



# Covenant of the Goddess Bylaws 2022-2023 as Amended at Grand Council 2022

## Contents

<b>Article 1. Definitions.....</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Definitions .....	3
B. Relation to Covenant .....	5
C. Covenant Definitions .....	5
D. Relation to Usual Vocabulary .....	5
<b>Article 2. Membership and Affiliation.....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Classes of Membership .....	5
B. Criteria for Membership .....	5
C. National Application Procedures .....	6
D. Local Council Application Procedures .....	6
E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer.....	8
F. Renewal of Membership .....	8
G. Revocation of Membership .....	10
H. National Complaint Process .....	10
I. Confidence Vote Instructions .....	11
J. Restrictive Actions.....	12
K. Non-Voting Affiliates.....	12
<b>Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board.....</b>	<b>14</b>
A. Governing Board of the Covenant [Governing Board added GC2019] .....	14
B. Governing Board Representatives of the Covenant [Document the Duties of the Governing Board GC2020] .....	15
C. Executive Board of the Covenant (also known as the National Officers) [GC2019] .....	16
D. Officers of the Covenant .....	17
<b>Article 4: Meetings .....</b>	<b>20</b>
A. Annual Meeting.....	20
B. Special Meeting .....	20
C. Meeting by Mail .....	20
D. Quorum .....	21
E. Requirement to Attend Meetings and Appoint Proxies .....	21
F. Procedures for Meetings.....	22
G. Individual Member Caucuses .....	22
H. Voting Rights and Voting Members .....	23
I. Representation .....	23
J. Types of Votes.....	23
K. Results of Veto .....	23
<b>Article 5: Committees .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Article 6: Local Councils .....</b>	<b>23</b>
A. Composition .....	24
B. Effect of Covenant, Bylaws, and Policies.....	24
C. Required Activities .....	24
D. Affinity Groups .....	24
E. Overlapping Local Council Boundaries.....	25
F. Dividing an Existing Local Council .....	25
G. Process of Creating a New Local Council .....	25

<b>Article 7: Credentials</b> .....	<b>26</b>
A. Credentials Available from the Covenant .....	26
B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials .....	26
C. Procedures for Obtaining Credentials .....	27
D. Responsibilities of the Local Council .....	27
E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officers .....	27
F. Maintenance and Revocation of Credentials .....	27
G. Fees for Credentials .....	28
<b>Article 8: Finances</b> .....	<b>28</b>
A. Budget .....	28
B. Tithes .....	28
C. Accounting .....	29
<b>Article 9: Ethics</b> .....	<b>29</b>
1. Policy and Purpose .....	29
2. Code of Ethics .....	29
3. Ethics Violations .....	30
<b>Article 10: Confidentiality</b> .....	<b>30</b>
i. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer .....	30
ii. Covenant Mailing List .....	30
iii. MerryMeet .....	30
<b>Article 11: Amendments</b> .....	<b>30</b>

## Article 1. Definitions

### A. Definitions

The definitions stated or referred to below shall apply wherever a defined term appears in these Bylaws.

1. ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT: at least a year and a day of sustained, face-to-face involvement and in-person training with a teacher or a Coven and its members, including becoming initiated or otherwise considered a "full Member" of the Coven by that Coven's tenets of our religion.
2. AFFILIATE: A non-voting individual who supports the Covenant of the Goddess but is not a Member of the Covenant (see FRIENDS OF COG).
3. ALTERNATE: An alternate representative from the Local Councils, National Covens collectively, and National Individual Members collectively, selected by their constituencies for the Governing Board.
4. CLERGY CREDENTIALS: The term "Ministerial Credentials" has the same meaning as the newer term "Priest/ess Credentials," and the term "Elder Credentials" has the same meaning as the more recent term "High Priest/ess" or "Elder Priest/ess credentials."
5. COVENANT: The Covenant of the Goddess.
6. COG NEWSLETTER: The official medium for Covenant communication among Members.
7. COVEN CONTACT: The individual designated by a Member Coven to receive Covenant communications on behalf of that Coven.
8. COUNCIL: The Membership of the Covenant acting as a body.
9. CHARTER: The Charter of the Covenant of the Goddess.
10. DISTANCE COVENERS: Persons meeting the active involvement guideline may be considered Distance Convoers of a CoG Member Coven and are eligible to receive Member benefits.
11. ELDER PRIEST/ESS: An individual eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess credentials, as defined in *Article 7. Credentials, Section B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials, Subsection 2. Elder Priest/ess Credentials, a-d*; roughly equivalent to High Priestess or High Priest. [GC2022 Added a-d.]
12. ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE PRIEST/ESS CREDENTIALS: Defined in *Article 7. Credentials, Section B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials, Subsection 1. Priest/ess Credentials, a-d*, roughly equivalent to Witch. [GC2022 Added a-d.]
13. EXECUTIVE BOARD: The National Officers of the Covenant when acting in their official capacity to fulfill the executive and administrative needs of the organization as elected at Grand Council.
14. FORMALLY ACCEPTED INTO TRAINING FOR THE CLERGY: Roughly equivalent to initiate.
15. FRIENDS OF COG: A type of non-voting supporting affiliation with Covenant of the Goddess (see AFFILIATE).
16. GERRYMANDERING: To divide an area into political units to give special advantage to one group (as per Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
17. GOVERNING BOARD: The representatives from the Local Councils, National Covens collectively, and National Individual Members collectively, when acting in their official capacity as a body to fulfill the responsibilities of oversight, long-range planning, and governance of the Covenant between Grand Councils selected by their constituencies. The National First Officer and the National Pursewarden are also members of the Governing Board.
18. GRAND COUNCIL: The annual meeting. Also known as "Great Council" in the Charter. Covenant of the Goddess' annual business meeting.
19. HOLD HARMLESS: An agreement not to sue in any court or bring any action of any kind against the Covenant, any Officer or Committee of the Covenant or any member of the Officers, Governing Board, or Committee Members for actions taken in their official capacities.
20. INDIVIDUAL MEMBER PRACTITIONER: Any individual Member of our religion. For purposes of these Bylaws, this includes practitioners who are members of a coven but choose to hold or apply for membership as part of an Assembly of Individual Members. [GC2019 changed Solitaires/Solitaries to Individual Members.]
21. IN GOOD STANDING: A Member's tithes are paid, Grand Council Quorum Forms are filed, and membership privileges or credentials are not suspended or under disciplinary action.
22. LOCAL BOARD: The officers of a Local Council when acting in their official capacity as a body.
23. LOCAL COUNCIL: A group of geographically proximate Covens, chartered by the Governing Board pursuant

to *Article 6. Local Councils*, of these Bylaws.

24. LOCAL COUNCIL ASSEMBLY OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS: All Individual Member Practitioners within that Local Council regardless of number.
25. MEMBER: A Coven, individual member of a Member Coven, or Individual Member Practitioner of Our Religion who has been admitted to the Covenant, pursuant to *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation* of these Bylaws.
26. MEMBER BENEFITS: include, but are not limited to, access to the electronic listserves, credentials, representing a coven in meetings, or carrying one or more proxies.
27. MERRYMEET: The annual festival of the Covenant, which includes the Grand Council annual meeting.
28. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS: All Members, regardless of number, who are Individual Member Practitioners and who are not Members of a Local Council. [GC2019 changed Solitaires/Solitarities to Individual Members.]
29. NATIONAL OFFICERS: The National Officers of the Covenant when acting in their official capacity to fulfill the executive and administrative needs of the organization and elected at Grand Council. The National Officers are also known as the Executive Board.
30. OUR RELIGION: The Craft.
31. PROVISIONAL LOCAL COUNCIL: A local council of the Covenant at risk of being disbanded/dissolved. A Provisional Local Council is not in compliance with the requirements of the Covenant. A provisional local council may not promote themselves in the name of the Covenant or as a local council of CoG, cannot handle funds as a local council of CoG, and cannot earn funds as a local council of CoG, and are not considered a local council in good standing. Members of a provisional local council can retain membership in the Covenant by becoming members at the national level.
32. PROVISIONAL MEMBER: A membership status restriction applied when a member does not file an annual Grand Council Quorum Form or receives a restriction as punishment for an infraction. A Provisional Local Council is a Local Council that has dropped below the required membership or has been restricted by action of Grand Council or the Governing Board.
33. PROXY: A written authorization signed by a Member or the Member's representative in fact giving another individual the power to vote on behalf of said Member and to represent the Member in any other decision-making processes, including the consensus process. "Signed" for the purpose of this *section* means the placing of the Member's name on the proxy (whether by manual signature, typewriting, email, facsimile, or telegraphic transmission, or otherwise) by the Member or such Member's representative.
34. PROXY HOLDER: The individual to whom a proxy is given.
35. REPRESENTATIVE: A representative from the Local Councils, National Covens collectively, and National Individual Members collectively, selected by their constituencies for the Governing Board.
36. TRADITION: A particular denomination of Witchcraft/Wicca/The Craft. When forming a local council, a minimum of three Covens of at least two different traditions is mandated by these Bylaws. For the purposes of ensuring diversity within a new Local Council, the two traditions must not be founded by any single living source in common.
37. TRIAL MEMBER: A Coven or Individual Member admitted with only one Letter of Recommendation. A Trial Member has a year and a day as a member of the Covenant to receive the second Letter of Recommendation. During that time, they have all the rights and responsibilities of a Regular or Individual member, except that they may not cast a veto in Grand Council or Local Council decision-making.
38. TWO-THIRDS VOTE: Where CoG bylaws, policies and/or procedures call for a two-thirds vote, this shall be interpreted to mean the requirement is a vote of two-thirds or greater from the total number of possible votes in order for the motion to be passed.
39. VIRTUAL ATTENDEES: Members attending Grand Council through authorized electronic means will be considered physically present for the purpose of quorum, discussion of proposals, voting on the budget, and election of officers.
40. VOTING MEMBERS: Both Member Covens and Individual Members (formed in temporary associations known as Individual Member Caucuses) are eligible to vote at Grand Council, represented by proxy or in person, as described under *Article 4. Meetings*, of these Bylaws. Individual Member Caucuses, while not a category of membership, shall be considered to be Voting Members for purposes of Grand Council ONLY, and not for local council functions. Although the word "voting" is used, consensus decision-making is mandated by the *Charter, Section III., Governance, Subsection C.* for most decision-making. Actual voting is used for contested elections and the Budget as a whole.

## **B. Relation to Covenant**

These Bylaws shall be understood in terms of, and in interpretations of, the Charter of the Covenant.

## **C. Covenant Definitions**

Any term that is defined, whether explicitly or implicitly, in the Charter shall be understood as having the same meaning in these Bylaws.

## **D. Relation to Usual Vocabulary**

The terminology of the Charter and of these Bylaws shall be understood as substituting for the more usual vocabulary of Our Religion.

# **Article 2. Membership and Affiliation**

## **A. Classes of Membership**

There shall be four voting classes of membership in the Covenant: Regular, Trial, Provisional, and Individual Members of Assemblies. [Solitaires changed to Individual Members GC2019] These Membership categories shall be conferred and have associated rights as is provided for *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation* of these Bylaws. The Council may also create classes of non-voting ~~Associates~~ Affiliates of the Covenant. [GC2020 Remove the word Associates from CoG's Official Materials and Publications.]

Once duly admitted, all voting Members shall have equal rights, including voting, according to procedures determined by *Article 4. Meetings*; holding office, according to procedures determined by *Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board, Section C. Officers of the Covenant, Subsection 2. Eligibility for Office*; and on all other matters.

