

**The C&MA Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal**  
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**Introduction**

The C&MA's Policy on Discipline addresses a variety of topics. Among these are: the Church, discipline, family issues, jurisdiction, ecclesiastical authority, restoration, minimizing the damage, discipline, and appeal. I consider each of these and then provide a summary.

The goal of this evaluation is to reveal areas that must change for the benefit and protection of children and families now employed with missionary-sending agencies. My focus is on those issues that influence them for better or worse. I occasionally note how the proposed policy, and suggested changes, would have affected me as an alumnus of Mamou Alliance Academy.

**The Church**

*The goals of discipline are to honor God; to protect the purity of the Church; to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed; and to bring fallen Christians to repentance.*

This quote assumes that C&MA is the Church rather than just one small part of the Body of Christ functioning among, and with thousands of other small bodies just like them. They are not the Church and should not dictate as if they are. C&MA is not qualified to say that they as a denomination are capable of protecting the purity of the Church. This is not a practical statement, but an over-generalization.

**Discipline**

The C&MA's Policy on Discipline's definition of appropriate discipline seems adequate for issues that do not require legal solutions and intervention from law enforcement. These issues include personal disputes and arguments between C&MA members or even between staff and members.

However, the proposed policy does not specify or delineate between disputes and crimes. Therefore, the goals of discipline as stated in The C&MA's Policy on Discipline might interfere with due process of law for US citizens. For example, the document states that the purpose of discipline is to bring "fallen Christians" to repentance. However, it is not specific in the definition. Bringing fallen Christians to repentance over-spiritualizes the crime problem.

Using sections of Scripture to paint a one-size-fits-all methodology to solve every problem in-house is at the least shortsighted, and at the worst, negligent and abusive. Matthew 18, the chapter that deals with resolving conflict and disputes does not address issues of criminal activity as The C&MA's Policy seems to state. If Scripture is the true guideline for disputes and problematic behavior, then C&MA has a responsibility to ensure the use of Romans 13 where Paul states that the law of the land is specifically put in place to deal with crime.

Where assaults against any individual or against property in the denomination occur, it is not the responsibility of C&MA to bring the perpetrator into repentance. Rather, their

responsibility lies in seeing that those harmed have immediate access to professionals and civil authorities. Also, C&MA must make certain that perpetrators of crimes are immediately dismissed and brought to justice.

### *My thoughts*

One of the best things that could have happened for me and my peers would have been the change that reversed the enforced boarding school policy. This change would eliminate most of the problems associated with in-house abuse and criminal acts towards children as described above. A child's well being is not an acceptable sacrifice for missions.

Changing the enforced policy would have given my family a better chance to maintain our own identity and family ties. It would have decreased the intense pressure on my parents to accomplish great things for God while their babies were abandoned.

### **Family issues**

While C&MA has the right of every Christian denomination or agency to establish doctrines and policy, it does not have the right to elevate the policy above the welfare of the lay members. Missionaries are low in the hierarchy within similar organizations. They and their children are the most vulnerable and as such, require definite protective policies. C&MA must restructure The C&MA's Policy on Discipline to specifically address the vital issues of child and family welfare. Ignoring effective safeguards for families and children is abusive and does not reflect or elevate the nature and name of God. Jesus promises severe punishment to those who harm a child.

There needs to be a change in the relationship between the leadership and the lay people who make up the bulk of employees. The C&MA's Policy on Discipline states:

*The Policy is not intended to create a legally enforceable contract or promise. The Board Directors of the C&MA reserve the right, in its sole discretion, to modify the Policy at any time for any reason.*

The C&MA's Policy proposes that high-level board members with no accountability to those in their employ can make changes without notice, irregardless of the impact of those changes. If there is no protection for the individual when they agree to C&MA policy, then how can anyone trust that the leadership will hold to any of their statements regarding behavior or procedure?

Leadership has a God-given responsibility to those under them. Lay people, especially those in overseas work need to have a voice in contractual changes. This suggested revision would benefit the whole body because it would improve communication and a sense of community between missionaries and board members.

