

The Apostles Office

Article I – Definition of the Office

The term *apostle* derives from the Greek word *apostolos*, meaning “one who is sent.” Apostles are called by the Lord and given as a gift to the Church to advance the Gospel, make disciples, and plant and strengthen churches (1 Cor. 12:28–31; Acts 14:21–24; Acts 15:39–41; Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 3:9–10). They function as master builders (1 Cor. 3:10), laying foundations in Christ and raising up elders and deacons. Apostles serve as spiritual fathers and mothers, reproducing themselves in new apostles such as Timothy and Titus, and ensuring that the Body of Christ is equipped for every good work.

Apostles also function as traveling ministers, raising support for churches, overseeing the congregations they planted, and visiting them to strengthen and encourage the believers (Acts 15:36; 1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 11:8–9). Through their ministry, apostles provide oversight, guidance, and care, ensuring that local churches remain rooted in sound doctrine and fruitful in the mission of Christ.

Article II – Qualifications of the Office

1. Biblical Qualifications

- Produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
- Demonstrate obedience to the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2).
- Prioritize the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4).
- Protect the Gospel (Acts 15:1–2; Gal. 2:14–16).
- Serve as spiritual fathers and mothers (1 Thess. 2:11).
- Willingly endure suffering for Christ (1 Cor. 4:9–13).

2. Lifestyle & Disposition

- Manage their household well if married, keeping their family in order with dignity (1 Tim. 3:4–5).
- Able to serve in teams and value plurality (Acts 13:14; Acts 16:25).
- May serve bi-vocationally (Acts 18:3; 2 Thess. 3:7–12).
- Passionate for unity (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3).

3. Skills & Competencies

- Provide sound biblical teaching (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:20).
- Preach the Gospel with boldness and clarity (Acts 14:7; Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:16).
- Pray for and minister in signs and wonders by the Spirit (Acts 2:43; Acts 5:12).
- Equip and mobilize believers for ministry (Eph. 4:12).
- Make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20).
- Raise up elders and deacons (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Acts 6:3).
- Plant and establish churches (1 Cor. 3:5–7).
- Develop apprentices and successors (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:1–2).
- Bring order and unity within the Church (1 Cor. 14:26–33).

Article III – Responsibilities of the Office

Apostolic leaders bear responsibility to:

- Operate, where possible, in teams of at least two appointed apostles, or recruit apostolic apprentices to ensure plurality.
- Advance the Gospel through church planting, disciple-making, and evangelism.
- Defend sound doctrine and safeguard the purity of the Gospel.
- Foster unity across the Body of Christ.
- Plant local churches where there is need.
- Strengthen existing local churches.
- Provide oversight to the churches and ministries they have planted or formally recognized. If the mission or direction of a team shifts, overseeing responsibilities should be fairly divided to ensure continuity of care and accountability. Apostolic oversight includes visiting, encouraging, and caring for the welfare of the churches and leaders entrusted to their charge.
- Recruit and apprentice future apostles.
- Provide apprenticeship for all leadership offices and appoint leaders to office.
- Collect funds to support churches in need.

Article IV – Apprenticeship of the Office

- **Calling** – An appointed apostolic leader shall discern individuals sensing a call to the apostolic office. Candidates must have a good reputation, confirmed by family and local church references.
- **Agreement** – Candidates must read and understand the *Gardens in Exile Charter* and *Leadership Office Bylaws* before signing an apprenticeship agreement under an appointed apostolic leader.
- **Apprenticeship** – Apprentices shall be trained through teaching, lifestyle shadowing, and practical ministry experience by co-laboring. The goal is to prepare them to meet the qualifications of an apostle, as outlined in the Apprenticeship Guidelines.

Article V – Appointment of the Office

1. Apprenticeship Route

- Apostles may appoint leaders to all leadership offices.
- The mentoring apostle ensures the apprentice has completed their apprenticeship.
- The mentoring apostle ensures the apprentice has read, understands, and agrees to the Charter and Leadership Bylaws.
- The mentoring apostle confirms a strong theological foundation and administers an oral or written examination in line with the theological outcomes set by the Apostolic Council.
- The mentoring apostle submits the report form provided by the Apostolic Council for testimony and record.
- The mentoring apostle appoints the apprentice into the office of apostle through prayer and the laying on of hands.