## **B. Criteria for Membership**

### *1. Criteria for Covens*

In order for the Covenant to be viable as an instrument of the joint will of its Members, a Coven, to be eligible for membership in the Covenant, must meet the following criteria, which must be addressed in each applicant's Statement of Practice:

- a. be recognized as being in fact a Coven of members of Our Religion by whichever Regular Members are already familiar with it and its members; and proclaim themselves as Witches or Wiccans in the Statement of Practice;
- b. be a cohesive, self-perpetuating group fully able to practice and preserve its Tradition of Our Religion;
- c. subscribe to a code of ethics compatible with that in *Article 9. Ethics, Section B. Code of Ethics*, of these Bylaws;
- d. generally, focus its liturgy, theology, and so on around the worship of the Goddess or the Goddess and the Old Gods;
- e. have three or more members who have been formally accepted into training for the Clergy;
- f. have at least one member who is eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials according to the provisions of *Article 7. Credentials, Section B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials, Subsection 2. Elder Priest/ess Credentials, paragraphs b., c., and d.* of these Bylaws;
- g. have been meeting monthly or more often for at least six months in order to conduct worship services;
- h. pledge to abide by all the provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council; and
- i. agree that the Coven and all its members will hold harmless any Officer or Committee of the Covenant or any member of the Officers, Governing Board, or Committee Members for actions taken in their official capacities.

### *2. Criteria for Membership in an Assembly of Individual Members [GC2019 changed Solitaires to Individual Members]*

In order to be eligible for membership as a member of an Assembly of Individual Members, an Individual

practitioner of Our Religion must meet the following criteria which must be addressed in each applicant's Statement of Practice. [GC2019 removed the requirement that Individual Members must be eligible for Elder Credentials]

- a. be recognized as being in fact a member of Our Religion by whichever members in good standing are already familiar with the practitioner and proclaim her or himself as a Witch or Wiccan in the Statement of Practice;
- b. subscribe to a code of ethics which is compatible with those in Article 9. Ethics, Section B. Code of Ethics, of these Bylaws;
- c. generally, focus her or his liturgy, theology, and practice around the worship of the Goddess or the Goddess and the Old Gods;
- d. pledge to abide by all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council; and
- e. agree to hold harmless any Officer or Committee of the Covenant or any member of the Officers, Governing Board, or Committee Members for actions taken in their official capacities.
- f. NOTE: Eligibility for voting and qualifications for holding office are addressed elsewhere in the Bylaws: See – *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section A. Classes of Membership; Article 3. The Officers and the Board, Section C. Officers of the Covenant, Subsection 4. Eligibility for Office; and Article 4. Meetings, Section G. Individual Member Caucuses.*

### **C. National Application Procedures**

In areas where no Local Council exists, the procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall be as follows:

1. The Coven or Individual Practitioner shall submit an application and a signed statement of practice to the Membership Officer specifying that it meets the criteria in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section B. Criteria for Membership*, and must include two letters of recommendation. The letters of recommendation shall be from members of two different Covens or Individuals that are known to the Covenant.
2. If a Coven or Individual practitioner has obtained only one recommendation, that Coven or Individual practitioner may apply as a Trial Member. Trial Members have one year and one day to complete the process of application for Regular Membership or membership in the Assembly of Individual Members. If that application process is not completed within one year and one day, the Trial membership shall lapse.
3. A copy of all pertinent documents, including the Membership Application, shall be forwarded to the National Publications Officer by the National Membership Officer. All Statements of Practice and Letters of Recommendation shall be published in the next Newsletter and on the AIR (Announcement, Information, and Resources) elist. From the date of publication in the Newsletter a 45-day review period (Sabbat to next Sabbat) for receipt of objections of shall begin for the applicant. Members must communicate written objections to the National Membership Officer before the end of the review period.
4. At the termination of a 45-day review period after publication of the documents as specified above in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section C. National Application Procedures, Paragraph 3*, if no written objections to the application have been received, the National Membership Officer shall approve the application no longer than 15 days after the termination of the review period. If there are any written objections, the National Membership Officer shall take whatever action she or he deems in the best interest of the Covenant. Decisions of the National Membership Officer may be appealed to the Governing Board. Decisions of the Governing Board may be appealed to Grand Council.
5. Final action on the application shall be announced to the Covenant in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.
6. If a new member application is approved at Lughnasadh/Lammas, the National Membership Officer will choose the Renewal Sabbat and do a proration of tithes for the new member to keep subsequent renewals off of the Lughnasadh/Lammas due date [Renewal Date Change Proposal GC2020].

### **D. Local Council Application Procedures**

In areas where a Local Council exists, the procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall be as follows (See also *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section F. Renewal of Membership, Subsection 3. Change of Membership Status.*):

1. A Local Council may establish its own procedures for application for membership in the Covenant. Such procedures shall not violate these Bylaws. In addition to any established procedures for application for

membership in the Covenant, each Local Council shall also comply with the provisions of *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section C. National Application Procedures*.

- a. A Local Council which has established its own procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall publish those procedures in the Samhain issue of the CoG Newsletter each year.
  - b. Any Local Council which does not publish procedures in the Samhain issue of the CoG Newsletter will be deemed to have accepted the procedures established in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section C. National Application Procedures*, until Samhain of the following year. A Local Council which does not comply with this provision may be made Provisional by the Governing Board.
  - c. A Local Council may amend its published procedures for application for membership in the Covenant by publishing such amendments in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter. No amendment shall be valid until published in the CoG Newsletter.
  - d. Any Member who feels a variance from National Application Procedures is in violation of the Bylaws, or is potentially discriminatory, can submit a statement to the Governing Board requesting formal review. The Governing Board will request that the Local Council rewrite or remove the variance and republish in the Yule newsletter.
2. The Membership Officer or the Board of the Local Council shall, after receipt, act on each application for membership in the Covenant. They may accept the application for publication and further processing, or if the Membership Officer or the Board of the Local Council has doubts or reservations about the applicant they may recommend the applicant for Trial Membership, refer the application to the National level, delay or decline to accept the application, or take whatever action on the application they believe to be in the best interests of the Covenant and the Local Council. Should the Membership decline to accept the application, a short note to that effect shall enter the Local Council minutes.
3. After the application has received the approval of the Local Council Membership, the Local Council Officer shall forward one set of the completed application materials as specified in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section C. National Application Procedures, Paragraph 1*, to the National Membership Officer within 15 days, who will forward them to the National Publications Officer. The applicant's Statements of Practice and Letters of Recommendation shall be published in the next Newsletter, and a 45-day review period for receipt of written objections shall begin. Members must communicate objections in writing to the National Membership Officer before the end of the review period.
4. If the National Membership Officer receives any written objections s/he will immediately refer the matter to the Membership Officer of the Local Council for reconsideration by the Local Council Membership.
5. Reconsideration of an Application by a Local Council
- After receiving notice of an objection, the Local Council Officer shall refer the application back to the Local Council Membership to reconsider the applicant for membership in the Covenant.
- a. The Local Council will meet as soon as possible to discuss the specifics of the objection and shall either accept the application in spite of the objection, recommend the applicant for Trial Membership, or decline to accept the application.
  - b. Should the Local Council decline to accept the application, a short note to that effect shall enter the Local Council minutes and within 15 days of the decision the Local Council Officer shall notify the applicant that their application was not accepted.
  - c. The Local Council Officer shall communicate the results of the Local Council's reconsideration to the National Membership Officer within 15 days of the decision.
  - d. Should the Local Council accept the application the National Membership Officer shall add the Member to the Roster within 15 days of receiving notice of the decision.
  - e. The National Membership Officer will notify the Covenant of the result of the Local Council decision by notice to AIR, and publication in the next Newsletter.
6. After the termination of the 45-day review period following publication as specified in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section D. Local Council Application Procedures, Paragraph 3*, and after checking with the relevant Local Membership Officer to confirm, if no written objections to the application have been received, the National Membership Officer shall approve the application within 15 days of the termination of the review period.
7. If a new member application is approved at Lughnasadh/Lammas, the National Membership Officer will choose the Renewal Sabbat and do a proration of tithes for the new member to keep subsequent renewals off of the Lughnasadh/Lammas due date [Renewal Date Change Proposal GC2020].

## **E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer**

### *1. Regarding Applications*

The Membership Officer shall be responsible for ascertaining, as best she or he can, whether applicants that apply for membership in the Covenant meet the criteria in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section B. Criteria for Membership*. Evidence concerning the qualifications of any applicant for membership may be submitted to the appropriate Membership Officer by any person who has first-hand information concerning such qualifications. In applying the criteria provided in this *Article*, each Membership Officer shall exercise her or his discretion in the most holistic and intuitive manner possible, in order to arrive at better decisions than mere logic would allow. In such decision-making, each Membership Officer should also beware of establishing precedents or creating trends that might at some future time lead to results that could disrupt the ordinary functioning of Covens or the Covenant, or which could lead to potential ethics conflicts. The Covenant affirms the right of member Covens to admit to membership whomever they choose and the Covenant shall not exclude applicants solely because of the age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or country of origin, residence, or citizenship of Coven members. The Covenant shall not exclude applicants solely because their Traditions of Our Religion differ from those of current Members.

### *2. Regarding New Members*

Upon acceptance of new Members into the Covenant, the Membership Officer shall:

1. obtain from the new Member the name, mailing address, telephone number, and confidentiality level(s) of the new Member's contact person; and
2. cause a Certificate of Membership to be forwarded to the new Member. In order for a Certificate of Membership to confer any legal status on the Coven or person who receives it, certain information may have to be filed with the state or local government. The Membership Officer will undertake such filing only when requested to do so in writing by the Coven or person in question.

## **F. Renewal of Membership**

Member Covens and members of the Assembly of Individual Members renew annually for a period of 12 months, with the option of prorating the tithe when moving the renewal date; for example, if a Local Council is changing from a staggered to a single renewal date for its Members, or if a new Member is renewing in a Local Council in which all Members renew on a single date as in *Article 8. Finances, Section B. Tithes*. There is a one-time exception for existing members that renew at Lughnasadh/Lammas as those members will be moved to Samhain without a pro-ration as of 2021 [Renewal Date Change GC2020].

Renewals shall be handled in the same manner as the original application:

- a. Through the Local Council if the original application was through a Local Council.
- b. Through the National Membership Officer if the original application was through National.

### *1. Renewal of Coven Membership*

In order to renew Membership, Members shall certify that they continue to meet the Membership requirements in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section B. Criteria for Membership*. Although covens in an area where a Local Council exists must apply through the Local Council, they may renew their memberships either through the Local Council or may instruct the National Membership Officer to transfer their memberships to National Coven status. See *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section F. Renewal of Membership, Subsection 3. Change of Membership Status*.

### *2. Renewal of Individual Membership*

Individual practitioners who were admitted to membership through a Local Council may similarly renew either through the Local Council or may transfer their memberships to membership in the National Assembly of Individual Members. See *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section F. Renewal of Membership, Subsection 3. Change of Membership Status*.