### **Jurisdiction**

The document states that ecclesiastical authority may confront offenders if their action is not going to cause harm to others, disqualify them from leadership, and mar the name of Christ. For serious offenses, the document still requires that they be handled in-house.

For illegal activities and crimes, C&MA and Church authority must give way to outside legal intervention to protect children. The denomination is culpable when it refuses to permit needful information from going to proper authorities. This is withholding evidence.

The C&MA National Office is not qualified to judge and rule in sexual and physical abuse of minors or any vulnerable person. Ecclesiastical authority must be carefully used so as not to interfere in situations that require legal intervention. Its scope of influence ends where criminal and illegal activity start.

### **Ecclesiastical authority**

Sections A and B, part III (General Procedure) seem to be useful and good. Section C in part III states that confidentiality will be present in all aspects of disciplinary proceedings. As stated above, ecclesiastical authority must be put aside in charges on predatory activity against children. C&MA leadership must disclose all information and witnesses to legal and civil authorities. This denomination is not above the law of the land.

Section IV describes the disciplinary proceedings. In part A, the description of inquiry and interview with the complainant seems okay in lesser charges. The section on proper submission of charges of a private dispute or doctrinal issue seems adequate.

Part B describes the investigation part of Section IV. It states that in child abuse, efforts are made to appoint an investigator preferred by the C&MA National Office. This leads to bias and may result in cover-up. Investigations of abuse charges of any kind must have independent and unbiased professionals who have no conflict of interest. Civil authorities must be notified and information shared with the proper legal authorities if C&MA is to develop transparency and preserve their reputation as servants of God to the outside world.

#### *My thoughts*

If C&MA had taken steps to intervene and protect the children, I know I would not have suffered at the hands of brutal caregivers. The shape of my life would have been far different. I would not have suffered decades of haunting and memories that still impact my life.

If the C&MA had any sense of justice and compassion, they would have listened to one of our caregivers who reported the abuses going on, instead of telling her to shut up and mind her own business. You see, the truth comes out. Even after decades, the truth comes out.

The part A description of disciplinary hearing is adequate, but Part B is not. It states:

*Since this is an ecclesiastical hearing, legal counsel of any kind is not permitted.*

This statement violates the constitutional rights of any US citizen to legal counsel and due process of law. Ecclesiastical authority does not trump the Law of the Land. They cannot claim ecclesiastical authority to prevent legal investigation from taking place. Where a need rises, professionals from outside agencies should be called in to examine cases of illegal or criminal activity against person or property, as a matter of course.

### **Restoration**

Section VI describes proposed policies regarding restoration and restitution. This section seems to apply only to the offender. I see no provision for the one who is victimized. This section reveals that C&MA does not consider those who are victims of in-house crimes. A primary example that demonstrates this is that of the predator who, after being identified as a rapist and abuser during years at Mamou Alliance Academy, was sent to another place to serve a C&MA church. This incident is representative of multiple thousands of similar incidents occurring in other religious denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church.

Restoration of perpetrators, if possible, must be defined with clarity, and require proper steps of restitution to the victim. Consolation and reinstatement for staff with a track record of child abuse is an insult. The negligence committed by this part of the policy throws the whole idea of restoration off-base. Jesus taught that restitution is part of salvation. Why does C&MA selectively use verses that speak only to restoration of the perpetrator, and include nothing for the victim of abuse? This, or any other denomination, must take upon itself to provide medical and legal help, counseling, support groups or any other needed service to their wounded.

#### *My thoughts*

I know if there were proper safeguards for children at Mamou, the tremendous numbers of wounded, struggling, dysfunctional, and traumatized missionary children, older and younger than me would not exist. I remember a male staff member walking down the road that separated us, the older students, from the first and second grade classroom. I recall that he also heard the cries from D. Wormely's classrooms and he did absolutely nothing to intervene. He never even questioned or challenged the circumstances that resulted in cries of pain from little children. The lives of many little ones were devastated while this influential staff member walked by. He ignored them just like the Pharisee that walked by the bleeding, victimized Samaritan. C&MA, and staff that did nothing, have much for which to give account. The cries of the innocent children still ring in my ears,

#### **Minimizing the damage**

Insisting that victims forgive the perpetrator or the denomination is an act of re-victimization. Forgiveness does not negate the official and Godly responsibility of any denomination or agency to walk with their own wounded through whatever process they need as long as they need it.

