

Constitution
of the
Covenant
Reformed
Presbyterian
Church

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Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church

Preface

We believe that our doctrine, polity, and worship are strictly regulated by Scripture. Only circumstantial matters are to be determined by the light of nature and the general rules of the Word of God. Accordingly, we profess that the principles set out in this Constitution regarding Church Polity and Public Worship, being found in God's Word, are binding on us in the same way as are the historic confessions of faith, catechisms, and creeds of the church as listed below.

I. Doctrine of the Church

A. Confessions and Creeds

1. Westminster Confessional Standards

- a. Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)**
- b. Westminster Larger Catechism**
- c. Westminster Shorter Catechism**

2. Three Forms of Unity

- a. Belgic Confession of Faith**
- b. Heidelberg Catechism**
- c. Canons of Dort**

3. Creeds

- a. Apostle's Creed**
- b. Nicene Creed**
- c. Athanasian Creed**

B. Exceptions and Clarifications

1. Exceptions

- a. one may hold and teach within our denomination that the pope is not *that Antichrist*, as the Westminster Confession asserts, though such a person and/or church or ministry must hold to the fact that the pope is *an* antichrist, and prelacy and Roman Catholicism are antichristian;
- b. variations of interpretations of confessional Sabbatarian practices are allowed as long as the principle of the first-day Sabbath is acknowledged.

2. Clarifications

a. Creation

Any position which denies a creation in six literal, contiguous calendar days, is out of accord with the Bible and the confessions; examples of such un-Biblical and anti-Confessional positions include: theistic evolutionary theory; uniformitarian geology (positing many millions of years for the earth and the universe); Framework Hypothesis or Analogical Day View (that is, any poetic or linguistical construct of Genesis which hermeneutically denies or refuses to affirm six literal, contiguous, calendar days); any position which denies the world wide scope of the Noahic Flood (which destroyed the entire earth in water and all mankind save Noah and his family and destroyed all the clean and unclean animal life on earth except that which Noah took aboard the ark or which naturally swam in the oceans);

b. Violations of the Ten Commandments

the following are considered to be violations of the ten commandments: bisexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism; abortion and infanticide; euthanasia; advocacy in the churches of a socialistic world view, and its consequent, redistributive (envy) mentality;

c. Statement on the love of God

We confess that God is love,¹ and that this describes His essential and unchanging nature, which is first of all and underlying all, a love for Himself.²

We confess that God's creation was declared by Him to be "very good"³ and that His essential goodness extends without change or alteration to all that He has created.⁴

Further, we confess that in Adam's fall all of his subsequent posterity sinned in and through him, and so all are liable to the just and righteous punishment due to his and their own sins.⁵ God might righteously have inflicted that punishment to His own greater glory⁶ in the vindication of His attributes of holiness⁷, righteousness⁸, and justice⁹ without any diminishing of His essential property of love.

We confess that God has been pleased to demonstrate His love nature by the sending and sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, to bear the just punishment of

¹ 1 John 4:8, 16.

² John 3:35; 7:26.

³ Gen. 1:31.

⁴ Ex. 34:6; Gen. 1:31.

⁵ Rom. 3:23; 5:12, 19.

⁶ Rom. 9:17-22.

⁷ Isa. 6:3 cp. 40:25; Rev. 4:8.

⁸ Psa. 145:17; Jer. 12:1.

⁹ Deut. 32:4.

His elect.¹⁰ This in no way diminishes His holiness, righteousness, or justice demonstrated in the deserved punishment of the sins of the reprobate.¹¹

Therefore we acknowledge and confess that the love of God which is demonstrated in the sending and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is unmerited,¹² discriminating,¹³ purposeful,¹⁴ covenantal,¹⁵ effectual,¹⁶ and exclusive to His elect people,¹⁷ and that no power in heaven or earth can separate them from it.¹⁸ As this is so, we confess that God regards all those outside the redemption and righteousness of the Son with His just hatred,¹⁹ and that His divine prerogative in love toward His elect and hatred toward the reprobate²⁰ is expressed to the end that He alone will be glorified in the fulfillment of His purpose by Jesus Christ.²¹

We also confess that, although God knows all of His elect individually from eternity,²² it has pleased Him to call them individually in time,²³ primarily by the means of the preached gospel.²⁴ Since men are not privy to His unrevealed will and decree of election,²⁵ it is His will that the gospel be preached to all men without distinction,²⁶ that the elect may be convicted of sin and converted,²⁷ and the reprobate hardened and rendered without excuse on the coming day of judgment.²⁸

d. Canon of Scripture.

The Canon of Scripture has been providentially preserved in the original languages via the Byzantine Majority Family of Greek texts (especially the Textus Receptus), and the Massoretic text of the Old Testament Hebrew. Such was the position of the Westminster Assembly. We therefore reject texts that omit passages from the canonical books of the Bible in the same way that we would reject the omission from or addition to the canonical books as asserted by the Roman Catholic Church's

¹⁰ Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:19; Rom. 2:5-9 esp. 7,10.

¹¹ Rom. 9:17-22; 2 Tim. 2:19-20; Jude 4; 1 Pet. 2:8; Rom. 2:5-9 esp. 8-9.

¹² Deut. 7:7,8; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Jn. 4:10.

¹³ Rom. 9:11,12,15,18,21,23-24; Eph. 5:25,26; 1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 13:11-16; WCF 3:3, 5-7. Since God is no respecter of persons, we reject racial discrimination in the church in all its forms.

¹⁴ John 3:16; Matt.18:11; 1 John 4:14; WCF 3:3,5-7.

¹⁵ 5. Deut. 7:8,9; Jer.31:33,34; Mk. 14:24; Gal. 3:15-29; Eph.5:25-32; Heb.9:11-22.

¹⁶ 1 John 3:1-3; Rom.8:29-30; WCF 10.

¹⁷ Deut. 7:7,8; Rom. 8:31-34; Eph. 5:25; Ps.1:6; WCF 3:5.

¹⁸ Rom. 8:31-39.

¹⁹ Ps. 5:5,6; Ps.11:5-7; John 3:36; Rom.9:11-22 ,esp. 13, 17-18, 21-22.

²⁰ Deut. 2:30; Prov.16:4; Rom. 9:11-13, 15, 18-23; 11:29; 1 Pet.2:7-8; 2 Pet.2:12; Jude 4.

²¹ Eph.1:6; Rom.9:22-24; Rom.11:28-36; WCF 3:5-7.

²² 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4.

²³ Col. 1:21; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 8:30.

²⁴ 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:14-15.

²⁵ Deut. 29:29.

²⁶ Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15.

²⁷ 2 Cor. 2:15-16; John 3:36; Mark 16:16.

²⁸ 2 Cor. 2:15-16; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18-32.

addition of the Apocrypha and other attempts to rethink the canonicity of the historically accepted canon of Scripture.

e. Nature of Scripture

“higher critical” teaching which denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, denies the inerrancy of the Scripture or postulates any position which makes any portion of Scripture the product of evolutionary development or redaction, and/or teaches that any portion of Scripture is “not profitable” for the church to teach, use or expound today, is out of accord with Scripture.

f. Charismatic movement and extra-ordinary spiritual gifts and office

We reject the charismatic movement including the use of extra-ordinary spiritual gifts and offices (which have ceased).

g. Distinctions of governments: family, church and civil

The Scriptures declare that civil magistrates are instituted by God for the good of both mankind and the church. We believe that God’s establishment of the family and the church as legitimate governments are distinct from the civil magistrate. Accordingly, we reject Erastianism.

h. Covenantal theology

We adhere to covenantal theology and reject dispensational theology.

i. Psalms and hymns

Use of biblically-based or biblically consistent hymns, singing from portions of the canon of Scripture other than the Book of Psalms, and modest use of musical accompaniment for the purpose of assisting congregational singing, are considered allowable practices in worship services. However, every church should agree that Psalms have been set forth in God’s word to be sung by His people and therefore, it is most desirable that they should be incorporated into worship in the churches.

j. Guarding the Lord’s Table

All churches must practice, in some manner, a guarding (“fencing”) of the Lord’s Table. Presbytery will not specify beyond this mandate. Thus, various means of guarding the Table are allowed: examination of visitors and members; closing of the communion to visitors; exhortation of the congregation concerning the Table. However, if the Table is closed in a particular CRPC church, the Table, nonetheless, will be opened to visiting members and officer-bearers of other CRPC churches and ministries.

k. Non-established practices

The following practices may vary from local church to local church but are not established by the broader assemblies. (It is understood that any member joining a local church will submit to the position of that church while a member even if they might transfer in from a church within the CRPC that held differently.)