### *3. Change of Membership Status [GC2018]*

#### **a. Transferring from one Local Council to another Local Council**

At the time of their renewal a Member may request a transfer into another Local Council with approval of that Local Council. Local Council transfer procedures will be followed. If the transfer is accepted by the receiving Local Council, that Local Membership Officer must notify the National Membership Officer of the transfer. If the receiving Local Council does not accept the transfer, the Member may remain in the original Local Council, or the Member may request a transfer to National status if eligible to do so, following the process in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section F. Renewal of Membership*,



*Subsection 3. Change of Membership Status, Paragraphs b, or c, below.* If the Member does neither of these, then their Membership in the Covenant lapses at that time.

**b. Transferring from Local Council Coven to National Coven**

At the time of their renewal a Member may renew their Membership either through their Local Council or may request the National Membership Officer to transfer their Membership to National status.

Before the National Membership Officer transfers the Member to National status, written notification must be made to the Local Council that the Member is requesting to transfer. The National Membership Officer will announce the transfer to the Covenant in both the next Newsletter and on the AIR elist.

**c. Transferring from Local Council Assembly of Individual Members to National Assembly of Individual Members**

At the time of renewal, a member of a Local Council Assembly of Individual Members ~~who holds or is eligible to hold Elder Priest/ess credentials~~ [GC2021] may request that the National Membership Officer transfer their Membership to the National Assembly of Individual Members.

Before the transfer to National status takes place, written notification of the transfer request must be made to the Local Membership Officer by the National Membership Officer. The National Membership Officer will announce the transfer to the Covenant in both the next Newsletter and on the AIR elist.

**d. Transferring from National to Local Council (either Coven or Individual Member)**

At the time of their renewal a National Member may request a transfer into a Local Council with the approval of that Local Council. Notification must be made in writing by the Member to both the Local Membership Officer and the National Membership officer that the Member is requesting a transfer. Local Council transfer procedures shall be followed.

The Local Membership Officer must notify the National Membership Officer in writing of the Local Council's decision. If the Local Council does not accept the transfer, the Member retains National status. If the Local Council accepts the transfer, the National Membership Officer will update the Roster. The National Membership Officer will announce the transfer to the Covenant in both the next Newsletter and on the AIR elist.

**e. Transferring from Coven to Individual Member**

An individual member of a Member Coven may request to transfer to the Assembly of Individual Members within the same Local Council, with the approval of that Local Council, or they may request to transfer to the National Assembly of Individual Members. In either case, the process below in *items 1-7* will apply.

1. If staying in the same Local Council, the individual will provide the National Membership Officer with a written statement listing the following information:
  - a. contact information,
  - b. Coven name,
  - c. charter number,
  - d. a statement that s/he has been a member of above-named Coven during all or part of the current membership year,
  - e. state her or his preference to either join the Local Council Assembly of Individual Members, or to transfer to the National Assembly of Individual Members.
  - f. The National Membership Officer will contact the Local Membership Officer to verify the individual's membership in a Member Coven, requesting additional information from the individual, Coven, or Local Council Members if necessary.
2. If the individual is requesting a transfer to the Local Council Assembly of Individual Members, Local Council transfer procedures shall be followed, and the Local Council will accept or decline the request.
3. If the Local Council accepts the transfer, the Local Membership Officer shall notify the National Membership Officer of the Local Council's decision in writing. The National Membership Officer will update the Roster and will announce the transfer in both the Newsletter and on the AIR elist.
4. If the Local Council does not accept the transfer, the individual may remain in the original Coven with the Coven's permission or may request a transfer to National status as below in (4). If the individual will not be remaining with the original Coven, and doesn't wish to transfer to National status, her or his Membership lapses at this point. The Local Membership Officer will communicate the decision of

the Local Council to the individual within 15 days.

5. If the individual is requesting a transfer to the National Assembly of Individual Members, the Local Membership Officer will pass the transfer request to the National Membership Officer within 15 days and include a written statement of any information they may have regarding this situation from (2) above.
6. The National Membership Officer will publish the request to transfer to the National Assembly of Individual Members in the next Newsletter beginning a 45-day review period to allow for written objections from the Covenant, and to the AIR elist.
7. At the termination of a 45-day review period after publication of the documents as specified above in (5), if no written objections to the transfer request have been received, the National Membership Officer shall record the transfer and notify the individual within 15 days after the termination of the review period.

If there are any written objections, the National Membership Officer shall take whatever action she or he deems in the best interest of the Covenant. Decisions of the National Membership Officer may be appealed to the Governing Board. Decisions of the Governing Board may be appealed at Grand Council.

**f. Transferring from Individual Member to Coven**

An Individual Member Practitioner may transfer to a Member Coven at any time, at the discretion of the Coven Leadership. If the Individual Member is keeping any Clergy Credential, it will renew with the Coven's renewal, unless the Individual Member is maintaining their dual Membership, in which case the Individual Member shall specify to which Membership the Clergy Credential (if any) is attached.

**G. Revocation of Membership**

Membership is revocable by:

1. the National Complaint Process, according to the provisions of *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section H. National Complaint Process.*
2. Votes of No Confidence, according to the provisions of *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section I. Confidence Vote Instructions.*
3. not sending a Grand Council Quorum Form two years in succession according to the provisions of *Article 4. Meetings, Section E. Requirement to Attend Meetings and Appoint Proxies, Subsection 1.*
4. non-payment of tithes annually, according to the provisions of *Article 8. Finances, Section B. Tithes, or* action of the Governing Board, according to the provisions of *Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board, Section A. Governing Board of the Covenant, Subsection 1. Powers.*

A Member Coven or Individual Member whose membership is revoked immediately loses all credentials, and any and all benefits of membership. A Member, whose membership is revoked due to non-payment of tithes, or failure to send a proxy twice in succession, must reapply for membership in the Covenant and must also reapply for credentials. Such a revoked Member may reapply immediately after the revocation becomes effective.

A Member Coven whose membership is suspended by action of the Governing Board or revoked by Grand Council immediately loses any and all benefits of membership, as described in these Bylaws. These benefits can only be reauthorized by action of the Governing Board or Grand Council, and if authorized, can only be reinstated by a new application for membership and/or credentials, as appropriate. A Member whose membership is revoked by a Vote of No Confidence may not reapply for membership in the Covenant for one year and one day from the date of revocation and must reapply for credentials that were lost as a result of the revocation.

**H. National Complaint Process**

Any Member in good standing may file a complaint with any member of the Governing Board. All complaints must:

1. be submitted in writing,
2. enumerate the specific Charter provision, Bylaw or Policy that has been violated,
3. identify when and where the violation was committed and by whom.

The Governing Board shall review all complaints and determine if the complaint:

1. is of national or local concern,
2. constitutes a threat to the viability of the Covenant.

Complaints that are determined to be of local concern shall be referred to the Local Council in the area where the violation occurred. Local Councils are encouraged to utilize the resources of their Governing Board Representative Contact or other Elder resources to prevent escalation of local problems. A complaint shall be considered of national concern if the violation:

1. occurred in an area not serviced by a Local Council,
2. involves National Members of the Covenant,
3. involves more than one Local Council,
4. involves the conduct of members of the Governing Board, a National Officer, or their appointed assistants,
5. directly threatens the function, perception, or legal status of the Covenant as a whole,
6. or if repeated efforts at the local level have failed to achieve resolution.

A complaint shall be considered a threat to the viability of the Covenant only if:

1. it threatens the legal existence and/or financial solvency of the organization; and/or
2. it involves extreme negative public relations for the Covenant at the national level both within the Pagan community as a whole and/or the general population.

If a complaint is determined to be both of national concern and a threat to the viability of the Covenant the Governing Board shall convene a Council of Elders in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Policy Manual to investigate the complaint and offer a recommendation of action to the Governing Board.

If any individual refuses to participate in the complaint process, the Governing Board may apply restrictive actions to the Member Coven or Individual Member, up to and including forfeiture of membership.

## **I. Confidence Vote Instructions**

### **1. Local Councils**

A confidence vote is limited to Local Councils and is taken in the following manner:

1. Any Member of a Local Council in good standing may request a confidence vote regarding the membership of another Coven or Individual Member within the Local Council by informing the Local Council Membership Officer or another Local Council Board Officer. The request shall:
  - i. be submitted in writing,
  - ii. enumerate the specific Charter provision, Bylaw or Policy that has been violated, and
  - iii. identify when and where and by whom the violation was committed.
2. Upon receipt, the Local Council Board Officers shall review the Vote of No Confidence request(s) and determine via consensus (minus any Officers who are a party to the Vote of No Confidence) if the request:
  - i. is of local concern, and
  - ii. violates any of the Covenant's governing documents
3. Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the request for Vote of No Confidence, the LC Board shall take the following action(s):
  - i. If the Vote of No Confidence request is determined to be invalid, the Local Council Board shall return the request with a written explanation as to how this request did not meet the standard, or
  - ii. If the Vote of No Confidence request is determined to be valid:
    - 1) the Local Council Membership Officer shall immediately notify all Members by letter and/or email that a confidence vote has been called,
    - 2) cite by whom and against whom the allegations have been made.
    - 3) A copy of the Vote of No Confidence request(s) along with all allegations and supporting documentation shall be provided to every Member Coven and Assembly of Individual Members (including all parties to the Vote of No Confidence) and to the Governing Board. The Governing Board is notified for informational purposes only and no action is required by the Governing Board.

4. The Local Council Board shall schedule a meeting of the Local Council to be held within 45 days of receipt of the Vote of No Confidence request. At this meeting, the Coven or Individual Member against whom the Vote of No Confidence has been called shall be provided an opportunity to respond to the allegations and for Local Council Members to question all involved parties.
  5. The Local Council Board shall make certain that the date selected will ensure the greatest attendance of Local Council Members, and specifically the Member(s) who brought the Vote of No Confidence and against whom the Vote of No Confidence was called.
  6. A second meeting to conduct the Confidence Vote shall be held no more than 60 days from the date that the Vote of No Confidence notification was sent by the Local Council Board to all Local Council Members. A ballot shall be distributed at this meeting and used to determine the outcome of the vote.
  7. The ballot shall call for a vote of "Confidence," "No Confidence" or "Abstain" in the party calling the confidence vote and also call for a vote of "Confidence," "No Confidence," or "Abstain" in the party against whom the confidence vote has been called. No other information shall be on or with the ballot.
  8. A vote of "No Confidence" by two-thirds (2/3) of all possible votes in the Local Council shall be required to revoke a Member's Charter.
  9. A call for a confidence vote may be withdrawn any time prior to the distribution of ballots.
2. General Provisions of Confidence Votes
- a. No veto may be cast in a confidence vote.
  - b. No proxies may be used in a confidence vote. All votes must be cast in the same manner whether in person or by mail. Meeting and voting should follow the Bylaw procedures of *Article 4. Meetings*.
  - c. Each Member Coven and each Assembly of Individual Members shall have one vote. Each Coven and Assembly of Individual Members vote shall be cast in person by an individual designated by each Coven or Assembly of Individual Members.
  - d. The outcome of the confidence vote shall be forwarded to the National Membership Officer and the Governing Board. The Publications Officer shall publish the results of the Vote of No Confidence in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.
  - e. The National Membership Officer, upon notification that a Local Council Coven or Individual Member has received a two-thirds (2/3) majority to revoke membership, shall amend all records and send notification to said Member within seven (7) calendar days that their Charter has been revoked by this procedure and they have lost all credentials, and any and all benefits of membership. The Local Council Member (to include all persons in an affected Coven) shall be removed from all Covenant electronic listserves.
  - f. Members who have had their membership revoked through a Local Council confidence vote may appeal their revocation to the Governing Board. Decisions made by the Governing Board may be appealed at the next Grand Council.
  - g. Between the time a Member requests a confidence vote and the time a vote is either taken or withdrawn, neither the Member who calls a confidence vote, nor any Member against whom a confidence vote is called, may transfer membership from a Local Council to National status, or have her, his, or its membership transferred by action of a Local Board or the Governing Board.

