I understand it the same way, Pastor Chair. I think that the speaker presented a very good example of why we have the word “generally,” because in most cases it could be considered the same, but there are some exceptions, and you presented one of them. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Number two, Petronia Genebago, please.

PETRONIO GENEBAGO: Mr. Chair, since this is the last item, just give me this privilege to say something. On behalf of those who are grateful this week, I would like to appreciate all our chairmen and chairwomen who chaired the business meetings, especially our parliamentarian who has not been replaced but calmly and lovingly guided us all in this meeting. May God bless you more. You did a great job for God and for our beloved Church. [Applause.]

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. I was going to say some similar things. I appreciate working with Gerson very much, with Todd, with Tami, and with Karen next to me, and with our people down in the front that have helped us all along. Thanks to all of you, and to those on the array of screens here. To all of you as well, too. The Church of God is on the move, and it is moving forward, and Jesus is coming. Get involved. I've asked Pavel Goya to come to the front and offer our closing prayer tonight. Before he does that, I would like Karen to make her announcement. There is one announcement that we've been asked to make.

KAREN J PORTER: Yes. We have one announcement, and that is, Sabbath evening you will receive a link to a survey, and we really appreciate your input. So, please, look for this survey coming to you by e-mail. Your opinion on this hybrid Session is urgently important to us, as we plan for our next Session. Please take some time to complete and submit the survey. It will be in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. Thank you.

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you. I am told by my people here at the table that while I was thanking them, I was not doing my job. So, we need to vote the last item, so we will put that up on the

screen. Number 2, that was the point of order? Thank you so much. Okay. We'll go ahead and vote that and then we'll take the last two comments after we vote this.

TODD MCFARLAND: Mr. Chairman, the item is open now and the body has two minutes. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank everyone as we take our last vote here for using ElectionBuddy so well. Just to be clear, this is your last ElectionBuddy vote. We will not be using it tomorrow, of course. So, thank you everyone for your patience with us in using this system that we think worked out pretty well.

[Voting]

THOMAS L LEMON: Thank you very much. We will display the vote as soon as it comes up— 1,052 “yes,” 6 “no,” so the amendment passes, and, my friends, tonight we are finished. [Applause] We need a motion to adjourn, “sine die.” If you would have that motion, please. It's not debatable. It will close our meeting until it's called to order again back here in St Louis in 2025. It's been moved. Okay. Let's stand together. Elder Goya, please. Let's stand together.

[Prayer by Pavel Goya.]

[End of the business sessions of the 61st General Conference Session]