- Specific age of communication at the Lord's Supper with the proviso that all communicants must pass examination by the congregational presbytery (also known as a "Session") for a credible profession of faith before admittance be allowed.
- Various interpretations of confessional Sabbath practices.
- Women teaching children in appropriate settings.
- In situations where the regular ministry of the word is not available, which male leaders may be authorized to lead in prayer, read Scripture, and/or read sermons (or administrate authorized taped sermons).

l. Subscription

All ministers in the CRPC are bound by oath to teach publicly only those things found to be in accord with the Constitution (as interpreted by the exceptions and clarifications herein stated). Those received who hold different views are bound not to teach them publicly or privately, though they may be discussed within the context of a broader assembly as provided by its rules and directories.

m. Vows and oaths

Vows and oaths which give the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22) and which are secret and thus unable to be examined are considered to be "superstitious and sinful snares" (WCF 22:7) and therefore are to be avoided.

n. Conflict (real or apparent) amongst confessional statements

Where perceived or real conflicts exist between the Westminster Confessional Standards (including the Larger and Shorter Catechism) and the other Creeds listed above, the Westminster Confessional Standards shall prevail.

o. Differences on allowed diversity may not rise to the level of sin ²⁹

In all of the practices within the CRPC where different positions are allowed (e.g. headcoverings or non-use thereof, various Sabbath practices,

²⁹ This is a proposed addition to the constitution from 06-2007 American Presbytery, See Minutes XIV, 4, B for action and grounds. It was ratified by the 11-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes XIV A for that action.

exclusive psalmody and non-exclusive psalmody, etc.), or which are set forth as non-established practices (“k” above), it must be agreed by all officer-bearers that such differences of conscience on these teachings will exist whereby an office-bearer may believe it sinful for himself to practice something that is set forth in these areas mentioned above. However, every office-bearer, in agreeing with the form of government of this church in his oath of office is also agreeing with the following statement with regard to any of his beliefs and practices with respect to other beliefs and practices that are either allowed or not established within the CRPC: *(Note: Allowed diversities set forth in the Exceptions and Clarifications section of this Constitution shall hereafter be referred to as “allowed diversity”).*)

Acknowledging that “all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all,” I confess and solemnly promise as follows:

There are positions that I hold which are listed among those set forth in this Constitution for allowed diversity within the CRPC, that are, to the best of my present understanding the teaching of Scripture.

Confessing these to be convictions I hold in my own conscience, I grant the legitimate possibility that other believers, according to their sincere conscience and good faith, may hold contrary positions.

Yet, I will not and do not judge the aforementioned believers to be in sin, whether the sin of ignorance, omission, or commission.

I will not seek to imply or infer that my position is less sinful or more pure than those who disagree with me, while always being willing to explain and account for my conviction when called upon to do so.

Finally, I will not seek to teach, advocate or promote any kind of class, caste-type system or higher/lower level of sanctification within or among the churches of the CRPC based on the position(s) I hold within the CRPC’s allowed diversity. Neither will I advocate or promote ecclesiastical unity, separation, divisive or political factions based on these beliefs and practices, but will by God’s grace seek only to advocate for and indeed, to lay down my life, in the interest of “those things necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation.”

In making this statement, it is not to be understood that others do not sin or that other sins may not arise which are worthy of rebuke, as there will always be sin in people with whom we are in fellowship which need rebuke. This pertains solely to allowed diversity within the CRPC as mentioned above.

Should any office-bearer become unable to maintain his assent, the procedures set forth in the DCO chapter on Exceptions/Scruples for Officer-bearers and Members (presently DCO 31) shall apply.

p. Clarification of the use of the words *Hades* vs. *hell* in WCF 32:1³⁰

The word *hell* in the original King James Version English is literally *Hades* in the Greek (see Luke 16:23, Acts 2:27) and *sheol* in Hebrew (see among others Psalm 9:17; 16:10; 49:15; 86:13) which speaks of the immediate state of a soul after death prior to the reunion with its body at the resurrection either unto eternal life or eternal death. In WCF 32:1, the word *hell* must be understood as referring to *Hades* so as not to confuse the intermediate state spoken of in WCF 32:1 with the final state spoken of in WCF 32:2-3.

II. Church Polity

A. The Head of the church

Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth, even for ever; having all power given unto him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all: he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church, and gave officer-bearers necessary for the edification of his church, and perfecting of his saints.³¹

B. The Church

There is one general church visible, held forth in the New Testament.³²

The ministry, oracles, and ordinances of the New Testament, are given by Jesus Christ to the general church visible, for the gathering and perfecting of it in this life, until His second coming.³³

Particular visible churches, members of the general church, are also held forth in the New Testament.³⁴ Particular churches in the primitive times were made up of visible

³⁰ This is a proposed addition to the constitution from 11-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes of this meeting (XIV B) for action. It was ratified by 07-2008 American Presbytery. See Minutes XIII A for action.

³¹ Isaiah 9:6, 7; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23; cp. Ephesians 4:8-11 and Psalm 68:18.

³² 1 Corinthians 12.

³³ 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:4, 5, 10-16.

saints, viz. of such as, being of age, professed faith in Christ, and obedience unto Christ, according to the rules of faith and life taught by Christ and His apostles³⁵; and of their children.³⁶

C. The Officer-bearers of the Church

The officer-bearers which Christ has appointed for the edification of his church, and the perfecting of the saints, are, some extraordinary, as apostles, evangelists, and prophets, which are ceased³⁷; others ordinary and perpetual, as pastors, teachers, and other church-governors, and deacons.³⁸ Only men may be ordained to ecclesiastical office.³⁹

1. Ministers of the Word (commonly called Teaching Elders or Pastors)

The minister of the word is an ordinary and perpetual officer-bearer in the church,⁴⁰ prophesying of the time of the gospel.⁴¹ It belongs to his office:

- a. to pray for and with his flock, as the mouth of the people unto God⁴²;
- b. to pray for the sick, even in private, to which a blessing is especially promised; much more therefore ought he to perform this in the public execution of his office, as a part thereof⁴³;
- c. to read the Scriptures publicly⁴⁴;
- d. to feed the flock, by preaching of the word, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, and comfort⁴⁵;
- e. to catechize, which is a plain laying down the first principles of the oracles of God, or of the doctrine of Christ⁴⁶;
- f. to dispense other divine mysteries⁴⁷;
- g. to administer the sacraments⁴⁸;
- h. to bless the people from God⁴⁹;
- i. to take care of the poor⁵⁰;
- j. to exercise a ruling power over the flock as a pastor.⁵¹

³⁴ Galatians 1:21, 22; Revelation 1:4, 20; 2:1.

³⁵ Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:14; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 9:13.

³⁶ Matthew 19:13, 14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:15, 16; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 7:14.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:28; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:11.

³⁸ Exodus 19:7, 8; Joshua 24:1; Ruth 4:2; Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9.

³⁹ Isaiah 3:12; Acts 1:16; 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1, 2, 11.

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 3:15-17.

⁴¹ Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Peter 5:2-4.

⁴² Acts 6:2-4; 20:36.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 14:15, 16; James 5:14, 15.

⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 31:9-11; Nehemiah 8:1-3, 13; Acts 6:2; 1 Timothy 4:13.

⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Titus 1:9.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 28:10, 13; Hebrews 5:12.

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

⁴⁸ Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-25.

⁴⁹ Numbers 6:23-26; Revelation 1:4, 5.

⁵⁰ Acts 4:34-37; 11:30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Galatians 2:9, 10.

⁵¹ Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17.

2. Church Governors (commonly called Ruling Elders)

As there were in the Jewish church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the church⁵²; so Christ, who has instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, has furnished some in his church, beside the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the minister in the government of the church.⁵³ These officer-bearers are commonly called Elders.

3. Deacons

The Scripture does hold out deacons as distinct officer-bearers in the church, whose office is perpetual.⁵⁴ To this office it belongs not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments, but to take special care in distributing to the necessities of the poor.⁵⁵

D. Particular Congregations

It is lawful and expedient that there be fixed congregations, that is, a certain company of Christians to meet in one assembly ordinarily for public worship. When believers multiply to such a number, that they cannot conveniently meet in one place, it is lawful and expedient that they should be divided into distinct and fixed congregations, for the better administration of such ordinances as belong unto them, and the discharge of mutual duties.⁵⁶

The ordinary way of dividing Christians into distinct congregations, and most expedient for edification, is by the respective bounds of their dwellings.⁵⁷ In this company some must be set apart to bear office.⁵⁸

E. The Officer-bearers of a Particular Congregation

For officer-bearers in a single congregation, there ought to be one at the least, both to labor in the word and doctrine, and to rule.⁵⁹ It is also requisite that there should be others to join in government.⁶⁰ Furthermore, it is useful, advisable, and in accordance with Scriptural teaching that there be others to take special care for the relief of the poor.⁶¹ The number of each of which is to be proportioned according to the condition

⁵² 2 Chronicles 19:8-10.