## **J. Restrictive Actions**

Restrictive Actions against individuals in which membership in the Covenant is retained can include:

- (1) revocation of credentials, and therefore the eligibility to hold them,
- (2) ineligibility to represent a Member in Council,
- (3) prohibition from attendance at CoG functions,
- (4) ineligibility to hold office, and
- (5) restriction of access to CoG Member-only electronic listserves.

These benefits can only be reauthorized by the action of the Governing Board or Grand Council. If reauthorized, revoked Credentials may only be reinstated by a new application for credentials.

## **K. Non-Voting Affiliates**

There shall be a class of non-voting Affiliates of the Covenant as provided for under *Article 2. Membership and*

*Affiliation, Section A. Classes of Membership.* Affiliation with the Covenant shall not confer the right to vote, hold office, or any other rights of membership. The Covenant reserves the right to decline the application or renewal of an Affiliate and asserts the right to end the affiliation at any time for any reason. No confidential Covenant information shall be available to Affiliates.

#### *1. Criteria for Friends of CoG*

Affiliates (also known as Friends of CoG) must meet the following criteria, which shall be attested to on the application and renewal forms:

##### A Friend of CoG

- a. shall be an individual. Covens, groups, organizations, etc., are not eligible to affiliate with the Covenant as a Friend of CoG.
- b. must be at least 18 years of age.
- c. is not required to self-identify as a Witch or Wiccan but may do so if they chose.
- d. shall agree to hold harmless any Officers or Committee of the Covenant and any Committee Members acting in their official capacities.
- e. shall acknowledge that affiliation as a Friend of CoG in no way entitles them to Membership in the Covenant and that they must apply in the usual manner should they wish to become a Voting Member of CoG.
- f. shall acknowledge that only the Governing Board (and any applicable Local Council Board) shall have access to the Friends of CoG information, unless permission is otherwise granted by the Friend.
- g. may give their permission for their contact information, i.e., email, phone, text, etc., to be shared with Local Councils and CoG Members, in order to be informed about upcoming events, may sign up to receive emails from CoG, and may join a closed social media group.
- h. shall acknowledge that the Covenant reserves the right to terminate association with the individual at any time for any reason.

#### *2. Friends of CoG*

- a. shall pay an annual, non-refundable tithe of at least 50% of the minimum Individual Member tithe with the option for greater contributions,
- b. may donate to the Special Donations categories with their application and renewal,
- c. shall have access to the Announcements, Information and Reports (AIR) email list,
- d. shall receive a CoG publication (such as the public Newsletter, or some other material created just for them) at least once per year, and premium gifts approved by the Governing Board,
- e. are not required to attend CoG meetings but may attend Grand Council if they identify as a Witch as per *Article 4. Meetings, Section F. Procedures for Meetings, Subsection 3.*,
- f. may attend Local Council meetings (with Local Council approval),
- g. do not have a proxy to assign,
- h. are not eligible to vote,
- i. are not eligible to cast a veto,
- j. are not eligible to carry a proxy for a Voting Member,
- k. are not eligible for inclusion in quorum for meetings, and
- l. are not eligible to receive Clergy Credentials.

#### *3. Participation in Local Council events*

The Local Council Membership Officer shall invite Friends of CoG in their area who request such contact to any Local Council events open to Friends. Local Councils and National Members are encouraged to offer Friends of CoG additional opportunities to participate in their activities, including activities not open to the general public.

#### *4. Application Procedures*

Friends of CoG applicants apply through National, not through a Local Council.

#### *5. Renewal of Participation*

- a. A Friend's affiliation is for a period of 12 months starting at the Sabbat at which they joined Friends of CoG.
- b. Renewals shall be handled in the same manner as the original application.
- c. A grace period of 10 days to renew will apply.

#### *6. Administration of the Friends of CoG program*

Administration of the Friends of CoG program shall be the responsibility of both the National Membership Officer and the Local Council Membership Officers. The National Membership Officer will send a letter of welcome to the Friend outlining their status and applicable rules, a wallet card, and any

other necessary information within 15 days of receipt of payment and the request to join the Friends of CoG. The National Membership Officer shall inform the Local Council Membership Officer within 15 days after a Sabbath of any additions or changes to the list of Friends in their area who are requesting contact with the Local Council and/or CoG Members and will include the Friend's preferred method of contact.

## **Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board**

### **A. Governing Board of the Covenant [Governing Board added GC2019]**

#### *1. Powers*

The Governing Board shall be empowered to fulfill the duties of oversight, long-range planning, and governance between Grand Councils. The Covenant will continue to elect National Officers to fulfill the executive and administrative needs of the organization as in this *Article, Section B. The Executive Board of the Covenant* and *Section C. Officers of the Covenant*.

#### *2. Composition*

The Governing Board is composed of representatives from the following constituencies: Local Councils, National Covens collectively, and National Individual Members collectively. The First Officer and the National Pursewarden shall also have a decision-making role within the Governing Board and the National Pursewarden shall be consulted for budgetary issues. [Friendly Amendment to add Pursewarden to the Governing Board GC2019]

#### *3. Remuneration*

The members of the Governing Board shall serve without pay.

#### *4. Eligibility*

To be eligible for selection to the Governing Board, the person must be a member in good standing.

#### *5. Filling Vacancies*

If a vacancy occurs on the Governing Board, the Alternate from that constituency shall fill the vacant post and shall serve out the remainder of that term. As soon as is feasible, that constituency shall select another person to be their Alternate for the remainder of that term, but if the remainder is two months or less, this is not necessary.

#### *6. Terms*

Representatives to the Governing Board serve two-year terms and are not term-limited by this document, though each constituency may establish term limits if their Members wish.

#### *7. Governing Board Meetings*

##### *a. Calling a Meeting*

A meeting of the Governing Board may be called by the First Officer or by one-third (1/3) of its members. Whenever possible, an agenda for each meeting will be circulated to the entire board and posted to the Covenant's Announcements, Information, and Reports (AIR) email list at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

##### *b. Quorum*

The quorum needed for an official meeting of the Governing Board shall be two-thirds (2/3) of its members. However, a document circulated by postal mail or by electronic mail, of which copies are read and signed by every member of the Governing Board, shall be considered to have been voted upon at an official meeting of the Governing Board.

##### *c. Procedural Rules*

The Governing Board shall adopt whatever procedural rules it deems necessary for the proper conduct of its meetings.

##### *d. Decision Making*

The Governing Board shall strive for unanimity in its decisions; when consensus is not possible, an affirmative vote of a majority of the Governing Board shall be required for the adoption of a proposal by the Governing Board.

##### *e. Minutes*

Minutes of the Governing Board meetings will be published in the newsletter and Announcements,

Information, and Reports (AIR) email list.

#### 8. *Continuing Qualifications*

If a member of the Governing Board remains a Member of the Covenant but leaves membership in the constituency which qualified the person for election to the Governing Board, that person may serve out the term for which she or he was selected subject to the approval of that constituency. If at the end of that term the person has not become eligible to hold office, the person may not be re-selected in that constituency.

#### 9. *Joint Meetings*

The Governing Board may call Joint meetings with the Executive Board as needed. Emergency meetings may be called at any time it is deemed necessary by the National First Officer in conjunction with Speaker of the Governing Board. [GC2022 Remove all requirements as to how frequently each board, the Governing Board or the Executive Board must meet.] ~~The Governing Board and National Officers shall meet jointly at least eight four times each year. The Governing Board separately shall meet at least four times each year. [Change joint meetings GC2020.]~~ The Governing Board separately, or the National Officers separately, or committees and task forces thereof, may schedule additional meetings as required.

#### 10. *Removal for Cause*

Any Representative may be removed from the Governing Board for cause, as follows:

- a. Governing Board Representatives may be removed at any time by their respective constituencies according to procedures approved by these constituencies.
- b. At the beginning of any term, the Governing Board may decide to prevent a returning Representative from being seated, by consensus -1 (where the -1 is the person at issue). In such case the Alternate Representative shall be seated, and a new Alternate shall be selected by that constituency as soon as feasible.

#### 11. *New Local Council Representation*

As new Local Councils are organized and approved by the Grand Council, each shall choose its own Representative and Alternate to the Governing Board. The Representative shall be seated immediately and formally take office the following November 1<sup>st</sup>, serving for two-year terms.

#### 12. *Grand Council Participation*

Members of the Governing Board, or their Alternates, must represent their constituencies in COG Grand Council meetings, either in person or electronically (attending Virtually).

#### 13. *Travel Assistance*

The Representatives from the National Covens collectively, and from the National Assembly of Individual Members, may apply to the National Pursewarden for travel assistance to attend Grand Council in person. Local Councils are encouraged to make it financially feasible for their Representatives to attend in person.

### **B. Governing Board Representatives of the Covenant** [Document the Duties of the Governing Board GC2020]

#### 1. *Duties*

- a. **Mission**  
Make sure that COG's mission and purpose are being fulfilled. These are explained in a statement of mission and purpose, approved by Grand Council, that articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served.
- b. **Guide Officers**  
Clarify the specific roles and responsibilities of the National Officers, within the parameters defined in the By-laws. Encourage qualified individuals to become candidates for National Office, and make sure that elections are run fairly and efficiently.
- c. **Oversee the Money**  
Provide proper financial oversight. The Board must assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.
- d. **Fund-Raising and Income**

Ensure adequate resources for COG to fulfill its mission. This includes planning major income sources and fund-raising initiatives and supporting the National Officers and staff in carrying them out.

- e. **Handle Problems**  
If problems arise that affect COG and cannot be handled by a National Officer, address and solve them.
- f. **Legality and Ethics**  
Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability. The Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.
- g. **CoG's Future**  
Ensure effective long-range organizational planning. The Governing Board must actively lead an overall planning process, with input from the National Officers, and assist in implementing and monitoring the plan's goals.
- h. **Board Selection Process, Evaluation**  
Monitor and support the process by which new Board members are selected. Orient and train new members. Periodically and comprehensively evaluate the Board's own performance.
- i. **Help Represent CoG to the Wider Community**  
Enhance the organization's public standing. The Board should clearly articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the public, and garner support from the community, especially the community of Wiccans and Witches.
- j. **Monitor All Programs and Services**  
Monitor and strengthen the organization's programs and services, to make sure that each is properly run and effective, in line with Grand Council's expectations.
- k. **Encourage CoG's Growth**  
Monitor and support membership outreach programs. Look for opportunities to serve and expand local councils, and to create new local councils, and to attract new National covens and individual members.
- l. **Support the National Officers**  
Support the National Officers and assess their performance. The board should ensure that they have the support they need to perform their duties and further the goals of the organization.

### **C. Executive Board of the Covenant (also known as the National Officers) [GC2019]**

#### **1. Powers**

Under the direction of the Governing Board, National Officers shall be empowered to fulfill the executive and administrative needs of the organization, to carry out the proposals adopted by the Council, to carry on all routine business of the Covenant, and at all times to act in what they deem to be the best interests of the Covenant.

