
Constituted Authority

As The Christian and Missionary Alliance (Alliance) grew, its organizational structure developed to meet its needs, provide necessary services, and preserve unity in doctrine and practice. A simple but effective system of government evolved gradually with the movement's expansion in North America and overseas.

Most systems of church government fall under one of three basic types: episcopal, presbyterian, or congregational. Alliance governance employs elements from both the congregational and presbyterian forms. The Alliance might best be described as a network of churches united in governance through a pattern of districts with a national hub. Thus, local churches in the Alliance are not wholly independent bodies. They are integral parts of the national organization and the district in which they are located.

The relationship between Alliance churches and the denomination is defined as *constituted authority*. In simple terms, this means that all Alliance churches have agreed that all legislation passed by General Assembly is binding upon its churches and workers, and all legislation passed by one of its district conferences is binding upon that district and its churches. When these legislative assemblies act within the parameters of Scripture and their governing documents, their actions are authoritative.

Ruling Bodies

Alliance governance identifies a legislative gathering at three levels of jurisdiction: local, regional, and national. The legislative gathering of a local church is the annual general meeting. The pastor and the church board report to the annual meeting and are subject to the actions of that meeting. The congregation may adopt bylaws and enact any legislation it deems advisable so long as it does not conflict with legislation of the district conference or General Assembly.

The legislative gathering at the regional level is district conference. It is comprised of all official workers serving churches in the district and lay delegates from those churches (by the same formula as General Assembly below). The district superintendent and the district executive committee are elected by and report to district conference. The district conference has authority to adopt its own bylaws and other legislation so long as it is not in conflict with the legislation of General Assembly.

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At the national level, General Assembly is the highest legislative body under God, as provided in the General Operating By-law of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada. Assembly meets every two years at a location determined by the Board of Directors.

General Assembly

All accredited delegates to General Assembly have the right to participate in debate and to vote. This system ensures that the rules and regulations which govern Alliance churches are not handed down by a hierarchy of officials. They are the collective action of the duly appointed delegates at General Assembly.

The Policy on General Assembly calls for Assembly committees to give careful and detailed consideration to all reports, resolutions, and recommendations coming before Assembly. To assure fairness and provide an opportunity for representative viewpoints to be expressed, these committees are composed of delegates from each district. Official delegates may bring any issue before the appropriate Assembly committee for its consideration.

General Assembly elects the president and the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the highest executive body of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. It cares for the business of the denomination between the meetings of General Assembly. This same principle applies at all levels, from the General Assembly to the local church. Each district has an executive committee which cares for the business of the district between district conferences, and each Alliance church has a board to fill this role between annual meetings of the members.

All official workers are accredited delegates to Assembly. Each organized church has the privilege of sending a minimum of two lay delegates to Assembly (more for churches with membership of 150 or more; see Policy on General Assembly). The concept of constituted authority is as strong as the will of local churches to send lay delegates to General Assembly.

Constituted Authority

The principle of constituted authority safeguards the Alliance. This principle of governance was adopted as a means of insuring that the concerns of every delegate and every local church can be expressed. It provides each local church the freedom to address the needs of people in its specific community, while providing for unity and cooperation with other member churches across the country. Local churches, elected officers, executive bodies and legislative assemblies are all governed by the bylaws, constitutions, procedures, and regulations found in the *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance*. These constitute the principles by which the denomination is organized.

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