⁵³ Romans 12:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

⁵⁴ Acts 6:1-4; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8.

⁵⁵ Acts 6:1-4.

⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:26, 33, 40.

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 15:7, 11; Matthew 22:39.

⁵⁸ James 3:1.

⁵⁹ 1 Timothy 5:17.

⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:28.

⁶¹ Acts 6:1-3.

of the congregation.⁶² These officer-bearers are to meet together at convenient and set times, for the well ordering of the affairs of that congregation, each according to his office.⁶³

F. Church-Government, and the several sorts of Assemblies for the same

Christ has instituted a government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church: to that purpose, the apostles did immediately receive the keys from the hand of Jesus Christ, and did use and exercise them in all the churches of the world upon all occasions.⁶⁴

And Christ has since continually furnished some in his church with gifts of government, and with commission to execute the same, when called thereunto.⁶⁵

It is lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, that the church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are congregational, classical, and synodical.⁶⁶

1. The Power in Common of all these Assemblies

It is lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, that the several assemblies before mentioned have power to convene, and call before them, any person within their several bounds, whom the ecclesiastical business which is before them does concern. They have power to hear and determine such causes and differences as do orderly come before them. It is lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, that all the said assemblies have some power to dispense church-censures.⁶⁷

2. Congregational Assemblies, that is, the Meeting of the ruling Officer-bearers of a particular Congregation, for the Government thereof

The ruling officer-bearers of a particular congregation have power, authoritatively, to call before them any member of the congregation, as they shall see just occasion⁶⁸; to enquire into the knowledge and spiritual estate of the several members of the congregation⁶⁹; and to admonish and rebuke.⁷⁰

The ruling officer-bearers of a particular congregation have power authoritatively to suspend from the Lord's table a person not yet cast out of the church, because those

⁶² Acts 6:3; 14:23; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Titus 1:5.

⁶³ John 3:19; Ephesians 5:8-13; 1 John 1:7.

⁶⁴ Matthew 16:17-19; 18:15-20; John 20:22, 23.

⁶⁵ Ephesians 4:11.

⁶⁶ See proof texts, below, in Sections 2, 3, and 4.

⁶⁷ Deuteronomy 13:12-18; Matthew 18:15-20.

⁶⁸ Ezra 10:7, 8.

⁶⁹ Ezekiel 34:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Hebrews 13:17.

⁷⁰ 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15; 1 Timothy 4:13; 5:20; Titus 1:10-13.

who have authority to judge of, and admit, such as are fit to receive the sacrament, have authority to keep back such as shall be found unworthy⁷¹:

First, Because the ordinance itself must not be profaned.⁷²

Secondly, Because we are charged to withdraw from those that walk disorderly.⁷³

Thirdly, Because of the great sin and danger, both to him that comes unworthily, and also to the whole church.⁷⁴ And there was power and authority, under the Old Testament, to keep unclean persons from holy things.⁷⁵

The like power and authority, by way of analogy, continues under the New Testament.

When congregations are divided and fixed, they need all mutual help one from another, both in regard of their intrinsic weaknesses and mutual dependence, as also in regard of enemies from without.⁷⁶

3. Classical Assemblies

A presbytery consists of ministers of the word, and such other public officer-bearers as are agreeable to and warranted by the word of God to be church-governors, to join with the ministers in the government of the church.⁷⁷

The Scripture does hold forth, that many particular congregations may be united in one presbyterial government. The matter is proven, by considering the church of Jerusalem.

a. The church of Jerusalem consisted of more congregations than one:

- (1) a multitude of believers is mentioned, both before the dispersion of the believers, and also after the persecution which caused the dispersion,⁷⁸ which fact mandates that there be more than one congregation;
- (2) the fact that there were many apostles and preachers in the church of Jerusalem would mean that each apostle would preach but seldom, if there were but one congregation; but that would not consist with the fact that the apostles had given themselves to the Word of God;⁷⁹

⁷¹ Matthew 18:15-20.

⁷² 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

⁷³ 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:5-13; 11:27-32.

⁷⁵ Numbers 15:31; 2 Chronicles 26:19-21.

⁷⁶ Numbers 32:20-32; 1 Corinthians 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Ephesians 3:15; 4:4, 5.

⁷⁷ Romans 12:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

⁷⁸ Acts 2:41, 46, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1, 7; 8:1.

⁷⁹ Acts 1:26; 6:2.

- (3) the diversity of languages among the believers argues for more than one congregation.⁸⁰
- b. All those congregations were under one presbyterial government:
 - (1) they were one church⁸¹;
 - (2) the elders of the church are mentioned⁸²;
 - (3) the apostles did the ordinary acts of presbyters, which proves a presbyterial church before the dispersion⁸³
 - (4) the several congregations of Jerusalem being one church, the elders of that church are mentioned as meeting together for acts of government, which proves that those several congregations were under one presbyterial government.⁸⁴

4. Synodical Assemblies

The Scripture does hold out another sort of assemblies for the government of the church, beside classical and congregational, all which we call *Synodical*.⁸⁵

Ministers of the word, and other church-governors, are members of those assemblies which we call *Synodical*, where they have a lawful calling thereunto.⁸⁶

Synodical assemblies may lawfully be of several sorts, as provincial, national, and ecumenical. It is lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, that there be a subordination of congregational, classical, provincial, and national assemblies, for the government of the church.⁸⁷

G. Ordination of Ministers

1. Touching the Doctrine of Ordination

No man ought to take upon him the office of a minister of the word without a lawful calling.⁸⁸

Ordination is always to be continued in the church.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Acts 2:7-11; 6:1.

⁸¹ Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:1; 12:5; 15:4.

⁸² Acts 11:30; 15:4, 6, 22; 21:17, 18.

⁸³ Acts 6:1ff.

⁸⁴ Acts 11:30; 15:4, 6, 22; 21:17, 18.

⁸⁵ Acts 15.

⁸⁶ Acts 15:2, 6, 22, 23. Members of said assemblies need not be construed so as to preclude, override or eliminate the possibility of membership in local churches.

⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 17:8-13; Isaiah 19:23-25. Such subordination is to be construed as being on the basis of a wider or broader consensus on the will of God in areas in determinative or advisory issues.

⁸⁸ Jeremiah 14:4; Romans 10:14, 15; Hebrews 5:4ff.

Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public church office. Every minister of the word is to be ordained by imposition of hands, and prayer, by those presbyters to whom it does belong.⁹⁰

It is agreeable to the word of God, and very expedient, that such as are to be ordained ministers, be designed to some particular church, or other ministerial charge.⁹¹

He that is to be ordained minister, must be duly qualified, both for life and ministerial abilities, according to the rules of the apostle.⁹²

He is to be examined and approved by those by whom he is to be ordained.⁹³

No man is to be ordained a minister for a particular congregation, if they of that congregation can show just cause of exception against him.⁹⁴

2. Touching the Power of Ordination

Ordination is the act of a presbytery. The power of ordering the whole work of ordination is in the whole presbytery, which, when it is over more congregations than one, whether these congregations be fixed or not fixed, in regard of officer-bearers or members, it is indifferent as to the point of ordination.⁹⁵

It is very requisite, that no single congregation, that can conveniently associate, do assume to itself all and sole power in ordination.⁹⁶

III. Public Worship

A. Of the Assembling of the Congregation, and their Behavior in the Public Worship of God

When the congregation is to meet for public worship, the people (having before prepared their hearts thereunto) ought all to come and join therein; not absenting

⁸⁹ Ephesians 4:11ff; Titus 1:5.

⁹⁰ Numbers 8:10; 1 Timothy 4:14.

⁹¹ Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5. Any ministerial charge other than that from a local church, must be a charge approved of and overseen in some agreeable fashion so that the work of the ministry is that of the church, rather than that of some non-church entity.

⁹² 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.

⁹³ 1 Timothy 3:7, 10; 5:22. In the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, it is understood that such ordination is solely for ministry overseen by a local church.

⁹⁴ 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7.

⁹⁵ 1 Timothy 4:14.