#### **2. Composition**

The National Officers shall be elected by the Council at the Annual Grand Council Meeting. At no time may the National Officers exceed thirteen (13) persons. At least five (5) individuals must be elected. Two or more offices may be performed by one individual. The National First Officer and the National Pursewarden cannot be the same person. [Friendly Amendment to Governing Board Proposal GC2019]

#### **3. Remuneration**

National Officers shall serve without pay. They may jointly or severally acquire office equipment and appoint whatever assistance they deem necessary and may arrange such financial remuneration of these assistants as may be approved by the Council or the Governing Board.

#### **4. National Officers Meetings**

##### **a. Calling a Meeting**

A meeting of the National Officers may be called by the First Officer or by one-third (1/3) of the



Officers. Whenever possible, an agenda for each meeting will be circulated to all National Officers and posted to the Covenant Announcements, Information and Reports (AIR) email list at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

b. Procedural Rules

The National Officers shall adopt whatever procedural rules it deems necessary for the proper conduct of its meetings.

c. Minutes

Minutes of all National Officer meetings will be published in the newsletter and Announcements, Information and Reports (AIR) email list.

5. *Filling Vacancies*

If a vacancy occurs among National Officers, the First Officer shall appoint a person who is eligible for office to fill the vacant post, subject to confirmation by the Governing Board. This person shall serve until the new Officers are elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

6. *Council Meetings*

National Officers are required to attend Council meetings.

7. *Terms*

National Officers serve two-year terms, except the Second Officer. The Second Officer remains a one-year term. [GC2019]

8. *Consecutive Terms [Terms changed GC2021]*

No person may serve for more than three consecutive terms (6 years) as a National Officer without a two-year rest.

Within these six years, no person may serve for more than two consecutive terms (4 years) in the same office.

9. *Continuing Qualification*

If a National Officer leaves membership in the Covenant, that person may serve out the term for which she or he was elected subject to vote of consensus -minus one (the officer in question) of the National Officers. If at the end of that term the person has not regained Membership, the person may not be re-elected. In case of any question, the Membership Officer shall investigate and recommend action.

10. *Resignation and Removal*

a. Resignation

If a National Officer determines that they are unable to perform the functions of the office to which they were elected, the Officer shall be allowed to resign that Office, without prejudice to that person's eligibility to later serve as an Officer of the Covenant.

b. Removal

If a National Officer is unable or refuses to perform the duties of the office to which they were elected, and the Governing Board determines that the failure of this Officer to act is having a serious and detrimental effect upon the Covenant, that Officer maybe removed from Office. The Governing Board may remove such an Officer by a vote of consensus-minus one (the Officer in question) of the Governing Board, and the Officer in question will be recused.

**D. Officers of the Covenant**

1. Elected Officers

The elected officers of the Covenant shall be as follows: First Officer, Second Officer, Pursewarden/Secretary, Publications Officer, Public Information Officer, Membership Officer, Outreach Officer, Recorder, and Correspondence Officer. Two or more offices may be performed by one individual. The National First Officer and the National Pursewarden cannot be the same person. [Friendly Amendment to Governing Board Proposal GC2019] More than one individual may fill a single office. At least five individuals must be elected. [Outreach Officer added GC2019]

2. Eligibility for Office

Eligibility for National Office shall be membership in good standing in Covenant of the Goddess, active participation in its affairs and projects, and eligible for Elder Priest/ess credentials. Eligibility for Local Council office shall be membership in good standing in a Local Council of CoG, active participation in its

affairs and projects, and eligible for clergy Priest/ess credentials.

### 3. Election

Officers of the Covenant shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a simple majority of Voting Members. Second Officers may be elected one year in advance to facilitate the planning of MerryMeet. The veto may not be used in the election of officers.

### 4. Duties

All Officers' materials shall be promptly forwarded to the succeeding Officers at the end of the term, which is October 31st. Materials not received by the succeeding Officer by November 30th will result in restrictive actions taken against the outgoing Officer by the Governing Board according to *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section J. Restrictive Actions*, of the Bylaws of the Covenant. These actions shall remain in effect until the newly elected Officer notifies the Governing Board that all materials have been received.

In addition to complying with all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council, the directions of the Governing Board, attending all meetings of the National Officers as described in *Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board, Section C. Executive Board of the Covenant*, and assuring the continued and effective operations of the Covenant, the elected Officers of the Covenant shall perform the following specific functions:

#### a. First Officer

The First Officer shall chair all meetings of the Council and the Governing Board, coordinate the activities of the National Officers, and may speak for the Membership of the Covenant within the parameters provided by the Charter, these Bylaws and policy decisions of the Council. The First Officer is also a member of the Governing Board. The First Officer may act as a voting Member of any committee. The First Officer may use the title President when dealing with the public. Should the First Officer be unable to serve, and in the absence of a co-First Officer, the Governing Board shall elect a First Officer *pro tem* from among their number.

#### b. Second Officer

The Second Officer shall be responsible for organizing the next Annual Meeting and MerryMeet. Any Local Council, group, or set of individuals who has been given the responsibility of organizing Grand Council and/or MerryMeet by the Covenant shall have a designated Event Pursewarden for the event(s). The Event Pursewarden shall submit to the National Pursewarden/Secretary a monthly accounting report that includes itemized listing of expenditures and revenues. The report shall also include any and all financial commitments made with regards to Grand Council/MerryMeet even if funds have not yet been expended for the commitment. The monthly accounting reports shall begin upon receipt of any money from the Covenant or six (6) months before the scheduled date of Grand Council and/or MerryMeet, whichever comes first. The National Pursewarden/Secretary shall review these reports monthly and share any and all concerns both with the Second Officer for that Grand Council/MerryMeet and with the Governing Board. By the end of her or his term of office, the Second Officer shall provide to the Governing Board a full accounting of all finances and material assets involved in organizing and producing the Annual Meeting and MerryMeet.

#### c. Pursewarden/Secretary

The Pursewarden/Secretary shall keep and be responsible for all the accounts and funds of the Covenant, shall maintain the financial books of the Covenant in compliance with the law and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, and shall have general supervisory powers over all financial concerns of the Covenant. The Pursewarden is also a member of the Governing Board. [Friendly Amendment to Governing Board Proposal GC2019] They shall collect and promptly deposit in the Covenant's bank account(s) all items of income to the Covenant, including those from any fund-raising activities, and shall make payments from these monies as authorized by the Council or the Board. The Pursewarden/Secretary shall prepare and present a financial statement at the Annual Meeting of the Council and at each meeting of the Governing Board and shall prepare an annual budget for the following year to be presented for approval at the Annual Meeting of the Council. They shall also submit to the Publications Officer a summary of the Covenant's financial activity for the previous fiscal year by December 1st of each year, for publication in the Yule issue of the CoG Newsletter. As supervisor of the financial concerns of the Covenant, the National Pursewarden/Secretary may close the checking account and confiscate the funds contained in such an account of any Local Council which fails to submit timely financial reports two quarters in a row. The National Pursewarden/Secretary shall handle the finances of that Local Council in consultation with the Local Council until the next Grand Council, until it is determined by Grand Council that the Local Council is able to comply with *Article 6. Local Councils, Section C. Required Activities* of these Bylaws. Local Councils may choose to

have the National Pursewarden/Secretary handle their finances for them. The Pursewarden may use the title Treasurer or Treasurer/Secretary when dealing with the public and financial institutions.

*[The Bylaw Review Committee found the following block of text which was approved at GC 2010 missing in the current Bylaws. This was REFERRED to the NATIONAL BOARD for reinstatement at GC 2018. The NATIONAL BOARD has reviewed this proposal at the direction of the membership and has determined that this omission will not be reinstated into the bylaws at this time as it directly conflicts with the legal duties and supervisory powers of the National Pursewarden. The language is included here as an annotation to be reviewed at GC 2019 with the intent that the text will be removed at that time.]*

The National Pursewarden shall not otherwise access a Local Council's bank accounts without the knowledge of the Local Council's Pursewarden and First Officer, including establishing, maintaining, and/or using electronic access. Such access is limited to observation only unless the Local Council is declared provisional based on the review of the National Board.

i. Assistant Pursewarden

A newly elected Pursewarden will immediately take office as assistant to the current Pursewarden for the remainder of the current fiscal year to become familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the office and the Covenant's accounting system.

ii. Pursewarden Emerita

The term of an outgoing Pursewarden will extend through the first quarter of the ensuing fiscal year. The Pursewarden Emerita will have the following responsibilities:

- Complete the financial paperwork for the previous fiscal year in requisite format for the COG accountant to prepare the tax filing for that fiscal year.
- Conduct the recruitment of candidates for Internal Auditors for the previous fiscal year and present the candidates to the Governing Board for approval.

**d. Publications Officer**

The Publications Officer shall be responsible for publishing the CoG Newsletter as directed by the Council. The Publications Officer shall take editorial responsibility for the content of the newsletter, including compliance with Members' confidentiality levels. They shall publish notification of business conducted by the Council, the National Officers, and the Governing Board. They shall be responsible for maintaining the mailing list of all who are entitled to receive Covenant publications. The Publications Officer shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of *Article 10. Confidentiality, Section B. Covenant Mailing List*, and shall arrange special mailings or notifications as required by the Council or the Governing Board.

**e. Public Information Officer**

The Public Information Officer shall develop and disseminate general information regarding the Covenant and Our Religion where appropriate, within the guidelines set by the Council and the Governing Board. She or he shall work under the regular supervision of the First Officer and shall coordinate her or his efforts with those performing the public information function in each Local Council.

**f. Outreach Officer**

The Outreach Officer shall work with the National Public Information Officer and other officers to increase all levels of membership; assist in the creation of new local councils, track and review the membership application process and suggest improvements, mobilize the membership by encouraging existing members to reach out to friends and acquaintances and invite them to join; and manage the Affiliate program ("Friends of COG"). [Outreach Officer added GC2019]

**g. Membership Officer**

The Membership Officer shall disseminate information on membership requirements to those who request it, process the applications for membership in the Covenant, issue membership documents, maintain a record of the names, addresses, telephone numbers and confidentiality levels of each Coven Contact, maintain a record of all Members of the Covenant, and submit an annually updated list of newsletter subscribers to the Publications Officer and provide other contact information as required by Governing Board Officers. They shall maintain all membership records in strictest confidentiality, releasing information only to members of the National Officers, Governing Board, or others authorized by the Members affected. They shall supervise the Local Council Membership Officers or those fulfilling that function in each Local Council. The National Membership Officer shall be responsible for ascertaining, as best as they can, whether any ad hoc or established association of covens that applies for a Charter as a Local Council is in fact entitled to receive it. The Charter, if issued, shall be

subject to the provision that the local covens which receive it shall promptly determine which covens and persons meet the criteria for the various classes of membership or affiliation established in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation* and shall promptly begin to comply with all provisions of the Charter and these Bylaws. The Membership Officer shall handle all functions relating to non-voting Affiliates as required in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation, Section K. Non-Voting Affiliates*. The Membership Officer shall authorize and issue credentials, upon receipt of requests from the contact persons of Member Covens in good standing, and from Local and National Assemblies of Individual Members, certifying that the requirements listed in *Article 7. Credentials*, of these Bylaws have been met. However, it is NOT the task of the Membership Officer to investigate or judge the qualifications of an applicant for credentials when such applicant is vouched for by an Elder Priest/ess of that Coven and/or the Local Membership Officer. The Membership Officer shall maintain a record of all those who hold credentials from the Covenant.

