



What the 2026 Sexual Ethics Framework Does and Doesn't Require

In brief

In September 2026 the Ministries Council approved *Biblical Sexual Ethics: A Church of God Theological and Pastoral Framework*. Its firm requirements fall almost entirely on credentialed ministers and people in church leadership roles. For LGBTQ people who attend, worship, and belong to Church of God congregations, the document itself calls for welcome, dignity, and pastoral care.

This guide sets out, as plainly and accurately as we can, what the framework asks of whom, what it does not ask, and what it leaves unsettled. We quote the document directly wherever possible so readers can check our account against the source. We disagree with the framework's conclusions, and we briefly explain why below. The guide's main purpose, though, is practical: to help people know where they stand in relation to the Ministries Council document.

What kind of document it is

Who issued it. The Ministries Council approved it, and Church of God Ministries distributes it. It is not a new General Assembly resolution. It describes itself as gathering earlier Assembly actions (1979, 1993, 2004, and 2014) along with existing credentialing standards.

Who it addresses. It says it is written "primarily for credentialed ministers, credentialing bodies, congregational leaders, and affiliated ministries."

How it describes its own authority.

- "This document does not establish a new Church of God teaching."
- It is "not intended to function as an exhaustive clinical guide, legal policy manual, or response to every pastoral circumstance."
- It points to the 2023 *Credentials Manual of the Church of God* for "specific guidelines regarding ministerial conduct, reporting, accountability, discipline, and restoration."
- Introducing it, General Assembly and Ministries Council Chair Rev. Sylvia V. Reid wrote that it is not meant to replace Scripture, become a new creed, or "serve as a weapon against individuals or groups."



What that means in practice. The framework explains and applies existing standards; it does not by itself create a disciplinary process. Where its expectations carry consequences, those run through credentialing. Church of God congregations remain self-governing, and the framework's language to congregations is advisory ("should") rather than mandatory.

CHOGAffirm's assessment of the document and its arguments

We have read the framework closely, and we want to be fair to it before saying where we think it falls short.

Where it succeeds. The framework is careful in tone. It repeatedly rejects contempt, admits that Christians have mistreated LGBTQ people, and speaks in the movement's own language of holiness and unity. It affirms women in ministry, treats intersex conditions and asexuality without judgment, and takes singleness seriously as a vocation, and charges the church to become a community capable of supporting an individual for whom celibacy is morally imperative. Its leadership standard names heterosexual conduct alongside same-sex conduct, and it insists that "no person should be reduced to one dimension of his or her life."

It also makes concessions that many traditional statements do not. It acknowledges that same-sex attraction may not go away, leaves attendance at same-sex weddings to conscience, and quotes the Code of Ethics pledge of pastoral care regardless of sexual orientation. It commits the church to hearing those who disagree well enough to "represent another person's view fairly" and "recognize its own pastoral failures." It confines its standards to the church's own members, distinguishing that accountability from the church's posture toward the wider world, and it calls for no political or legal program. Its resource list includes a major affirming work and labels it honestly. These are real commitments, and we encourage people to hold leaders to them.

Where it falls short.

- **It answers a weaker argument than the ones affirming Christians make.** It frames the disagreement as Scripture versus experience. Many affirming Christians argue from Scripture itself: from the nature of the Levitical purity code, from Scripture's trajectory toward including those once excluded, and especially from the Council of Jerusalem's decision in Acts 10–15 to welcome Gentiles. The framework document cites that same council but does not engage the affirming reading.
- **It uses its sources selectively.** Its signature strategy is citing affirming scholars against the affirming position. It quotes William Loader, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Richard Hays on what the texts say but omits why each reaches a different conclusion, and it lists Hays's later affirming book without engaging it. The most serious case is Loader. The framework presents him as showing that Paul knew of varied orientations, so that



Paul's view "cannot be dismissed as cultural ignorance" (Document footnote 18). This is not Loader's understanding of Paul. In his published summary of the question, Loader says precisely the opposite: Paul shared the Jewish assumption that all people are heterosexual (see William Loader, "[Homosexuality in the New Testament](#).") Disagreeing with Loader is legitimate; presenting him as support for the opposite claim is not.