⁹⁶ 1 Timothy 4:14.

themselves from the public ordinance through negligence, or upon pretence of private meetings.⁹⁷

Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner, taking their seats or places without adoration, or bowing themselves towards one place or other.⁹⁸ Additionally,

The congregation being assembled, the minister, after solemn calling on them to the worshipping of the great name of God, is to begin with prayer,⁹⁹ in which the following should be covered:

In all reverence and humility acknowledging the incomprehensible greatness and majesty of the Lord (in whose presence they do then in a special manner appear), and their own vileness and unworthiness to approach so near Him, with their utter inability of themselves to so great a work;¹⁰⁰ and humbly beseeching him for pardon, assistance, and acceptance, in the whole service then to be performed;¹⁰¹ and for a blessing on that particular portion of His word then to be read:¹⁰² And all in the name and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰³

The public worship being begun, the people are wholly to attend upon it, forbearing to read any thing, except what the minister is then reading or citing; and abstaining much more from all private whisperings, conferences, salutations, or doing reverence to any person present, or coming in; as also from all gazing, sleeping, and other indecent behavior, which may disturb the minister or people, or hinder themselves or others in the service of God.¹⁰⁴

If any, through necessity, be hindered from being present at the beginning, they ought not, when they come into the congregation, to betake themselves to their private devotions, but reverently to compose themselves to join with the assembly in that ordinance of God which is then in hand.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ Hebrews 10:25.

⁹⁸ James 2:1-9. With respect to “grave and seemly manner”, it should be noted that when the church gathers together, this is a weekly reunion of the family of God and is a joyful occasion—Acts 2:46. However, at the appropriate time prior to worship, all personal greetings and talking should cease in preparation for corporate worship.

⁹⁹ Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:20. The principle that prayer should begin our public worship, follows from the fact that our worship, which must be done only through a mediator, is performed in the name of Jesus, our High Priest.

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 6:1-8; Habakkuk 1:13;

¹⁰¹ 1 Kings 8:22-66;

¹⁰² Nehemiah 8:5-8

¹⁰³ John 14:13-14; 15:16; Hebrews 2:11-18; 5:7; 1 John 2:1

¹⁰⁴ Nehemiah 8:1-5; Luke 4:20; Acts 20:7-12; Hebrews 4:11-12

¹⁰⁵ The principles of reverence which should characterize public worship are found throughout Scripture; the third commandment, in particular, instructs us to treat the Word of God with reverence and respect. Deuteronomy 12:5-8; Psalm 87:2; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20; Chapter 14 (esp. vs. 2-4, 13, 17, 23);

B. The Elements of Public Worship

1. Of Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures

Reading of the word in the congregation, being part of the public worship of God (wherein we acknowledge our dependence upon him, and subjection to him), and one means sanctified by him for the edifying of his people, is to be performed by a minister of the word.¹⁰⁶

Howbeit, such as intend the ministry, may occasionally both read the word, and test their gift in exhorting (i.e. speaking words of edification)¹⁰⁷ in the congregation, if allowed by the presbytery thereunto.¹⁰⁸

All the canonical books of the Old and New Testament (but none of those which are commonly called *Apocrypha*) shall be publicly read in the vulgar tongue, out of the best allowed translation, distinctly, that all may hear and understand.¹⁰⁹

How large a portion shall be read at once, is left to the wisdom of the minister. It is requisite that all the canonical books be read over in order, that the people may be better acquainted with the whole body of the Scriptures.¹¹⁰

When the minister who reads shall judge it necessary to expound any part of what is read, let it not be done until the whole reading be ended; and regard is always to be had unto the time, that neither preaching, nor other ordinances, be straitened, or rendered tedious; which rule is to be observed in all other public performances.¹¹¹

Beside public reading of the Holy Scriptures, every person that can read, is to be exhorted to read the Scriptures privately (and all others that cannot read, if not disabled by age, or otherwise, are likewise to be exhorted to learn to read), and to have a Bible.¹¹²

2. Of Public Prayer¹¹³

The service of public worship is to begin with a prayer, invoking God's presence at and blessing upon the service itself.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Nehemiah 8:1-3; 9:3-5; 1 Timothy 4:14.

¹⁰⁷ *Preaching* replaced by *exhorting* at 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes, 13 B on Constitution.

¹⁰⁸ 2 Timothy 2:2.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 14.

¹¹⁰ Nehemiah 8:2, 3, 5, 8.

¹¹¹ Luke 4:16-21.

¹¹² Psalm 119:97; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

¹¹³ An excellent format for prayer may be found in the *Directory for Publick Worship*, "Of Publick Prayer before the Sermon."

¹¹⁴ Exodus 20:24; Zechariah 2:5; Matthew 28:20; Revelation 21:3.

It is appropriate for there to be a pastoral prayer, in which the minister offers petitions on behalf of the congregation. According to the instruction of our Lord, it is most appropriate to utilize the Lord's Prayer as a pattern for this congregational prayer.¹¹⁵

3. Of the Preaching of the Word

Preaching of the word, being the power of God unto salvation, and one of the greatest and most excellent works belonging to the ministry of the gospel, should be so performed, that the workman need not be ashamed, but may save himself, and those that hear him.¹¹⁶

The minister of Christ is to be in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in such arts and sciences as are handmaids unto divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but most of all in the Holy Scriptures, having his senses and heart exercised in them above the common sort of believers; and by the illumination of God's Spirit, and other gifts of edification, which (together with reading and studying of the word) he ought still to seek by prayer, and an humble heart, resolving to admit and receive any truth not yet attained, whenever God shall make it known unto him. All which he is to make use of, and improve, in his private preparations, before he deliver in public what he hath provided.¹¹⁷

Ordinarily, the subject of his sermon is to be some text of Scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion, or suitable to some special occasion emergent; or he may go on in some chapter, psalm, or book of the Holy Scripture, as he shall see fit.¹¹⁸

If the text be long (as in histories or parables it sometimes must be), let him give a brief sum of it; if short, a paraphrase thereof, if need be: in both, looking diligently to the scope of the text, and pointing at the chief heads and grounds of doctrine which he is to raise from it.¹¹⁹

In analyzing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of matter than of words; and neither to burden the memory of the hearers in the beginning with too many members of division, nor to trouble their minds with obscure terms of art.¹²⁰

In raising doctrines from the text, his care ought to be, *First*, That the matter be the truth of God.¹²¹ *Secondly*, That it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text,

¹¹⁵ Luke 11:1-4; Philippians 4:6.

¹¹⁶ Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 2:4; 15:1-2; Colossians 1:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 4:12.

¹¹⁷ 2 Timothy 2:15.

¹¹⁸ Luke 4:16-21; 24:44; Acts 8:27-35.

¹¹⁹ Habakkuk 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 2 Corinthians 3:12.

¹²⁰ Habakkuk 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 2 Corinthians 3:12.

¹²¹ Deuteronomy 18:20.

that the hearers may discern how God teaches it from thence.¹²² *Thirdly*, That he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended; and make most for the edification of the hearers.¹²³

The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; or, if any thing in it need explication, it is to be opened, and the consequence also from the text cleared. It is best if the parallel places of Scripture, confirming the doctrine, are plain and pertinent, rather than many, and (it need be) somewhat insisted upon, and applied to the purpose in hand.¹²⁴

The arguments or reasons are to be solid, and, as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth into the hearer's heart with spiritual delight.¹²⁵

If any doubt obvious from Scripture, reason, or prejudice of the hearers, seem to arise, it is very requisite to remove it, by reconciling the seeming differences, answering the reasons, and discovering and taking away the causes of prejudice and mistake. Otherwise it is not fit to detain the hearers with propounding or answering vain or wicked cavils, which, as they are endless, so the propounding and answering of them does more hinder than promote edification.¹²⁶

He is not to rest in general doctrine, although never so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use, by application to his hearers: which albeit it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, requiring much prudence, zeal, and meditation, and to the natural and corrupt man will be very unpleasant; yet he is to endeavour to perform it in such a manner, that his auditors may feel the word of God to be quick and powerful, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and that, if any unbeliever or ignorant person be present, he may have the secrets of his heart made manifest, and give glory to God.¹²⁷

In the use of instruction or information in the knowledge of some truth, which is a consequence from his doctrine, he may (when convenient) confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand, and other places of Scripture, or from the nature of that common-place in divinity, whereof that truth is a branch.¹²⁸

In confutation of false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but, if the people be in danger

¹²² Luke 4:21.

¹²³ 1 Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26.

¹²⁴ Habakkuk 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 2 Corinthians 3:12.

¹²⁵ Psalm 119:129-131; Matthew 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52; 20:1; 22:2.

¹²⁶ 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9.