#### **h. Recorder**

The Recorder shall prepare and maintain records of all business conducted at all meetings of the Council, the National Officers, and the Governing Board, and shall be prepared to read from such records concerning past meetings if asked to do so by the Council or the Governing Board. The Recorder shall supply minutes of all meetings to the Publications Officer in a timely manner. The Recorder shall make the final determination regarding the official minutes after taking into account the policies and procedures of the Covenant as well as any corrections or comments of Members, but subject to the approval of the Governing Board for their meetings, and Grand Council with regard to the minutes of Grand Council. The Recorder shall issue revised copies of the Bylaws to all Members whenever the Council approves changes in these Bylaws. The Recorder shall also revise the Policy Manual annually to include such policy changes as were made by the Grand Council at the most recent annual meeting. The incoming National Recorder will assist in completing Grand Council minutes, Bylaws and Policy Manuals for the Covenant, by November 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **i. Correspondence Officer**

The Correspondence Officer shall promptly answer inquiries not directly related to the functions of the other officers.

#### **5. Officer Assistants**

Officers of the Covenant may, with the advice and consent of the First Officer, appoint assistants, who are themselves CoG Members, to help them carry out their duties in a timely and efficient manner.

### **Article 4: Meetings**

#### **A. Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of the Council shall take place once each year, prior to the end of the fiscal year at Samhain. The Governing Board shall select the date, time, and place for the meeting and the Publications Officer shall publish these particulars in the CoG Newsletter at least four months before the date chosen.

#### **B. Special Meeting**

A meeting of the Council may be called at any time by the Governing Board, but such a meeting shall not be considered a regular Annual Meeting. No meeting of the Council shall be held without 60 days written notice to each Member of a Special Council Meeting. Notice shall be sent to the address on file for each Member.

#### **C. Meeting by Mail**

The Governing Board may, on its own initiative, or shall upon written request from 20% of the Member Covens, circulate any proposal, including a proposal to amend the Charter or these Bylaws, to be voted upon by the Members, by the following procedure:

1. The Publications Officer shall send a copy of all necessary documents to each Member, including a blank Ballot regarding the proposal. Members shall promptly return their votes on the proposal to the Publications Officer.
2. When every Member has been heard from, or after a predetermined deadline, allowing at least six weeks for decision, the Publications Officer shall tabulate the votes and report to the Governing Board.
3. A proposal voted upon by this procedure shall be deemed to have been voted upon at a meeting of the Council, and so a veto may be cast concerning it.

4. Records of such a procedure shall be maintained and reported to the Covenant as the proceedings of any Council meeting are reported.

#### **D. Quorum**

No meeting of the Council may be held unless a quorum is present. A quorum will be determined in the following manner:

1. First, at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the Member Covens and registered Individual Member Caucuses from the Continental United States must be physically or virtually represented at the meeting; and
2. At least fifty percent (50%) of all Member Covens and registered Individual Member Caucuses must either be physically/virtually represented or represented by proxy at the Meeting.
3. If a Member Coven notifies the Governing Board that they do not intend to renew their membership, and such notification is received in advance of Grand Council, said Member Coven shall not count toward quorum, even if their membership expires after Grand Council; except if said Member Coven(s) is/are represented in person or by proxy at Grand Council, in which case they retain their membership rights for the purposes of Grand Council, including counting towards Quorum.
4. Once quorum for the Council has been established, quorum will be deemed to continue. If delegates or representatives absent themselves and do not declare otherwise, they are presumed to have given their proxy to the Council as a whole, unless:
  - a. Fewer than 25% of the delegates/representatives are physically/virtually present, or
  - b. A vote is called, and quorum is questioned from the floor.

*From the 1998 Charter available on the CoG Website: (Added at Grand Council 2021 to clarify how a Quorum of 2/3 is required to change bylaws)*

[ARTICLE V. AMENDMENTS AND BY-LAWS The provisions of this Covenant may be amended only by an affirmative vote that is equal to two-thirds of all the votes exercised by members of the Church, subject to their unanimous consent. **The provisions of this Covenant shall be implemented by means of such By-Laws as may be adopted by an affirmative vote equal to at least two-thirds of all votes exercised by members of the Church, subject to their unanimous consent.** Any provision of this Covenant that is ambiguous may be clarified by means of the By-Laws, but By-Laws that conflict with any provision of this Covenant shall be invalid, null, and void.]

#### **E. Requirement to Attend Meetings and Appoint Proxies**

1. Each registered Coven, Individual Member and Individual Member Caucus shall send a representative or a proxy to the annual Grand Council. Any Coven or Individual Member failing to do so shall become provisional. Any Coven or Individual Member failing to send a representative or a proxy two years in a row shall lose its, her or his membership and can only be reinstated by a new application for membership.
2. Each Coven, Individual Member and Individual Member Caucus must submit a Grand Council Quorum Form by the annual deadline. Any Coven or Individual Member failing to do so shall become provisional. Any Coven or Individual Member failing to submit this form two years in a row shall lose its membership and can only be reinstated by a new application for membership.
3. Individual Members may choose to appoint Grand Council as a whole to carry a proxy or may form an Individual Member Caucus with at least two other Individual Members.
4. A Coven or Individual Member Caucus may appoint as its proxy any Member of the Covenant who is both eligible to vote at a Meeting of the Council and physically represented at such a Meeting. Alternatively, a Coven may appoint the Council as a whole as proxy.
  - a. A proxy may be general or specific.
  - b. A proxy for a Regular, Trial, or Provisional Member Coven must be signed by that Coven's Contact. A proxy for an Individual Member Caucus must be signed by all members of the Individual Member Caucus. At least one member of the Individual Member Caucus must be eligible for Elder Priest/ess credentials.
  - c. An individual may physically represent more than one coven, provided she or he is a member of that coven. No individual may act as proxy for more than five Covens, Individual Member Caucuses, or any

combination thereof. No individual may cast more than six votes.

- d. When individuals hold dual memberships in an Assembly of Individual Members and in a Member Coven, their voting rights as an Individual Member are suspended for as long as they retain their membership in the member Coven.
- e. Virtual attendees **may** ~~cannot~~ carry proxies. [GC2022]
- f. When a member is attending both physically and by electronic means, their physical presence takes precedence over virtual participation.

## **F. Procedures for Meetings**

The First Officer shall chair all meetings of the Council and the Governing Board. The individual appointed to chair any committee of the Council or Governing Board shall chair all meetings of that committee.

1. At any meeting of the Council, the Governing Board, or a Committee, the Chair shall recognize speakers, decide whether comments are relevant to the topic under discussion, decide the order in which topics are to be discussed, and make whatever other decisions are needed to enable the meeting to proceed effectively.
2. At any meeting of the Council, decisions shall be made by the following process: each issue raised shall be thoroughly discussed by all present who wish to discuss it. All points of view, suggestions, and objections shall be taken into account in shaping a proposal about how to deal with the issue, until official representatives are agreed that the best possible proposal for the moment has been arrived at. Only if such unanimity cannot be reached shall the Council vote on a proposal.
3. Members of the Local and National Assemblies of Individual Members or members of any Member Coven shall be entitled to attend and speak at any meeting of the Council. Only a voting member may place a proposal before the Council for a decision. Any challenge to a decision by the Membership Officer concerning such entitlement shall be heard and adjudicated by the Council before the meeting begins. Non-members of the Covenant who satisfy the Membership Officer that they are bona fide members of Our Religion may be allowed to observe Council Meetings. In rare instances, attendance at particular discussions of Grand Council may be limited solely to Members.
4. Any person who is a Voting Member of the body that is meeting may challenge any ruling of the Chair. Such a challenge shall be voted upon immediately. A majority of the Voting Members shall be able to uphold or overturn the ruling of the Chair; a tied vote shall be considered to uphold the ruling of the Chair. When Grand Council calls for a review of the Governing Board's actions, Governing Board members may not veto during the review or the call for review.

## **G. Individual Member Caucuses**

For the sole purpose of participating in the Annual Meeting (Grand Council) Individual Members may form Individual Member Caucuses and send either their representative(s) or their proxy to Grand Council.

1. An Individual Member Caucus may have more than but must not have fewer than three members. One of these members must be eligible for Elder Priest/ess Credentials. Individual Member Caucuses may consist of Local Council Individual Members, National Individual Members, or both.
2. An Individual Member Caucus shall enjoy the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as any Member Coven for the duration of the specific Grand Council for which it was formed, including but not limited to:
  - a. inclusion in the quorum count for Grand Council,
  - b. the ability to cast a veto as part of the consensus process at Grand Council,
  - c. the ability to vote in the election of National Officers and budget with one vote per Individual Member Caucus.
3. Individual Members shall have the ability to belong to different Individual Member Caucuses in different years, but no Individual Member may belong to more than one Individual Member Caucus at a given Grand Council.
4. All Covens, Individual Members, and Individual Member Caucuses must be formed and registered with the National Membership Officer by the Grand Council Quorum Form deadline set by the National Membership Officer.
5. An Individual Member Caucus that has submitted a Grand Council Quorum Form, but who's representative or proxy holder does not attend Grand Council will not be counted for purposes of establishing quorum.
6. An Individual Member Caucus automatically dissolves at the official conclusion of Grand Council. If the same

three Individual Members wish to form an Individual Member Caucus for a future Grand Council, they must submit a new Grand Council Quorum Form notifying the National Membership Officer.

## **H. Voting Rights and Voting Members**

Each Regular Member, Trial Member, Provisional Member, and Individual Member Caucus shall have one vote at the Annual Meeting. Only Regular Members and Individual Members Caucuses may cast a veto.

1. For the Annual Meeting, the term Voting Members is hereby defined as representatives of Regular Members, Trial Members, Provisional Members, or Individual Member Caucuses of the Covenant who are physically/virtually present at a Council meeting.
2. For meetings of a Local Council, the term Voting Members is hereby defined as representatives of Regular Members, Trial Members, Provisional Members, or Assembly of Individual Members of the Covenant who are physically/virtually present at a Local Council meeting.
3. When a quorum (as defined in *Article 4. Meetings, Section D. Quorum*, of these bylaws) of the Council is present, Members of the Covenant who are represented by proxy shall also be Voting Members.

## **I. Representation**

1. A Coven or Individual Member Caucus shall be free to designate whichever of its members it pleases, or a Proxy, to exercise its vote at any single meeting of Grand Council. In the case of a Local Council, a Coven or Assembly of Individual Members shall be free to designate whichever of its members it pleases, or a Proxy, to exercise its vote at any single meeting of the Council. All persons thus chosen as representatives must be members in good standing.
2. The Local Council Board will encourage and assist members of its Local Council Assembly of Individual Members in contacting each other to form Individual Member Caucuses, share concerns, pick representatives to the Annual Grand Council meeting, and/or prepare a proxy. The National Membership Officer will fulfill this responsibility for the National Assembly of Individual Members.

## **J. Types of Votes**

When a vote of the Council is necessary, there shall be four types of votes possible: affirmative, abstention, negative, and veto.

1. A veto which is cast shall immediately defeat the proposal under consideration. A veto may be cast only in the case of such extreme dissent regarding the proposal coming under question that, were there no veto, the dissenting Member would leave the Covenant. A veto may not be cast under any other circumstances. A veto may not be cast by proxy ~~or by a virtual attendee~~. A veto may be cast at a meeting of the Council only by a Voting Member (i.e., the representative of a Member Coven or of a member of an Individual Member Caucus) who is ~~physically~~ present and entitled to cast one. [GC2022 *For the purposes of meetings, being virtually present is equal to being physically present.*]
2. The phrase "subject to unanimous consent" in the Charter and these Bylaws shall be understood as referring to the veto power.