2. Recognition Route (Existing Apostles)

- The recognizing apostle requests character references from family and church leaders regarding the candidate's suitability.
- The recognizing apostle requests ministry references regarding the candidate's experience and grace for the office, and discerns whether they meet the qualifications or should first enter an apprenticeship.
- The candidate must read, understand, and agree to the Charter and Leadership Bylaws.
- The recognizing apostle confirms a strong theological foundation and administers an oral or written theological examination based on outcomes set by the Apostolic Council.
- If approved, the recognizing apostle submits a report to the Apostolic Council for testimony and record.
- The recognizing apostle publicly appoints the candidate through prayer and the laying on of hands.

Article VI – Finance for the Office

1. Sources of Support

Appointed apostles may receive financial support from:

- Individual supporters who partner in their ministry.
- Local churches they have planted, served, or are currently serving.

Apostles shall not charge fees or sell ministry services. Their ministry must remain fully donation-based, freely offered as an act of stewardship and obedience to Christ (Matt. 10:8). Support must come through voluntary gifts and donations, not through commercialization of the Gospel.

2. Annual Reporting & Accountability

Apostles who raise financial support must provide an annual report to their supporters and contributing churches. Reports must include:

- **Donors** – individuals or churches who have given financial support within that year (one-time or ongoing).
- **Living Salary** – modest personal support.
- **Ministry Expenses** – travel, training, discipleship, materials, gatherings, etc.
- **Retirement Savings** – 10% of raised funds, in addition to salary, set aside for retirement.
- **Administrative Costs** – banking fees, online giving platform fees, etc.

Failure to report honestly or misrepresentation of funds will result in discipline and restoration under apostolic oversight.

3. Bi-Vocational Expectation

Apostles must remain willing to be bi-vocational, following the biblical model of Paul, who labored with his own hands when necessary (Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 2:9). Apostolic ministry shall not be dependent solely on external fundraising but rooted in stewardship, prayer, and faithfulness to God's provision.

4. Tax Obligations

Apostles must honor the civil laws of the nations where they minister by paying taxes as required (Rom. 13:6–7; Matt. 22:21). They must not conceal or misrepresent income but act with honesty and integrity before God and man.

Article VII – Legal Matters for Apostles

Each apostle may operate as self-employed in compliance with civil law.

Article VIII – Restoration & Removal of Apostles

1. Accountability

Every apostle shall be accountable to other apostolic leaders in *Gardens in Exile*. Apostolic leaders must walk in mutual submission, correction, and encouragement, upholding holiness and integrity in their office.

2. Restoration

Apostles may be corrected for misconduct, sexual immorality, financial dishonesty, abuse of authority, false teaching, or any action contrary to the Word of God and the *Gardens in Exile Charter and Bylaws*. Correction shall be redemptive in nature, seeking repentance, healing, and restoration rather than condemnation (Gal. 6:1; Heb. 12:11).

Process:

- First, apostolic leaders correct one another in love privately.
- If unrepentant, the matter should be addressed with another apostle.
- If still unresolved, the matter shall be brought before the Apostolic Council.

The goal is always reconciliation, spiritual health, and the honor of Christ's name.

Restoration may include repentance, accountability, mentoring, or suspension from ministry.

3. Removal from Office

- No apostle may be removed solely by another apostle.
- If removal is deemed necessary, the matter must be brought before the Apostolic Council, which holds final authority to remove apostles.
- Removal must be carried out prayerfully, based on evidence and spiritual discernment, and never on personal grievance or ambition.
- The churches and ministries overseen by the removed apostle shall be informed and reassigned to another apostolic leader.

Article IX – Amendments

- Amendments to these Bylaws may only be made by the Apostolic Council.