¹²⁷ Hebrews 4:12.

¹²⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

of an error, he is to confute it soundly, and endeavour to satisfy their judgments and consciences against all objections.¹²⁹

In exhorting to duties, he is, as he sees cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them.¹³⁰

In dehortation (dissuasion), reprehension, and public admonition (which require special wisdom), let him, as there shall be cause, not only discover the nature and greatness of the sin, with the misery attending it, but also show the danger his hearers are in to be overtaken and surprised by it, together with the remedies and best way to avoid it.¹³¹

In applying comfort, whether general against all temptations, or particular against some special troubles or terrors, he is carefully to answer such objections as a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary. It is also sometimes requisite to give some notes of trial (which is very profitable, especially when performed by able and experienced ministers, with circumspection and prudence, and the signs clearly grounded on the Holy Scripture), whereby the hearers may be able to examine themselves whether they have attained those graces, and performed those duties, to which he exhorts, or be guilty of the sin reprehended, and in danger of the judgments threatened, or are such to whom the consolations propounded do belong; that accordingly they may be quickened and excited to duty, humbled for their wants and sins, affected with their danger, and strengthened with comfort, as their condition, upon examination, shall require.¹³²

And, as he needs not always to prosecute every doctrine which lies in his text, so is he wisely to make choice of such uses, as, by his residence and conversing with his flock, he finds most needful and seasonable; and, amongst these, such as may most draw their souls to Christ, the fountain of light, holiness, and comfort.¹³³

But the servant of Christ, whatever his method be, is to perform his whole ministry:

- a. Painfully, not doing the work of the Lord negligently.¹³⁴
- b. Plainly, that the meanest may understand; delivering the truth not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; abstaining also from an unprofitable use of unknown tongues, strange phrases, and cadences of sounds and words; sparingly citing sentences of ecclesiastical or other human writers, ancient or modern, be they never so elegant.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Titus 1:13, 14; 3:9.

¹³⁰ John 16:33; 2 Thessalonians 3:16.

¹³¹ Ezekiel 3:17; Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 13:17.

¹³² 2 Timothy 4:2.

¹³³ Matthew 13:52.

¹³⁴ 2 Samuel 24:24.

¹³⁵ Colossians 2:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6.

- c. Faithfully, looking at the honor of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not at his own gain or glory; keeping nothing back which may promote those holy ends, giving to every one his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect unto all, without neglecting the meanest, or sparing the greatest, in their sins.¹³⁶
- d. Wisely, framing all his doctrines, exhortations, and especially his reproofs, in such a manner as may be most likely to prevail; showing all due respect to each man's person and place, and not mixing his own passion or bitterness.¹³⁷
- e. Gravely, as becomes the word of God; shunning all such gesture, voice, and expressions, as may occasion the corruptions of men to despise him and his ministry.¹³⁸
- f. With loving affection, that the people may see all coming from his godly zeal, and hearty desire to do them good.¹³⁹ And,
- g. As taught of God, and persuaded in his own heart, that all that he teaches is the truth of Christ; and walking before his flock, as an example to them in it; earnestly, both in private and public, recommending his labors to the blessing of God, and watchfully looking to himself, and the flock whereof the Lord hath made him overseer: So shall the doctrine of truth be preserved uncorrupt, many souls converted and built up, and himself receive manifold comforts of his labors even in this life, and afterward the crown of glory laid up for him in the world to come.¹⁴⁰

Where there are more ministers in a congregation than one, and they of different gifts, each may more especially apply himself to doctrine or exhortation, according to the gift wherein he most excels, and as they shall agree between themselves.¹⁴¹

4. Of the Administration of Baptism

Baptism, as it is not unnecessarily to be delayed, so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.¹⁴²

Nor is it to be administered in private places, or privately, but as part of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Acts 20:27.

¹³⁷ Acts 20:31.

¹³⁸ 1 Timothy 4:12.

¹³⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 4:12-16.

¹⁴¹ Philippians 2:3, 4.

¹⁴² 1 Corinthians 4:1.

¹⁴³ Acts 2:41.

Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament, showing, That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ:¹⁴⁴ That it is a seal of the covenant of grace¹⁴⁵, of our ingrafting into Christ¹⁴⁶, and of our union with him¹⁴⁷, of remission of sins¹⁴⁸, regeneration¹⁴⁹, adoption¹⁵⁰, and life eternal¹⁵¹: That the water, in baptism, represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which takes away all guilt of sin, original and actual¹⁵²; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature¹⁵³: That baptizing, or sprinkling and washing with water, signifies the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the mortification of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ¹⁵⁴: That the promise is made to believers and their seed; and that the seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church, have, by their birth, interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the church, under the gospel, no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old Testament¹⁵⁵; the covenant of grace, for substance, being the same¹⁵⁶; and the grace of God, and the consolation of believers, more plentiful than before¹⁵⁷: That the Son of God admitted little children into his presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, *For of such is the kingdom of God*¹⁵⁸: That children, by baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible church, distinguished from the world, and them that are without, and united with believers¹⁵⁹; and that all who are baptized in the name of Christ, do renounce, and by their baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh¹⁶⁰: That they are Christians,¹⁶¹ and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized¹⁶²: That the inward grace and virtue of baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered¹⁶³; and that the fruit and power thereof reaches to the whole course of our life¹⁶⁴; and that outward baptism is not so necessary, that, through the want thereof, the infant is in

¹⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19

¹⁴⁵ Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12

¹⁴⁶ Romans 6:1-14

¹⁴⁷ Romans 6:1-14

¹⁴⁸ Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21

¹⁴⁹ Titus 3:5

¹⁵⁰ Galatians 3:26-27; 4:5

¹⁵¹ Romans 6:5

¹⁵² Revelation 1:5

¹⁵³ Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 3:6

¹⁵⁴ Hebrews 9:13-14; 11:28; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2

¹⁵⁵ Acts 2:38-39; Genesis 17:7

¹⁵⁶ Colossians 2:11-12

¹⁵⁷ John 1:14, 16-17

¹⁵⁸ Mark 10:14, 24; Luke 18:16

¹⁵⁹ Acts 2:38-39, 41, 47

¹⁶⁰ Acts 3:19

¹⁶¹ The word "Christian" here is used in the covenantal sense, i.e., that the child was born of Christian parents who were members in good standing of a Bible-believing church. It is not used in the modern evangelical sense of a person having a "born again" experience, thus being a "Christian" without having any connection to the church.

¹⁶² 1 Corinthians 7:14

¹⁶³ John 3:5, 8

¹⁶⁴ Romans 6:1-4; 2 Peter 1:4-12

danger of damnation, or the parents guilty, if they do not condemn or neglect the ordinance of Christ, when and where it may be had.¹⁶⁵

Then after the appropriate admonitions to all involved, the minister is to call the name of the person being baptized, and pronounce:

*I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*¹⁶⁶

As he pronounces these words, he is to baptize the person with water: which, for the manner of doing of it, is not only lawful but sufficient, and most expedient to be, by pouring or sprinkling of the water on the head of the person, without adding any other ceremony.

This done, it is appropriate for him to give thanks and pray.

5. Of the Celebration of the Communion, or the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The communion, or supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated; but how often, may be considered and determined by the ministers, and other church-governors of each congregation, as they shall find most convenient for the comfort and edification of the people committed to their charge.¹⁶⁷

The ignorant and the scandalous are not fit to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.¹⁶⁸

Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered, it is important that public warning be given the Sabbath-day before the administration thereof: something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof, be taught; that, by the diligent use of all means sanctified of God to that end, both in public and private, all may come better prepared to that heavenly feast.¹⁶⁹

When the day is come for administration, the minister, having ended his sermon and prayer, shall make a short exhortation:

Expressing the inestimable benefit we have by this sacrament, together with the ends and use thereof: setting forth the great necessity of having our comforts and strength renewed thereby in this our pilgrimage and warfare: how necessary it is that we come unto it with knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and with hungering and

¹⁶⁵ Luke 23:42-43; Acts 10:2, 4, 22, 31, 45, 47.

¹⁶⁶ Matthew 28:19; "Holy Spirit" may be substituted for "Holy Ghost."