## **K. Results of Veto**

At all times the Council should aim to make decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, other methods should be explored, such as continuing discussion by referral to a committee, or by trial of method for a period of time, followed by reassessment. If the matter is pressing, the bylaws allow for a vote to be taken. A proposal can be adopted by the Council only by a Passing Vote, which shall consist of affirmative votes cast by at least fifty percent (50%) of the Voting Members, with no veto cast.

## **Article 5: Committees**

To provide for the proper governance and functioning of the Covenant, the Council or the Governing Board shall establish, maintain, and disband Committees as it sees fit, and shall establish such procedural rules as may be necessary to augment the rules provided in these Bylaws.

## **Article 6: Local Councils**

## **A. Composition**

Local Councils shall be comprised of Covens which are geographically proximate. Only one Local Council shall be chartered in a geographic area, which shall be defined by the Board working with geographically proximate Member Covens. The extent of the geographical area covered by a Local Council shall be determined by the ability of that Local Council to serve all of the covens within that Local Council. In special circumstances, as described below in this *Article*, when recommended by the affected Local Council(s) and the Governing Board, the Council may make or allow more than one Local Council in a geographic area.

1. Any three or more Covens, of at least two Traditions of Our Religion, which are qualified to hold Regular Membership in the Covenant, may be chartered as a Local Council of the Covenant. Grand Council may make exceptions to this rule in special circumstances.
2. If two or more Covens wish to form a Local Council but are unable, for good reasons which have been investigated by the Membership Officer, to fulfill the requirements of *Article 6. Local Councils, Section A. Composition*, they may be admitted as a Provisional Local Council, with the understanding that they will complete the requirements for membership within one year. A Provisional Local Council may exist for a period of one year and one day, after which they will either be admitted as a full Local Council or the Local Council will be deemed not to exist.
3. Ideally, Local Councils should form around the members they serve, should be reasonably sized to afford easy transit to meetings, and should meet frequently enough, (at least quarterly is recommended) to offer ready and practical service and response to members. It is practical, but not required, to include local councils within state boundaries, which may reflect local regulations applied to religious groups within a particular jurisdiction.
4. Any established Local Council that drops below the membership threshold shall maintain active status in Covenant of the Goddess, as long as they retain two covens in different traditions and one assembly of Individual Members with at least three members. This bylaw shall in no way change the process of establishing a Local Council.

## **B. Effect of Covenant, Bylaws, and Policies**

Except where it is provided otherwise, all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, or policy decisions of the Council which concern the Council, its Governing Board, its National Officers, or its Committees, shall be interpreted in reasonable ways as applying to the Local Council, its Board (Officers), and its Committees. Each Local Council shall be otherwise autonomous and free to conduct its affairs as it sees fit, including the election of its Officers and the selection of its Representative and Alternate to the Governing Board. [GC2019 Governing Board]

## **C. Required Activities**

1. All Local Councils must:
  - a. Meet at least once a year;
  - b. Elect at least three individuals as local officers and notify the National First Officer of the names of the local officers by December 15 annually;
  - c. Promptly act on all membership applications from their area;
  - d. Submit quarterly Financial Reports to the National Pursewarden; and
  - e. Send concise copies of the minutes of all general Local Council meetings to the CoG Newsletter for publication, within 45 days of the meeting recorded, or within 45 days of the meeting where the previous minutes are approved.
2. If a Local Council fails to comply with the provisions of this *section*, the Governing Board may change the status of the Local Council to that of Provisional Local Council until they comply. If compliance is not obtained in a year and a day, the Governing Board may revoke the Provisional Local Council's charter.

## **D. Affinity Groups**

Within a Local Council, Affinity Groups may be established to further the interests and aims of two or more Local Council Members who share common interests and aims other than their tradition of Our Religion. Covens may, at their discretion, join one or more Affinity Groups. Affinity Groups will approve Affinity Group membership, determine the frequency and purpose of their meetings, and select and follow through on their own projects and activities. Affinity Groups shall keep the Local Council First Officer and other appropriate



officers informed of their activities. Affinity Groups are encouraged to invite membership by CoG Members beyond Local Council boundaries.

#### **E. Overlapping Local Council Boundaries**

1. Except in special circumstances, overlapping Local Council boundaries should be avoided. Division of a Local Council should aim to divide the former area so that the boundaries of the resulting Local Councils do not overlap and are as discrete as possible. In the process of setting procedures, the Governing Board and the affected Local Councils are urged to avoid gerrymandering. If overlaps are unavoidable, the overlapping area should constitute a minimal area of the resulting Local Councils.
2. Overlapping Local Councils' boundaries may be visualized in a manner analogous to the way several covensteads may coexist in a given town, with coven members residing within the whole area. It must be permissible for member covens and individual members of overlapping Local Councils to transfer between Local Councils if they wish, according to established membership procedures. The overlapping Local Councils must adopt communication procedures to allow ease in transferring, and to avoid any unfair advantage accruing to one Local Council. Members of either Local Council may renew at the national level if they wish. Overlapping or adjoining Local Councils may collaborate on projects such as fundraising, festivals, clerical concerns, or other issues of mutual interest. It may be possible for members who wish to join both Local Councils to do so if they can be active in the projects of both.

#### **F. Dividing an Existing Local Council**

Ideally, decisions about dividing a Local Council are best reached by the Local Council members directly affected. The decision to divide a Local Council represents a critical stage for the Local Council and must be approached with serious consideration. Within an area already covered by an existing Local Council, a potential Local Council —defined in this instance as at least three covens of two traditions—may follow the procedures below to register their desire to form a new Local Council. If fewer than three covens wish to secede, they should instead renew at the National level.

##### **1. Registering the Issue**

A potential new Local Council must first make a good faith effort to discuss the issue with the membership of the original Local Council, and the members of the original Local Council must be informed about the proposal to form a new Local Council before the issue can be registered with the Governing Board or Grand Council. The proposal may not be registered unless it can be demonstrated that (a) the initial effort to discuss the issue has been made, and that (b) informed representatives of both groups are ready and able to present their issues to the Governing Board or the membership.

##### **2. Negotiation**

After the issue is registered with the Governing Board or Grand Council, the parties have up to six months to reach a reasonable compromise through local negotiations. If the parties wish for national intervention prior to the end of the six-month local discussion period, all affected factions must make the request. A separation may not be authorized by the Governing Board or Grand Council prior to the end of the six (6) month period unless it can be demonstrated that (a) a local effort to discuss the issue has been made, (b) and a reasonable and workable compromise has been reached.

##### **3. Intervention**

If no workable compromise can be reached after six months, the Governing Board or Grand Council may intervene directly, may appoint a mediator who will report to the Governing Board on the progress of mediation, or may set deadlines for further action on the process. As a result of this process, the Governing Board or Grand Council may authorize the creation of a new Local Council. When a division occurs, members of the previous Local Council shall have until the next renewal period to decide if they wish to join one or the other Local Council, or to renew at the National level.

#### **G. Process of Creating a New Local Council**

1. Covens which feel that they satisfy the criteria of *Article 6. Local Councils, Section A. Composition* and wish to form a new Local Council, should notify the National Membership Officer of their intent to attempt to form a Local Council in their area, by sending the National Membership Officer a Notice of Intent, which at the minimum details the membership and geographic area which their Local Council shall comprise. Upon this notification, the National Membership Officer shall contact all parties that would make up the proposed new Local Council, as well as all other geographically proximate Covenant of the Goddess Members, regarding their wishes with respect to the new Local Council. The National Membership Officer will consider all other

relevant factors, including relevant Bylaws, history, and opinions of nearby Local Councils, regarding establishment of this proposed new Local Council.

It is recommended, though not required, that covens which would wish to form a new Local Council first form an Affinity Group for as long a time as possible prior to the establishment of the new Local Council.

2. Notification of the general Covenant of the intent to form a proposed new Local Council, or the completion of the process of Dividing an Existing Local Council as detailed in *Article 6. Local Councils, Section F. Dividing an Existing Local Council* of these Bylaws, shall be published in the CoG Newsletter.
3. After undertaking a review of the proposed new Local Council, including soliciting input from nearby Local Councils possibly affected by the change, the National Membership Officer shall take all relevant facts to the Governing Board. After deliberation the Governing Board shall decide either to support the establishment of the new Local Council, to deny the new Local Council's formation, or to recommend changes to the new Local Council's proposed structure. The full details of the decision shall be published in the CoG Newsletter in the next issue following this decision.
4. Denial by the Governing Board of a request to form a new Local Council may be appealed at Grand Council. If an appeal is requested, publication of the grounds for the appeal should likewise be published in the Newsletter at least one issue prior to Grand Council. Unanimous consent of Grand Council for the formation of the proposed new Local Council must still be obtained in the case of an appeal.

## **Article 7: Credentials**

### **A. Credentials Available from the Covenant**

The following credentials are available from the Covenant: Priest/ess Credentials, Elder Priest/ess Credentials, and Handfasting Certificates. In order for any credentials or Charter of Membership issued by the Covenant to confer any legal status on the individual or Coven who receives it, certain information may have to be filed with the appropriate state or local government.

### **B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials**

#### **1. Priest/ess Credentials**

In order to be eligible to receive Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall:

- a. be an active Member of a Coven that is a Member in good standing; or be a Member in good standing of a Local Council Assembly of Individual Members;
- b. have been Formally Accepted into Training for the Clergy in a coven in a manner that entails taking on the full commitment to the requirements of that coven's Tradition of Our Religion;
- c. have undergone at least a full year of active training for the priesthood of Our Religion; and
- d. pledge to abide by all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council.

#### **2. Elder Priest/ess Credentials**

In order to be eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials, clergy of Our Religion shall:

- a. Be an active Member of a Coven that is a Member in good standing; or be a Member in good standing of either a Local Council Assembly of Individual Members or the National Assembly of Individual Members.
- b. Satisfy the criteria *b, c, and d* of *Article 7. Credentials, Section B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials, Subsection 1. Priest/ess Credentials,*
- c. Have undergone at least one additional full year of active training for the ministry, after the year specified in *Section B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials, Subsection 1. Priest/ess Credentials* of this Article and
- d. Be in fact fully able to establish a coven, admit members to it, and train them in all the tenets and practices of her or his tradition of Our Religion.

In order to actually receive Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall, in addition to the requirements listed in *Paragraph 1* above:

- e. Attest to a competent knowledge of the duties of clergy members as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice. [GC2022]

In order to actually receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall in addition to the requirements listed in *Paragraph 2* above:

- e. attest to a competent knowledge of the duties of clergy members as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice. [GC2022]
- f. Be in fact able to educate coven members who are applying for Priest/ess Credentials in their responsibilities as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdictions(s) in which they practice. To this end, the Covenant provides educational resources on this and other responsibilities of the clergy. [GC2022]

### 3. Handfasting Certificates

When individuals, of whatever gender or number, wish to bond together in a loving and lasting relationship, their relationship may be solemnized in a handfasting, or rite of joining. If the rite is performed under the auspices of a Covenant Member and by an individual empowered to perform such rites by that Member's Tradition of Our Religion, the Member may apply for Credentials and Certificates available from the Covenant, thus registering the rite in the Covenant records.

### 4. Other Certificates

Grand Council may approve the creation and issuance of other types of certificates.

