

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for the Church of God Executive Committee and Executive Council

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The Global Ministry Forums Survey yielded a total of 6,323 responses among Church of God ministers and laypersons across the world. Means (statistical averages), standard deviations (statistical variability), and frequency distributions were calculated for all responses and were presented in a comprehensive analysis of the Global Ministry Forums survey. For each question, the responses agree/strongly agree were combined into an agreement percentage, and the responses disagree/strongly disagree were combined into a disagreement percentage for presentation purposes. This executive summary highlights the general findings, with select highlights to responses of Ordained Bishops on certain topics thought to be of interest to the Church of God Executive Committee and Executive Council.

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS

In total, 77% of the respondents were male, with 74% being between the ages of 36-65 and 90% of respondents indicating a marital status of married. In terms of ethnicity, 57% reported being white non-Hispanic, while another 26% reported as Hispanic/Latino and 9% as African-American. The educational level of respondents was distributed as follows: 46% of respondents had less than a four-year degree, 30% indicated the highest degree earned as a four-year degree, while 24% of respondents had completed a graduate degree. Among respondents, 76% were from the United States, with 44% reporting their current place of residence as the USA-South. Respondents from Central and South America each represented 7% of the population, while respondents from Mexico represented 5% of the population. The vast majority (90%) of respondents have been members of the Church of God for more than 10 years. In terms of rank/role, 44% were Ordained Bishops, 27% were Ordained Ministers, while 24% indicated their current role as some other form of ministry and 6% as laypersons. 60% of respondents were currently engaged in full-time ministry, while 21% were engaged in part-time ministry with another 13% reporting as ministers not currently in vocational ministry.

IMPORTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF RANKS

- 70% of all respondents agree there is a lack of understanding regarding the three current ranks of ministry: Exhorters, Ordained Ministers, and Ordained Bishops.
- It appears as if the vast majority of respondents did not feel they had adequate understanding of why the ranks were created.
- 66% of respondents agreed the ranks do assure local church congregations that the Church of God is properly evaluating ministerial qualifications.
- 65% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that maintaining the three ranks is important. This agreement percentage increased to 70% among Ordained Bishops.
- 40% of respondents indicated disagreement that the distinct ranks have no validity outside of determining whether a person can participate in certain meetings and serve on certain boards; 50% of Ordained Bishops indicated some form of disagreement with this statement.
- 47% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with reducing the ranks of ministry to Licensed Minister and Ordained Minister. That number was 56% among Ordained Bishops.

QUALIFICATIONS

- 92% of all respondents agreed background checks should be required for all potential ministers prior to engaging in any ministerial training activity, while 75% agreed background checks should be conducted at least every 5 years for credentialed ministers.
- 77% of respondents indicated ministers should be required to engage in “continuing education” programs, while 48% disagreed that ministers should be required to renew their ministerial credentials periodically by filing an application; 54% of Ordained Bishops disagreed with that latter statement.
- 69% of respondents agreed the Church of God must require at least a minimum level of educational training for its ministers in order to advance, while 57% agreed that MIP provides sufficient training for those preparing to serve as pastors.
- Laypersons were generally more favorable for items related to enhanced qualifications, education and periodic checks for credentialed ministers than respondents from the three ministerial groups.
- 72% of all respondents agree the qualifications for the three ranks of ministry are sufficient; this agreement level increased to 76% among Ordained Bishops.
- 59% of respondents indicated agreement that Ordained Ministers should be allowed to participate in the International General Council, while only 26% of all respondents disagreed. Among Ordained Bishops, agreement was just 40% with 44% of Ordained Bishops indicating some form of disagreement to this statement.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

- 73% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it is un-biblical for women to participate in any denominational leadership role. Among Ordained Bishops, the level of disagreement on this item was 70%.
- On every other item of this sub-scale, the percentage of Ordained Bishops indicating agreement was approximately 17% less than non-Ordained Bishops.
- 62% of all respondents agreed that women would bring a healthy perspective to the direction of the Church of God if allowed to serve in all denominational roles. This agreement percentage was 52% among Ordained Bishops.
- 67% of respondents agreed that women should be allowed to serve on State/Regional Councils and participate in the International General Council; this compares to approximately 57% of Ordained Bishops for these two items.
- 59% of respondents agreed that women should be allowed to participate in all levels of ministry in the Church of God, with 48% agreeing women should be allowed to obtain the rank of Ordained Bishop and 42% agreeing women should be allowed to serve as Administrative Bishops. Among Ordained Bishops, 49% indicated women should be allowed to participate in all levels of ministry, with 39% agreeing women should be allowed the rank Ordained Bishop and 31% as Administrative Bishops.
- Female respondent agreement percentages were approximately 25% greater than male respondents on each item in this sub-scale. In addition, younger respondents, those with higher levels of educational achievement, and those from outside of the United States were more likely to indicate agreement on virtually each item of this sub-scale.

ATTENTION UPON THE MEANING AND USAGE OF THE TERM BISHOP

- 81% of respondents indicated agreement that the debate over the title *Bishop* needs to be resolved so that the Church of God can move on from the issue.
- 74% of all respondents disagreed that the title *Bishop* is offensive; that disagreement percentage was 80% among Ordained Bishops.
- Among Ordained Bishops, 69% agreed they do not use the title *Bishop* in their everyday role as pastor, and 44% do not use the title when referring to the highest rank of ministry in the Church of God to friends from other denominations.
- 49% of all respondents agreed the title *Bishop* should be reserved only for those in a leadership role over other pastors, such as Administrative Bishop or Presiding Bishop; this agreement percentage was 46% among Ordained Bishops.
- 34% of Ordained Bishops prefer the title Ordained Minister to Ordained Bishop, while 38% of Ordained Bishops indicated some form of disagreement with this statement.
- 45% of respondents disagreed that women should be excluded from obtaining the title of *Bishop* due to the biblical definition of this position. That number was 37% among Ordained Bishops, while 46% of Ordained Bishops agreed with that statement.