- **Its sources pull away from the movement's Wesleyan-holiness roots.** Robert Gagnon and Reformed or Baptist scholars carry most of the biblical argument. Wesleyan scholars appear mainly in the section on method, and Church of God voices supply framing rather than argument. Most of its sources were initial signers of the 2017 Nashville Statement, issued by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, including Christopher Yuan and Jackie Hill Perry, whom it quotes; R. C. Sproul, whom it cites; and Kevin DeYoung, whose book it recommends. The CBMW is best known for teaching that leadership in church and home belongs to men, a view the framework itself rejects when it affirms women at every level of ministry. CHOGAfirm remains concerned that sexual ethics is becoming a channel through which Reformed and broader Evangelical thinking reshapes our Wesleyan-holiness movement.
- **It applies its rigor unevenly.** It relies on Matthew 19 to define marriage but never applies that passage's teaching on divorce and remarriage to its leadership standard, when divorce and not sexual orientation is the direct subject of the passage.
- **Its welcome is aspirational, but its boundaries are enforceable.** Its prohibitions are specific and tied to credentialing. Its promise of "spiritual family" has no comparable mechanism: nothing ties a minister's credentials to whether LGBTQ people are actually welcomed into worship and community life. Key terms such as "deliberate rejection of one's biological sex" are left undefined.
- **It does not always keep its own promises.** It pledges to keep contested medical claims out of its theology, then recommends polemical resources on gender. Several minor citation errors also undercut the scholarly authority it seeks.

In short, the framework states the traditional position in a genuinely pastoral voice, and that deserves acknowledgment. Where it falls most short is in engaging the strongest case it rejects. We hope future conversations in the movement will take up that work together, and in a more distinctly Church of God key.

What it asks of ministers and church leaders

The framework's firm requirements are four, and all concern teaching, officiating, and leadership.

Expectation	Who it applies to	The framework's words
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Teaching	Credentialed ministers and "other spiritual leaders"	They "may not teach that same-sex sexual relationships, same-sex marriage, or the deliberate rejection of one's biological sex are consistent with Scripture, nor may they model or officially endorse such teaching through their own conduct."
Officiating weddings	Credentialed ministers	They "may not officiate a ceremony presented as a marriage other than the covenant union of one man and one woman."
Church facilities	Congregations	Congregations "should not make church facilities available for such ceremonies."
Leadership roles	Teachers, small-group leaders, ministry directors, pastoral staff	"A person who actively and unrepentantly practices or promotes conduct contrary to the church's historic biblical teaching is not suited for spiritual leadership while that condition continues."

The leadership standard is not limited to LGBTQ people. The framework applies it equally to "pornography, adultery, premarital sex, open marriage, polyamory, same-sex sexual behavior, abusive conduct, and the deliberate rejection of one's biological sex." It also states that differences of sexual development (intersex conditions) "do not automatically disqualify a person from Christian leadership."

What it does not require, and what it protects

The framework also contains commitments that are easy to miss. People can reasonably ask their churches and leaders to honor them.

Welcome into church life

- "Churches should welcome people regardless of sexual orientation, gender-related distress, practice, or history."
- Welcome means "treating people as image-bearers, inviting them to worship, building genuine relationships, listening before assuming, and refusing degrading speech or mistreatment."
- The leadership boundaries "do not prohibit friendship, personal hospitality, pastoral care, or welcoming any person into the worship and community life of the church."
- "There is a difference between welcoming someone into community and placing someone in a spiritual leadership role."

Pastoral care and dignity



- It quotes the ministers' Code of Ethics pledge to "offer pastoral care to all regardless of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation."
- Theological disagreement "must never become an excuse to demean or mistreat individuals."
- Gender dysphoria "should be met with compassion, careful listening, protection from mockery or mistreatment, and patient pastoral care."

Attraction and identity

- It distinguishes attraction from behavior, saying its teaching "does not mean that same-sex attraction necessarily disappears upon conversion."
- Transformation "should not be reduced to a promise that every unwanted attraction will disappear immediately."
- "The absence of sexual attraction is not itself sinful."
- Intersex conditions "are not themselves sinful" and call for individualized care.

Matters left to conscience

- Whether a church leader attends a same-sex wedding "may reasonably be treated as a matter of pastoral judgment, relationship, personal conscience." It adds that "faithful Christians may reach different conclusions."
- "Pastors should not assume that they control the precise order or pace of the Spirit's work in another person's life."

A stated obligation on congregations

- When the church asks people to live celibately, "the church assumes a corresponding responsibility to become spiritual family."
- "No follower of Jesus should be asked to carry the cost of obedience alone."

Protection for victims

- Its reading of 1 Corinthians 6 "must never be extended to victims of rape, coercion, abuse, or trafficking."

What it leaves unclear

Several terms that carry real consequences are not defined. We offer these as honest questions that church leaders can clarify, not as accusations.