## C. Procedures for Obtaining Credentials

In requesting Credentials from the Covenant, these procedures shall be followed:

1. the appropriate form shall be completed and signed by the individual requesting the Credentials and by the Coven Contact if the credentials applicant is a Coven Member.
2. the appropriate fee, as set by the Council each year, shall accompany the form; and
3. the form and the fee shall be forwarded to the Local Council Membership Officer, in areas where a Local Council exists; or
4. this form **and any required letters** shall be forwarded to the National Membership Officer, where no Local Council exists. [GC2022 *See Policy Manual for details for Individual Members who do not have a Local Council.*]

## D. Responsibilities of the Local Council

The Local Council shall decide which individuals within the Local Assembly of Individual Members are eligible to receive Priest/ess Credentials or Elder Priest/ess Credentials.

## E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officers

1. In areas where a Local Council exists, the Local Membership Officer shall ascertain, as best as she or he can, whether the request for Credentials has been properly executed, and shall also forward all documents and fees to the National Membership Officer.
2. In areas where a Local Council does not exist, the National Membership Officer shall ascertain, as best as she or he can, whether the request for Credentials has been properly executed. The National Membership Officer shall also forward any fees received to the Purswarden. Finally, the National Membership Officer shall forward Credentials to individuals who apply and who meet the criteria and follow the procedures set forth for those Credentials.
3. Confirmation of the status within the Covenant of an individual holding credentials from the Covenant shall be made by the appropriate Membership Officer upon written request, which identifies the name and address of the entity to be informed, by the individual holding credentials.

## F. Maintenance and Revocation of Credentials

### 1. Maintenance

All persons holding Credentials shall be required to report any changes in their status affecting their eligibility to hold those Credentials to the appropriate Membership Officer and are also expected to keep the Membership Officer informed concerning their whereabouts as long as their Credentials are valid. Credentials must be renewed annually.

2. Priest/ess Credentials shall remain valid only so long as the person remains an active Member of a Coven which remains a Member in good standing of the Covenant or is a Member in good standing of a Local Council's Assembly of Individual Members and is an active participant in the Local Council's affairs.

3. Elder Priest/ess Credentials shall remain valid as long as:
  - the Elder Priest/ess is an active Elder of a Member Coven in good standing; or
  - the Elder Priest/ess is a Member in good standing of a Local Council's Assembly of Individual Members and is an active participant in the Local Council's affairs; or
  - the Elder Priest/ess is a Member in good standing of the National Assembly of Individual Members.
 If the Elder Priest/ess's membership status changes, she or he has one year and one day to establish a new status without losing the Elder Priest/ess Credentials.
4. Reinstatement of Credentials
 

Any Credentials that are revoked, suspended, or otherwise expired can be reinstated only by reapplication to, and recertification by, the National Membership Officer.

**G. Fees for Credentials**

The Covenant shall charge reasonable fees to cover all expenses involved in the issuing of credentials. Individuals requesting more than one credential shall pay a separate fee for each credential.

**Article 8: Finances**

**A. Budget**

At each Annual Meeting, the Pursewarden shall present a budget which includes the projected operating expenses of the Covenant for the next year, and the means to meet those expenses. This budget shall note all investments or other financial holdings in the name of or for the benefit of the Covenant. The budget shall also include all projected income from such investments or holdings. Approval of the budget as a whole shall be based on a simple majority vote. Approval of the budget as a whole or the vote thereon shall not be subject to veto. The Pursewarden shall estimate the amount of the projected expenses which will not be met. The Council shall then, by a passing vote, establish the amount of the tithe that each class of Member shall pay to the Covenant for that year, sufficient to cover projected operating expenses and maintain a reserve. The Governing Board shall also have the authority to raise money in any way that does not involve further assessments of the members.

**B. Tithes**

1. Annual tithes are due on the Sabbat that the Member was approved, with a grace period of ten (10) days following that Sabbat (see schedule). The tithe shall be paid by each Member to the Pursewarden or a designated representative. A Member who is in arrears in paying the annual tithe shall automatically have all voting rights and other privileges suspended. If the tithe has not been paid before the final deadline, the membership shall be revoked, and can only be reinstated by a new application for membership.

Renewal Date List

<b>Renewal Date</b>	<b>Final deadline</b>	<b>Notification Date</b>
Yule – 12/21	December 31st	Samhain – 10/31
Imbolg – 2/2	February 12th	Yule – 12/21
Ostara – 3/21	March 31st	Imbolg – 2/2
Beltaine – 5/1	May 11th	Ostara – 3/21
Litha – 6/21	June 30th	Beltaine – 5/1
Lammas – 7/31	August 10th	Litha – 6/21
Mabon – 9/21	September 30th	Lammas – 7/31
Samhain – 10/31	November 10th	Mabon – 9/21

2. Those Local Councils that have Local tithes have the option to, in consultation with the National Membership Officer, choose a single date on which all Members within that Local Council will renew in order to simplify

collection of tithes. This date should be based on the Sabbath on which the majority of the Members of that Local Council currently renew. [#19 - GC 2013 Bylaws – text added by 2018 Bylaw Review committee from the GC 2013 Minutes.]

3. To prevent loss of tithe revenue, a Local Council which transitions from a staggered to a single renewal date for all of its Members shall at the time of the transition prorate the tithes of current Members once. [#19 - GC 2013 Bylaws – text created by 2018 Bylaw Review committee.]
4. After this transition, any new Members of such a Local Council will pay the full tithe when applying, but will have their first renewal prorated, and their renewal date moved to match the Local Council renewal date. The National Membership Officer, National Pursewarden, and the Local Council Membership Officer will cooperate to make this happen. [#19 - GC 2013 Bylaws – text added by 2018 Bylaw Review committee from the GC 2013 Minutes.]
5. Individual Member tithes in the same household. Two or more Individual Members living in one household may elect to pay membership tithes at a discounted rate of the full minimum tithe for the first Individual Member and one half the minimum tithe for the second or any subsequent Individual Members but must be renewed simultaneously.
6. The NMO shall send out renewal forms (electronically) no later than the Sabbath prior to the Sabbath on which the tithe is due (see Renewal Date List).
7. All credentials will expire on the membership renewal date; credentials will need to be renewed at the same time as the membership to prevent lapsing and the need for reapplication.
8. The Renewal Date List shall be included in the “Members of the Covenant” section of the CoG Newsletter and on the website.

### **C. Accounting**

All individuals responsible for handling Covenant funds and the records of those funds shall follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. A Pursewarden may only disburse funds on the authority of the Council or the Governing Board. At least two signatories are required on the National Checking Account: one is the National Pursewarden and the second is one of the current Governing Board, preferably the National First Officer.

## **Article 9: Ethics**

### **1. Policy and Purpose**

The Covenant strongly encourages its Members to comply with the Code of Ethics described in *Article 9. Ethics, Section B. Code of Ethics*. The Covenant recognizes that ultimately questions of ethics violations are between individuals and their Gods.

### **2. Code of Ethics**

The following shall constitute the Code of Ethics of the Covenant:

1. An ye harm none, do as ye will.
2. Since Our Religion and the arts and practices peculiar to it are the gift of the Goddess, membership, and training in a Coven of members of Our Religion are bestowed free, as gifts, and only on those persons who are deemed worthy to receive them; nevertheless, a Coven may expect each of its members to bear a fair share of its ordinary operating expenses.
3. All persons have the right to charge reasonable fees for the services by which they earn a living, so long as Our Religion is not thereby exploited.
4. Every person associated with this Covenant shall respect the autonomy and sovereignty of each Coven, as well as the right of each Coven to oversee the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical development of its members in its own way and shall exercise reasonable caution against infringing upon that right in any way.
5. All persons associated with the Covenant shall respect the traditional secrecy of Our Religion.
6. Members of Our Religion should ever keep in mind both its underlying unity and the diversity of its manifestations and should make clear on any communications just whom they are speaking for or about.
7. These ethics shall be understood and interpreted in light of one another, and especially in light of traditional laws of Our Religion.
8. Governing Board Representatives, National Officers, or appointees are morally obligated to recuse

themselves from any adjudicatory decision in which there is a perceived problem of partiality.

### **3. Ethics Violations**

The Covenant recognizes the following to be ethical violations:

1. Knowingly and willfully making a false statement to any Council, National Officer, Governing Board, Committee, or other duly constituted agency of the Covenant; also, knowingly and willfully making a false statement about the Covenant to non-members.
2. Theft of Covenant property, commission of fraud upon the Covenant, or the intent to defraud the Covenant;
3. Persistent refusal to abide by the provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, or such decisions of the Council as are necessary for the continued viability and usefulness of the Covenant as an instrument of the joint will of the Members;
4. Willful violation of the confidentiality provisions of *Article 10. Confidentiality*, of these Bylaws;
5. Such persistent use of the veto power that the usefulness or viability of the Covenant is seriously threatened;
6. Misrepresentation by an individual or a Coven of that individual's or that Coven's status within the Covenant; or
7. Deliberate intimidation, coercion, or manipulation of any individual, against that individual's will, at any official ~~business~~ function of the Covenant. [GC2022 *Change business to official.*]

## **Article 10: Confidentiality**

### **i. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer**

In processing an application for membership in the Covenant, the Membership Officer shall ask persons and groups for only such information as she or he needs to decide whether a person or group meets the criteria in *Article 2. Membership and Affiliation*, of these Bylaws, and such information shall be considered strictly confidential.

Concerning any specific person or group, the Membership Officer shall communicate to other persons in the Covenant only the results of its decisions, as, in effect, a simple "yes" or "no." However, the Membership Officer may, at her or his discretion, communicate such information to the current members of the Governing Board. The Membership Officer may also base general statements (such as about how many members the Covenant has) on such information and communicate such statements to the Publications Officer.

### **ii. Covenant Mailing List**

The mailing list of Covenant of the Goddess shall be in the keeping of the Publications Officer who will be charged with guarding its confidentiality. The Governing Board may grant access to the mailing list to other Officers or their assistants as defined in *Article 3. The Officers and the Governing Board, Section D. Officers of the Covenant, Subsection 5. Officer Assistants*. Members who wish to mail communications to other members may do so at their own expense through the Publications Officer according to procedures established by the Council.

### **iii. MerryMeet**

1. The mailing list used to publicize MerryMeet shall be in the keeping of the Second Officer, who will be charged with guarding its confidentiality. Access to this mailing list may be granted to other Officers by the Governing Board.
2. No information about the exact location of MerryMeet shall be released to the media without the express prior consent of the Second Officer. It is understood that media inquiries concerning MerryMeet shall be referred directly to the Second Officer.

## **Article 11: Amendments**

These Bylaws shall be amended only in the same way that the Charter can be amended. These Bylaws may be amended only by the Council. These Bylaws shall not be amended by any Local Council or by any other body

within the Covenant.

*From the 1998 Charter available on the CoG Website: (Added from Grand Council 2021 to clarify how a Quorum of 2/3 is required to change bylaws)*

[ARTICLE V. AMENDMENTS AND BY-LAWS The provisions of this Covenant may be amended only by an affirmative vote that is equal to two-thirds of all the votes exercised by members of the Church, subject to their unanimous consent. **The provisions of this Covenant shall be implemented by means of such By-Laws as may be adopted by an affirmative vote equal to at least two-thirds of all votes exercised by members of the Church, subject to their unanimous consent.** Any provision of this Covenant that is ambiguous may be clarified by means of the By-Laws, but By-Laws that conflict with any provision of this Covenant shall be invalid, null, and void.]