



## Church of God in Christ

### Statement on the Young Men of Valor Training Manual for Adult Facilitators (Edition 2)

**Purpose:** To repudiate unbiblical teachings on sexuality expressed in the *Young Men of Valor Training Manual* for Adult Facilitators (edition 2) **and** delineate actions taken and revised protocols implemented to ensure this situation does not happen again in the future.

Holiness is the defining doctrine of the Church of God in Christ. In the twentieth century, the Church of God in Christ, the Mother Church, gave birth to a distinctive holiness-Pentecostal movement. In 1907, one year after the Azusa Street Revival, the Church of God in Christ was founded. Embracing and living in accordance with the Word of God has always been the foundation of our faith, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

A recent publication, *The International Youth Department, Church of God in Christ, Young Men of Valor Training Manual* for Adult Facilitators (Edition 2), has come to our attention. Unfortunately the section on sexual health in this manual is contrary to Christian teaching – teenagers are counseled to decide when it is right to have sex by consulting their “partners” and their feelings and beliefs. There is no mention of God’s commands, the Bible, prayer or the prohibition of sexual activity outside of marriage. Young men are directed to talk to parents, counselors and others about sexual activity, but they are not directed to consult scripture, pastors, evangelists or other church leaders. The text includes several references, which seems to imply that homosexuality is a permissible choice for teenagers to consider.

The text also seems to imply that it is appropriate for teenagers to decide to engage in sexual activity, again, without any mention of marriage, the bible or church teachings.

Abstinence is discussed, but only as an option, not as a requirement of godly conduct.

Some, perhaps most, of the content of this chapter appears to have been lifted from a secular publication designed for a secular audience.

Other sections of the manual that deal with the use of tobacco and marijuana are also not in line with our church teachings.

The erroneous teachings referenced above are repudiated by the Presiding Bishop and by all church leaders.

The inappropriate information was included in the revised manual without proper vetting. In addition, critical information that aligned with the beliefs and teachings of the Church was excluded. The President is responsible for ensuring the doctrinal integrity of documents published by the department. He also has a grave responsibility to protect the faith and innocence of our children at all costs. In both instances, he failed in the case of the *Young Men of Valor Training Manual* for Adult Facilitators (Edition 2).

The failure to have in place processes that provide for appropriate review and sign off constitutes a failure by departmental management. Further, the failure to notify the Presiding Bishop immediately when he became aware of the issue is troublesome.

Pastor Stephens has accepted full responsibility for the failure to provide appropriate supervision.

This situation has also brought to light the fact that the Publishing Board does not have in place adequate safeguards to ensure that all materials that are promoted on the website and sold online or at the bookstore are properly vetted to ensure that they are in line with our teachings.

To address this matter the following actions have been taken:

1. Pastor Ben Stephens has given a strong reprimand and his actions will be subject to oversight for an undetermined period of time;
2. Oversight and management of the Young Men of Valor program has been reassigned;
3. Bishop James L. Whitehead, Jr. has been appointed to lead a standing commission that will be responsible for reviewing all printed departmental materials as well as all materials promoted or sold through the Publishing House to ensure they are in line with COGIC doctrine;
4. Representatives of the Publishing Board will appear before the General Board semi-annually to provide information on content being offered; and,
5. All department leaders have been tasked with conducting an audit within their respective departments to determine if any documents now exist that are in need of revision to ensure alignment with COGIC doctrine.

From time to time, God allows troublesome situations to occur so that we will move to a higher level of diligence. Out of the pain of this trying situation, we are applying what we learned to improve our processes, which ultimately makes us more effective.