Perhaps if more careful vigilance, detail, and stringent guidelines were in place, the C&MA would not find it necessary to be on the defensive and as uncooperative as they have been with the alumni of Mamou Alliance Academy.

Spiritual statements like “this is the price we have to pay” and “there will be sacrifices” is a slap in the face of the victim. It neutralizes the two greatest commandments that God has given as life principles outlining the way that Christians need to act towards each other.

#### *My thoughts*

Pat spiritual statements are an obstacle in Christian missionary groups and families. It taught me that my physical self as a little girl and then, as a young woman, was unholy, dirty, disgusting ... something for which to be ashamed. I have never had a good self-image.

Holding and developing healthy relationships is still difficult. I struggled with issues of the goodness of womanhood, motherhood, and childhood. My memories are heavily tainted with self-hatred, anxiety, internal pressure to hurry up and do the next thing ... to really *fear* God in the most unholy way. I do not trust anyone easily, especially Christian people. I do not trust God in the way that I am told I should. I lay this at the feet and those of the staff and caretakers at Mamou Alliance Academy.

## **Discipline and Appeal**

Section VII determines the severity of discipline when a charge is substantiated. Section 1X describes the appeal process. As stated many times above, the proposed policy should pertain to minor infractions, disputes, arguments over policy, that are not illegal or criminal activities. It is important to have strict and uncompromising standards in place to help with discernment between cases, and for the protection of children forced into a boarding school setting.

## **Summary**

Some of the following recommendations do not relate directly to The C&MA's Policy on Discipline, but are important and necessary C&MA policy changes. If they had been in place, I and my peers would not have suffered at Mamou.

There are sections where The C&MA's Policy proposals seem adequate (eg. Section III parts A and B). However other parts need to be rewritten (eg. Disclosure, legal authorities).

1. Lay people need to be involved in policy changes and at the least, should have compensation to help deal with difficulties that arise from unexpected changes.
2. Lay people need to know that C&MA leadership prioritizes their welfare and the welfare of their children.
3. Lay people should have the right to raise their children at home in conjunction with their missionary work.
4. If children are boarded out, parent/child communication cannot be censored or prevented. The house parents set in place of a boarding school situation do not have the authority to interfere or impede communication.
5. Lay members of C&MA should be able to fulfill their personal and moral responsibilities to their children without the over-lording of C&MA National Policy.
6. C&MA must notify public authorities about in-house crimes or illegal activities. Ecclesiastical authority does not supersede the law of the land or block proper legal rights to the civil authorities and prosecution in case of abusive and criminal assaults against a child or their property.
7. Where the protection and safeguarding of children and vulnerable and victimized people are concerned, C&MA has a legal responsibility to work with professionals in outside agencies and law officers.

8. C&MA policy cannot order US citizens to release their constitutional rights.
9. Protecting in-house criminals against prosecution is a crime. In the case of sexual predatory attacks on children in a foreign missionary boarding school, the US Embassy, local officials and parents should be immediately notified.
10. Professionals in fields pertaining to childcare, psychology and independent protective services should make regular inspections and interviews with the missionary child at the boarding school without interference or stonewalling from boarding school caregivers.

Scripture says the two life principles given by God fulfill all of the Law and the Prophets. Christian denominations and missionary agencies typically ignore these two principles in their neglect of the people who serve them, and in their neglect to put in strong safeguards on behalf of the children. These neglectful and, in some cases, criminal actions must change.

If missions are to survive and prove effective now and in the future, Christians and missionary groups and leadership need to come to terms with what constitutes true service. They must reevaluate their actions in line with what Jesus teaches, and how past and present policies lead to unnecessary clashes of culture and harm to children.

May God have mercy on us and on the whole world.