- **"Deliberate rejection of one's biological sex."** Does this refer to a name, pronouns, clothing, social transition, medical care, or some combination?



- **"Promotes."** Does this extend to a leader who shares affirming books or resources, attends an affirming event, or has an LGBTQ family member?
- **Ordinances.** The framework welcomes people into "worship and community life" but does not address membership, baptism, communion (giving or receiving), or dedicating the children of same-sex couples.
- **Which roles count as leadership.** It names teachers and small-group leaders. It does not say whether that includes worship team members, ushers, volunteers with children, or committee members.
- **Consistency with other standards.** Its leadership list does not mention divorce and remarriage, though Matthew 19, the passage it relies on most, addresses divorce directly.
- **The promise of "spiritual family."** It does not say what congregations owe single LGBTQ members or who is responsible for seeing that it happens.
- **Room for disagreement.** The Chair acknowledges that faithful people may have questions about or disagree with parts of the framework. How does that square with barring ministers from teaching an affirming view? It is unclear which parts of the framework may bear faithful disagreement.
- **Medical questions.** It promises a separate, updatable pastoral resource on medical research. That resource has not yet been released.

What this may mean for you

Church of God congregations are self-governing, so local practice will vary. The notes below describe what the framework says. They are not legal advice or a prediction of how any particular church will act.

If you are LGBTQ and attend a Church of God congregation

- Nothing in the framework asks your church to turn you away. It calls for welcome regardless of orientation, practice, or history.
- If you are mocked, demeaned, or mistreated, the framework itself names that as wrong. The General Assembly Chair has also said it must never be used to demean, diminish, or mistreat anyone. You can point to both.
- Leadership and teaching roles are where the framework draws lines. If you serve or hope to serve, it is reasonable to ask your pastor directly how your congregation understands those lines.
- The framework is silent on membership and ordinances. If those matter to you, ask your church rather than assume.

If you are family or a friend

- The framework places no restriction on friendship, hospitality, or family relationships.



- It does not restrict lay members from attending a same-sex wedding. Even for church leaders, it treats attendance as a matter of conscience.

If you are a credentialed minister

- This is where the framework's requirements carry weight. It ties them to the 2023 *Credentials Manual*, sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 7.3.3, and 7.3.7.
- If a term such as "promotes" or "deliberate rejection of one's biological sex" is unclear for your situation, consider asking your credentialing body for clarification in writing.
- Your pledge to offer pastoral care to all, regardless of sexual orientation, remains part of the Code of Ethics the framework quotes.

If you lead a congregation

- The framework's guidance to congregations on facilities is phrased as "should," and decisions about local practice rest with your congregation. The 2014 GA Resolution "Ministerial/Facility Protection Against Forced Officiating/Hosting of Same-Sex Marriages" may be relevant here.
- Its call to become "spiritual family" is an obligation your church can take up in concrete ways: friendship, hospitality, shared holidays, and practical care.

If you have questions about your own situation, feel free to contact us at contact@chogaffirm.com. We can offer only unofficial advice, but we will do our best to ensure you are supported.

Where these questions will be decided

Because the framework works through credentialing, how it is applied will depend on who oversees the *Credentials Manual*.

On September 28, 2026, the General Assembly met virtually to vote on new bylaws for Church of God Ministries. The bylaws were approved as written. As proposed, the bylaws would:

- replace the Ministries Council with a Board of Directors of 8 to 12 members;
- give that board authority to approve changes to the *Credentials Manual* (section 4.3.3);
- allow it to appoint committees on theological issues, on revising the *Credentials Manual*, and to serve as an appeals body for credentialing matters (section 4.17);
- limit the Assembly to considering resolutions the board proposes (section 3.8.1).

The proposed bylaws also state that the board "may not alter theological doctrine" and affirms "the autonomy of local congregations" (sections 4.3 and 12).



If you want to raise the questions in this guide, the Board of Directors and its credentialing committees are where they can be answered. Church of God Ministries also invites questions about the framework at GAChair@chog.org.

Sources

- [Ministries Council, *Biblical Sexual Ethics: A Church of God Theological and Pastoral Framework*](#) (September 2026).
- [Biblical Sexual Ethics](#), Church of God Ministries landing page with the Chair's letter and FAQs
- [Proposed Amended and Restated Bylaws of Church of God Ministries, Inc.](#) (draft for the September 28, 2026 vote)
- [Structure & Polity Task Force](#), Church of God Ministries