Asking the church to study, as it has before

A request for a representative study committee on pastoral guidance concerning human sexuality. It changes nothing in the Manual and presumes no outcome.

> **The ask.** A resolution asking the Board of General Superintendents to convene a representative study committee (scholars, theologians, pastors and district leaders, lay and clergy, from every world region) to study pastoral care, the guidance given to district boards, and the scriptural foundations of ¶31. The committee would report to the next General Assembly.

Why it matters to districts

District Advisory Boards, District Ministerial Credentials Boards, superintendents and pastors are already meeting these questions in real cases, often with little shared guidance. A 2015 doctoral study of Nazarene pastors found the question "touched the lives of all the participants," and that participants "felt unprepared to answer these questions." One of the study's three areas is the guidance given to district boards.

The church has done this before

1964–1972. Two commissions, authorized by successive General Assemblies, studied divorce and church membership for eight years. The 1972 Assembly adopted their report, opening membership to divorced and remarried people "at such a time as they have given evidence of their regeneration."

1989–1993. When district boards needed guidance on divorced candidates for ordination, the General Board formed a committee. It asked Dr. Alex Deasley of Nazarene Theological Seminary for a biblical and theological paper, reported unanimously, and the 1993 Assembly adopted its recommendations.

In both cases the church neither drifted nor forced a floor fight. It asked its scholars and pastors to study and report, and then it decided.

What it is not

- Not a change to ¶31 or to any text of the *Manual*.
- Not a request to endorse any view.
- Not a presumed outcome. The study would "neither presume nor preclude any recommendation."

¶31 itself says living out its call "is complex and must be navigated with care, humility, courage, and discernment." A delegate who holds the church's present teaching can support study, as many who held its teaching on divorce did in 1968 and 1989.

How it would move

WHO SUBMITS	A district assembly or district resolutions committee, or any five or more members of the 2027 General Assembly (Standing Rule 16)
DEADLINE	To the General Secretary by 1 December 2026
VOTE	A majority. It is a study request, not a Manual amendment
COST	About $35,000 for the quadrennium, modeled on the study committee the 2023 Assembly approved (JUD-814)
MOST USEFUL	Sponsors from more than one world region, including sponsors who hold the church's present teaching

Sources: *Herald of Holiness*, July 19, 1972, 16–18; Report of the Divorce and the Ministry Study Committee to the 23rd General Assembly (1993), 200–206; *Journal of the Thirtieth General Assembly* (2023), 14–15, 207; *Manual* 2023, ¶¶31, 912; R. G. Watson, Regent University PhD dissertation (2015), 310, 313. The 1991 committee paper, the 1993 report and a short documentary are at **asithasbefore.com**. The draft resolution follows on the next pages.

WORKING DRAFT FOR PROSPECTIVE SPONSORS · NOT YET SUBMITTED

Draft resolution to the 31st General Assembly (2027)

Study Committee on Pastoral Guidance Concerning Human Sexuality. The General Secretary assigns the resolution number. Submit by 1 December 2026 (General Assembly Standing Rule 16e, Manual ¶912).

[Number]—Study Committee on Pastoral Guidance Concerning Human Sexuality

Presented by: [District Assembly or District Resolutions Committee], or [names of five or more members of the General Assembly] (Standing Rule 16).

Type: Non-*Manual* item. It proposes no change to the text of the *Manual*.

Entity responsible for carrying it out: The Board of General Superintendents (Standing Rule 16f).

RESOLVED, that the Board of General Superintendents convene a committee, representing the diversity of the denomination by region, lay and clergy, and including biblical scholars, theologians, pastors and district leaders, to study:

1. the pastoral care of members, families and congregations affected by same-sex attraction;
2. the guidance given to District Advisory Boards and District Ministerial Credentials Boards in such cases; and
3. the scriptural and theological foundations of paragraph 31 of the Covenant of Christian Conduct, including the method the church has used in comparable questions of marriage and membership;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee hear from pastors, district superintendents, and members and families directly affected;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee's study neither presume nor preclude any recommendation, and that nothing in this resolution alters the *Manual* or the Covenant of Christian Conduct while the study is under way;

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee report its findings, with any recommendations or resolutions, to the Board of General Superintendents, who shall report to the next General Assembly.

COST ESTIMATE (REQUIRED BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY STANDING RULE 16C; MANUAL ¶912)

Total cost: about 35,000 USD, using the same per-person figures as JUD-814 (2023). Per-person cost of one three-day physical meeting:

Airfare	$800
Lodging (5 nights × $125)	$625
Meals and support (3 days × $100)	$300
Contingency	$50
Total per person	**$1,775**

With ten members, a physical meeting costs about $17,750. Two physical meetings during the quadrennium, with all other meetings by video conference, would cost about $35,500.

RATIONALE

The church has twice studied a question of marriage and membership before changing its practice.

1964–1972. Two commissions authorized by successive General Assemblies studied divorce and church membership for eight years. The 1972 Assembly adopted their report (*Herald of Holiness*, July 19, 1972, 16–18; *Journal of the Thirtieth General Assembly*, 2023, 15).

1989–1993. In February 1989 the General Board formed a committee "to give guidance to district boards in their work with candidates for ordination." The committee commissioned a biblical and theological paper from one of the church's New Testament scholars and reported unanimously. The 1993 Assembly adopted its report (Report of the Divorce and the Ministry Study Committee, 1993, 200–206).

In both cases the church did not change its practice by drift or by floor debate alone. It asked its scholars and pastors to study the question and report.

Paragraph 31 itself recognizes the weight of the present question. It acknowledges that "the implication of this call to sexual purity is costly," and that "the faithful outworking of these statements as congregations is complex and must be navigated with care, humility, courage, and discernment." A study committee is the church's established way of giving districts and pastors that kind of careful guidance. The study would be conducted under the Board's authority and would report to the Assembly. Adopting it commits the church to study, not to any outcome.

Working draft prepared with research assistance; not yet reviewed by a specialist · asithasbefore.com