¹⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 5; 11:29

¹⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:28-32; 2 Corinthians 13:5

thirsting souls after Christ and his benefits: how great the danger to eat and drink unworthily.¹⁷⁰

Next, he is, in the name of Christ, on the one part, to warn all such as are ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience, that they presume not to come to that holy table; showing them, that he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment unto himself: and, on the other part, he is in an especial manner to invite and encourage all that labor under the sense of the burden of their sins, and fear of wrath, and desire to reach out unto a greater progress in grace than yet they can attain unto, to come to the Lord's table; assuring them, in the same name, of ease, refreshing, and strength to their weak and wearied souls.¹⁷¹

After this exhortation, warning, and invitation, the table being conveniently placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, at it, or before it, the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the elements of bread and wine set before him (the bread in comely and convenient vessels, so prepared, that, being broken by him, and given, it may be distributed amongst the communicants; the wine also in one or more convenient cups), having first, in a few words, showed that those elements, otherwise common, are now set apart and sanctified to this holy use, by the word of institution and prayer.¹⁷²

Let the words of institution be read out of the Evangelists, or out of the first Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, Chap. 11, starting in verse 23. *I have received of the Lord, &c.*, which the minister may, when he sees requisite, explain and apply.

There should be prayer, thanksgiving, and blessing of the bread and wine.¹⁷³

The elements being now sanctified by the word and prayer, the minister, being at the table, is to take the bread in his hand, and say, in these expressions (or other the like, used by Christ or His apostle upon this occasion):

According to the holy institution, command, and example of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, *I take this bread, and, having given thanks, break it, and give it unto you*; there the minister, who is also himself to communicate, is to break the bread, and give it to the communicants, saying, *Take ye, eat ye; this is the body of Christ which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of him.*¹⁷⁴

In like manner the minister is to take the cup, and say, in these expressions (or other the like, used by Christ or the apostle upon the same occasion):

¹⁷⁰ Ezekiel 43:10-12, 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, 32-34

¹⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 11:28-32; Matthew 11:28-30

¹⁷² Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-21; Mark 14:22-24; 1 Corinthians 10:21

¹⁷³ Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; See "Celebration of the Communion" in the *Directory for Publick Worship* for wise format for prayer.

¹⁷⁴ Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24.

According to the institution, command, and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, I take this cup, and give it unto you; here he gives it to the communicants, saying, *This cup is the new testament in the blood of Christ, which is shed for the remission of the sins of many: drink ye all of it.*¹⁷⁵

After all have communicated, the minister may, in a few words, put them in mind of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, held forth in this sacrament; and exhort them to walk worthy of it. The minister is to give solemn thanks to God. If a collection for the poor is received upon the occasion of the observance of this sacrament, it is so to be ordered, that no part of the public worship be thereby hindered.¹⁷⁶

6. Of Singing in Worship

It is the duty of Christians to praise God publicly, by singing together in the congregation, and also privately in the family.¹⁷⁷

In singing, the chief care must be to sing with understanding, and with grace in the heart, making melody unto the Lord.¹⁷⁸

7. Concerning Public Solemn Fasting¹⁷⁹

When some great and notable judgments are either inflicted upon a people, or apparently imminent, or by some extraordinary provocations notoriously deserved; as also when some special blessing is to be sought and obtained, public solemn fasting (which is to continue the whole day) is a duty that God expects from that nation or people.¹⁸⁰

Before the public meeting, each family and person apart is privately to use all religious care to prepare their hearts to such a solemn work, and to be early at the congregation.¹⁸¹

So large a portion of the day as conveniently may be, is to be spent in public reading and preaching of the word, with appropriate singing, fit to quicken affections suitable to such a duty: but especially in prayer, to this or the like effect:

In all these, the ministers, who are the mouths of the people unto God, ought so to speak from their hearts, upon serious and thorough premeditation of them, that both themselves and their people may be much affected, and even melted thereby,

¹⁷⁵ Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:21; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

¹⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:20-21

¹⁷⁷ Acts 16:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 33:3; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

¹⁷⁹ Additional wise and useful instructions may be found in the *Directory for Publick Worship*, "Of Publick Solemn Fasting."

¹⁸⁰ 2 Chronicles 20:1-4; Esther 4:16; Ezra 8:21-23; Joel 2:15; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27.

¹⁸¹ Joel 2:12, 13.

especially with sorrow for their sins; that it may be indeed a day of deep humiliation and afflicting of the soul.¹⁸²

Special choice is to be made of such Scriptures to be read, and of such texts for preaching, as may best work the hearts of the hearers to the special business of the day, and most dispose them to humiliation and repentance: insisting most on those particulars which each minister's observation and experience tells him are most conducing to the edification and reformation of that congregation to which he preaches.¹⁸³

Before the close of the public duties, the minister is, in his own and the people's name, to engage his and their hearts to be the Lord's, with professed purpose and resolution to reform whatever is amiss among them, and more particularly such sins as they have been more remarkably guilty of; and to draw near unto God, and to walk more closely and faithfully with him in new obedience, than ever before.¹⁸⁴

He is also to admonish the people, with all importunity, that the work of that day does not end with the public duties of it, but that they are so to improve the remainder of the day, and of their whole life, in reinforcing upon themselves and their families in private all those godly affections and resolutions which they professed in public, as that they may be settled in their hearts for ever, and themselves may more sensibly find that God has smelled a sweet savor in Christ from their performances, and is pacified towards them, by answers of grace, in pardoning of sin, in removing of judgments, in averting or preventing of plagues, and in conferring of blessings, suitable to the conditions and prayers of his people, by Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁵

Besides solemn and general fasts enjoined by authority, we judge that, at other times, congregations may keep days of fasting, as divine providence shall administer unto them special occasion; and also that families may do the same, so it be not on days wherein the congregation to which they do belong is to meet for fasting, or other public duties of worship.¹⁸⁶

8. Concerning the Observation of Days of Public Thanksgiving

When any such day is to be kept, let notice be given of it, and of the occasion thereof, some convenient time before, that the people may the better prepare themselves thereunto.¹⁸⁷

The day being come, and the congregation (after private preparations) being assembled, the minister is to begin with a word of exhortation, to stir up the people

¹⁸² Nehemiah 9.

¹⁸³ Nehemiah 9:1-3.

¹⁸⁴ Ezra 10:1-5; Nehemiah 9:38.

¹⁸⁵ Ezra 10:1-5.

¹⁸⁶ Matthew 9:14, 15; Acts 13:3; 14:23.

¹⁸⁷ 1 Kings 8:1-11, 62-66.

to the duty for which they are met, and with a short prayer for God's assistance and blessing (as at other conventions for public worship), according to the particular occasion of their meeting.¹⁸⁸

Let him then make some pithy narration of the deliverance obtained, or mercy received, or of whatever has occasioned that assembling of the congregation, that all may better understand it, or be minded of it, and more affected with it.¹⁸⁹

And, because singing of psalms is of all other the most proper ordinance for expressing of joy and thanksgiving, let some pertinent psalm or psalms be sung for that purpose, before or after the reading of some portion of the word suitable to the present business.¹⁹⁰

Then let the minister, who is to preach, proceed to further exhortation and prayer before his sermon, with special reference to the present work: after which, let him preach upon some text of Scripture pertinent to the occasion.

The sermon ended, let him not only pray, as at other times after preaching is directed, with remembrance of the necessities of the Church and State (if before the sermon they were omitted), but enlarge himself in due and solemn thanksgiving for former mercies and deliverances; but more especially for that which at the present calls them together to give thanks: with humble petition for the continuance and renewing of God's wonted mercies, as need shall be, and for sanctifying grace to make a right use thereof. And so, having sung another psalm, suitable to the mercy, let him dismiss the congregation with a blessing, that they may have some convenient time for their repast and refreshing.¹⁹¹

But the minister (before their dismissal) is solemnly to admonish them to beware of all excess and riot, tending to gluttony or drunkenness, and much more of these sins themselves, in their eating and refreshing; and to take care that their mirth and rejoicing be not carnal, but spiritual, which may make God's praise to be glorious, and themselves humble and sober; and that both their feeding and rejoicing may render them more cheerful and enlarged, further to celebrate his praises in the midst of the congregation, when they return unto it in the remaining part of that day.¹⁹²

When the congregation shall be again assembled, the like course in praying, reading, preaching, appropriate singing, and offering up of more praise and thanksgiving, that is before directed for the morning, is to be renewed and continued, so far as the time will give leave.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ The principle that prayer should begin our public worship, follows from the fact that our worship, which must be done only through a mediator, is performed in the name of Jesus, our High Priest.

¹⁸⁹ Psalm 136.

¹⁹⁰ Psalms 100; 106:1-5; 136.

¹⁹¹ 1 Kings 8:12-61.

¹⁹² 1 Kings 8:57-61.

¹⁹³ 1 Kings 8:64.

At one or both of the public meetings that day, a collection is to be made for the poor (and in the like manner upon the day of public humiliation), that their loins may bless us, and rejoice the more with us. And the people are to be exhorted, at the end of the latter meeting, to spend the residue of that day in holy duties, and testifications of Christian love and charity one towards another, and of rejoicing more and more in the Lord; as becomes those who make the joy of the Lord their strength.¹⁹⁴

9. Of Religious Oaths and Vows

Oaths and vows are similar in nature, but are to be distinguished in this manner: that oaths chiefly concern our duty to our fellowman,¹⁹⁵ while vows more directly concern our duty to God.¹⁹⁶

Among the appropriate occasions for the taking of vows are the presentation of children by parents for baptism¹⁹⁷, assuming the duties of church membership¹⁹⁸, and ordination to ecclesiastical office.¹⁹⁹

C. The Appropriate Time for Public Worship

1. Of the Sanctification of the Lord's Day

The Lord's day ought to be so remembered before-hand, as that all worldly business of our ordinary callings may be so ordered, and so timely and seasonably laid aside, as they may not be impediments to the due sanctifying of the day when it comes.²⁰⁰

The whole day is to be celebrated as holy to the Lord, both in public and private, as being the Christian Sabbath. To which end, it is requisite, that there be a holy cessation or resting all that day from all unnecessary labors; and an abstaining, not only from all sports and pastimes, but also from all worldly words and thoughts.²⁰¹

That the diet on that day be so ordered, as that neither servants be unnecessarily detained from the public worship of God, nor any other person hindered from the sanctifying that day.²⁰² That there be private preparations of every person and family, by prayer for themselves, and for God's assistance of the minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry; and by such other holy exercises, as may further dispose them to a more comfortable communion with God in his public ordinances.²⁰³

¹⁹⁴ 1 Kings 8:65.

¹⁹⁵ Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 10:20; 2 Chronicles 6:22, 23; 2 Corinthians 1:23.

¹⁹⁶ Psalms 66:8; 76:13, 14; Ecclesiastes 5:4-6; Isaiah 19:21.

¹⁹⁷ Joshua 24:15 cf. Ephesians 6:4

¹⁹⁸ Ruth 1:16-17

¹⁹⁹ Exodus 24:1-8; 1 Timothy 4:13-14; 2 Timothy 4:1-2

²⁰⁰ Exodus 16:22, 25-26, 29; 20:8; Nehemiah 13:19; Luke 23:54, 56.

²⁰¹ Isaiah 58:13-14; Matthew 5:17-18; Mark 2:27-28

²⁰² Exodus 16:22, 25-26, 29; 20:9-11; 23:12.

²⁰³ Ezekiel 22:26; Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 10:25.

That all the people meet so timely for public worship, that the whole congregation may be present at the beginning, and with one heart solemnly join together in all parts of the public worship, and not depart till after the blessing.²⁰⁴

That what time is vacant, between or after the solemn meetings of the congregation in public, be spent in reading, meditation, repetition of sermons²⁰⁵; especially by calling their families to an account of what they have heard, and catechizing of them²⁰⁶, holy conferences²⁰⁷, prayer for a blessing upon the public ordinances²⁰⁸, singing of psalms²⁰⁹, visiting the sick²¹⁰, relieving the poor²¹¹, and such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy²¹², accounting the Sabbath a delight.²¹³

2. Touching Days for Public Worship

There is no day commanded in Scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival days, vulgarly called *Holy-days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.²¹⁴

Nevertheless, it is lawful and necessary, upon special emergent occasions, to separate a day or days for public fasting or thanksgiving, as the several eminent and extraordinary dispensations of God's providence shall administer cause and opportunity to his people.²¹⁵

²⁰⁴ Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25

²⁰⁵ Psalm 1:1-2; 92; 95; Isaiah 56:3-7; Acts 1:10-12

²⁰⁶ Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Exodus 12:26-27; Ephesians 6:4

²⁰⁷ Acts 17:10-12

²⁰⁸ Matthew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 11:23

²⁰⁹ Psalm 92 (Title); Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16

²¹⁰ Mark 3:1-5

²¹¹ Mark 2:23-28

²¹² Luke 13:15-16; 14:5

²¹³ Isaiah 58

²¹⁴ Colossians 2:16, 17, 23.

²¹⁵ See the proof texts in Sections 7 and 8, above.

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Updated @ 11-2014 Presbytery

By-Laws: Principles and Practices of Church Life

also known as

THE BOOK OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

OF THE

COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**CONTAINING THE DIRECTORY OF CHURCH ORDER,
THE DIRECTORY OF DISCIPLINE, AND THE
DIRECTORY OF WORSHIP AS WELL AS THE
CREEDALIZED LAW OF THE LORD TO BE USED IN
THE TRAINING AND EXAMINATION OF ALL
CHURCH OFFICERS**

Abbreviations Used

Abbreviations:

BC	=	Belgic Confession
BCG	=	Book of Church Government
CD	=	Canons of Dordt
CON	=	Constitution of the CRPC
DCD	=	Directory of Church Discipline
DCO	=	Directory of Church Order
DCW	=	Directory of Church Worship
HC	=	Heidelberg Catechism
WCF	=	Westminster Confession of Faith
WLC	=	Westminster Larger Catechism
WSC	=	Westminster Shorter Catechism

**Chapter and Section given by Arabic numerals separated by a colon, i.e.
Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 4, Section 3 = WCF 4:3.**

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE ABBREVIATIONS

THE OLD TESTAMENT

<u>Book</u>	<u>Abbrev.</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Abbrev.</u>
Genesis	Gen	Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Exodus	Exo	Song of Solomon	SoS
Leviticus	Lev	Isaiah	Isa
Numbers	Num	Jeremiah	Jer
Deuteronomy	Deu	Lamentations	Lam
Joshua	Jos	Ezekiel	Ezk
Judges	Jdg	Daniel	Dan
Ruth	Rut	Hosea	Hos
1 Samuel	1Sa	Joel	Joe
2 Samuel	2Sa	Amos	Amo
1 Kings	1Ki	Obadiah	Oba
2 Kings	2Ki	Jonah	Jon
1 Chronicles	1Ch	Micah	Mic
2 Chronicles	2Ch	Nahum	Nah
Ezra	Ezr	Habakkuk	Hab
Nehemiah	Neh	Zephaniah	Zep
Esther	Est	Haggai	Hag
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Psa	Malachi	Mal
Proverbs	Pro		

THE NEW TESTAMENT

<u>Book</u>	<u>Abbrev.</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Abbrev.</u>
Matthew	Mat	1 Timothy	1Ti
Mark	Mar	2 Timothy	2Ti
Luke	Luk	Titus	Tit
John	Joh	Philemon	Phm
Acts	Act	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jam
1 Corinthians	1Co	1 Peter	1Pe
2 Corinthians	2Co	2 Peter	2Pe
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1Jo
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2Jo
Philippians	Php	3 John	3Jo
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jud
1 Thessalonians	1Th	Revelation	Rev
2 Thessalonians	2Th		

PREFACE

The By-Laws of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian¹ Church (CRPC) help to bring to expression the Scriptural principles found in the Constitution. The three documents contained in the By-Laws—the Directory of Church Order (DCO), the Directory of Church Discipline (DCD), and the Directory of Church Worship (DCW)—form a manual of practice for the denomination. If there is any contradiction between the By-Laws and the Constitution, the Constitution supercedes the By-Laws.

Brief Introductory Principles of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church²

In the following statement of introductory principles, 1) the term “Presbytery” is intended to mean that body of church officers gathered in assemblies broader than the local church government and 2) Session is the term used for the local church presbytery.

1. We exist as a Presbytery for the “well-being” of churches and not for the “essence” of the church.
2. We exist to give evidence of the spiritual unity we have in Christ (cf. John 17:20-23). We do not create it, Christ does. Nor do we seek to have a working relationship whereby we “rule over” one another.
3. Each local church is a church in her own “right” and has her headquarters in heaven rather than in Presbytery.
4. We exist to seek and give mutual advice when asked, to be a place of appeals, and to establish courts for trials as these become necessary.
5. We exist to be a help to the local Sessions for the purposes of examination of candidates for the Ministry and, if so requested, also for Elders.
6. Presbytery is a servant to the local Session rather than that Session is a servant to the Presbytery.
7. We hold to the principle that, “No church/Minister/Session may lord it over another church/Minister/Session”. It is not the prerogative of Presbytery to legislate how each particular church/Session ought to do things which go beyond what we have covenanted to do in the Book of Church Government.
8. We have no standing committees and no budgets, other than what a given meeting of Presbytery might deem necessary for a specific period of time and/or purpose.

¹ *Approved footnote 10-19-2004.* The form of Presbyterianism which is used throughout this Book of Church Government seeks to follow the Scriptures in all areas of polity where they clearly speak. In the remaining areas, where godly wisdom must be utilized, the experience and history of polity practices is drawn both from the “Continental” and “Presbyterian” churches. The principle generally followed is that broader assemblies have a biblical right to be called into being by their constituent churches and make decisions related to doctrine, practice, and judicial appeals. That right is established in Scripture, and pertains primarily to those matters of concern to all the churches such as doctrinal and judicial determinations. Such assemblies are composed of “overseers and other rulers” from constituent churches (WCF 31:1). While these broader assemblies are composed of teaching and ruling officers from local churches and thus utilize the multitude of counsel, participation, and representation of its constituent churches, nevertheless, the authority by which decisions are made is one derived directly from God through Scripture (cf. WCF 31:3).

² Brief Introductory Principles added at 07-2008 American Presbytery. See minutes for details.

9. We bring together what we consider to be the best of “Presbyterian Church Polity” and “Reformed Church Polity”. For example:
 - (a) We have church courts but not standing courts (they exist by creation of Presbytery and for a specific case/trial).
 - (b) Our Ministers are members of the local church and are under the authority of the local Session in regards to their ethical conduct but their ministerial credentials are held by the Presbytery.
10. When we gather as Presbytery, we do so as delegates of the local sessions and not as church. Therefore, we do not hold worship services at Presbytery.
11. We trust God to grant wisdom to each governing church body as they deal with each situation. This affects our Book of Church Government, in that we do not seek to establish laws for each situation and scenario.
12. We believe that these principles ought to govern the motives for a given church to seek to join our Presbytery and/or to separate from our Presbytery.
13. We seek unity with all true churches which are governed by Christ through men of good faith, who love the biblical truth and desire to defend it and promote it with us. Therefore, we call ourselves *Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church* because:
 - a. *Covenant* reminds us of God’s unfailing commitment to His people and our bond to one another in Christ so as to capture the heart of both the Scriptures and these covenant documents and not their mere words alone;
 - b. *Reformed* reminds us that our theology is that rooted and grounded in the Scriptures and revived through the Protestant Reformation and that our polity contains the best of that found in churches of Reformed polity;
 - c. *Presbyterian* reminds us that our church government is by Christ ruling through a plurality of elders with equal votes though differing gifts and contains the best of that found in churches of Presbyterian polity;
 - d. *Church* reminds us again of our covenanted and spiritual unity with Christ’s one church. It is not intended to convey the hierarchical concept of one overarching central denominational church government. While we are essentially governed by Christ at the local church level, we do not call ourselves *churches* because we wish to demonstrate our distinction from those of an essentially historical congregational polity.

DIRECTORY of CHURCH ORDER

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THE DIRECTORY OF CHURCH ORDER

PREFACE

It is to be regretted that, at this time in history, when the Christian faith is commanding so little influence in the social, political, and economic affairs which affects society, that the Church should be engaged with questions which affect her own life rather than the life of the majority of the people. Questions regarding the place of God's Law in the life of the church, the function of derived standards such as creeds and covenants, the order and essence of worship, the importance of preaching and the sacraments, the relevance of Christian education, and the priorities given to Christian counseling, all consume the Church to such a degree that little else can be done until such issues can be resolved. Yet, is it not because of the prevailing religious apathy so dominant in Christianity that the Church must, of necessity, lay again solid foundations so as to be able to "set her own house in order"? If "judgment begins in the house of God" is it not proper that such chastisement should cause the Church to humble herself before her divine Husband and implore His strength to reestablish "decency and good order" which is so pleasing to Him? Such is the task given to all Christians in our generation.

The Constitution along with the By-Laws: Principles and Policies of Church Life (which we refer to as our Book of Church Government) are designed for the establishment of such order. They are designed to fulfill presbyterian functions as ordained in the Word of God. It specifies objective principles of God's Word for areas of life, ministry, and rule so that the ever-changing opinions of men may be thwarted and the proper place of God-ordained authority maintained.

These documents lay the ground work for the ethic and commitments upon entry into the individual church so as to apprise each member of his individual obligations, disallowing any claim to ignorance in the violation of sound covenantal church order . . . and leaves them responsible before God and men. Churches are thereby judicially protected, promoted, and kept, by objective witness, without which, schism may rear its head undetected and undiscerned, seducing the body at large. In addition, each church will have a basis for comfort in waiving any examination of visiting presbyterian members in its proper responsibility for participation in the Lord's Supper.

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 and the Westminster catechetical standards (Larger and Shorter Catechisms) highlight the doctrinal distinctives from the Word of God necessary for the rightful ordering of our Reformed heritage. Certainly, the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht are agreeable for church use, being subordinated to the Westminster Standards (especially if any allegation is made of conflict in their use).

In addition, we recognize the call of God in this age of Reformation to expound a greater maturity in creedal formation in the light of such pressures and necessities for the understanding and edification of God's people. Thus, our Book of Church Government recognizes the right of each local congregation and/or the presbyteries or general assemblies at large, to write additional creedal standards and constitutions from time to time.

The holy calling of that form of church government historically referenced as "presbyterianism" is the one frame of government designed by God best suited to facilitate the many powers and responsibilities of the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth".

All is offered in the hope and expectation that, despite our lamentable unprofitableness, the Lord Christ Jesus, our lawful and only Mediator between God and man, will be pleased to bless and keep such a church well-ordered in an age of schism, well-protected in a world of detractors and persecutors, well-enlightened in an age of darkness and above all, submissive and obedient to the revealed Will of her

1 Divine Husband as expressed in His Holy Word, which is the Standard by which all other standards are
2 to be judged.

3

4

CHAPTER 1

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE KING AND COVENANT HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

SECTION 1. Jesus Christ is the King³ and Covenant Head of His beloved Church⁴. It pleased the Father to give an inheritance to His Son, whose right it is to receive a kingdom. That King, ruling from His throne in heaven, is declared to "rule over all"⁵ on earth including "all people, nations, and languages."⁶ This kingdom is entrusted to One, even Jesus our Lord, who is called "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace", and of the increase of such government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order and establish it... forever.⁷ Having all authority and power given to Him by His Father, He is above all principalities, authorities and powers, having demonstrated such authority by His death and resurrection from the dead⁸. Unto the authority of His Name every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Him Lord⁹. He received such authority as has "put all things under His feet" and the Father has given Him to be "the Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all"¹⁰; and being ascended far above all the heavens, he has "received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, so that the LORD God" (the Holy Spirit) "might dwell *among* them."¹¹

SECTION 2. Jesus Christ rules His Church by His Word and Spirit.¹² As the only Mediator between God and man¹³, such mediation includes all the offices and government in His Church. "It belongs to His majesty from His throne of glory not only to rule His Church directly but also to use the ministry of men in ruling and teaching His Church through His Word and Spirit, thus exercising through men His own authority and enforcing His own laws. The authority of all such ministerial office rests upon His appointment, who has ordained government in His Church, revealed its nature in His Word, and promised His presence in the midst of His Church as this government is exercised in His Name."¹⁴

SECTION 3. The rule of Christ's kingdom on earth is exercised (when human agency is utilized) through His royal priesthood, declared a "kingdom of priests"¹⁵ in both Testaments and such are the specific (human) representatives of His Will among all nations. His royal priesthood consists of all true saints¹⁶ (true believers) and none else (though there be many who consider themselves Christian but are, in reality, enemies of Christ and obstructions to covenantal ministry, progress and edification¹⁷) and is a function, by calling of God, of Christ's unique Mediatorial Office. God, alone, and not any mere man, knows who among the church visible is truly of such a priesthood.

Nevertheless, as a royal priesthood by calling, such Christians alone among men are honored by God as the true representatives of His Will, God giving this honor to no other persons. To them is given the

³ Isa 9:7.

⁴ Eph 5:23; Col 1:18.

⁵ Psa 103:19.

⁶ Dan 7:14.

⁷ Isa 9:6-7.

⁸ Eph 1:20-21.

⁹ Php 2:10-11.

¹⁰ Eph 1:22-23.

¹¹ Psa 68:18.

¹² Isa 59:21.

¹³ 1Ti 2:5.

¹⁴ Orthodox Presbyterian Church Book of Order p. 2 caps added.

¹⁵ Exo 19:6; 1Pe 2:5.

¹⁶ WCF 25:1.

¹⁷ Mat 7:23.

command to pray that God's Will be done "on earth, as it is (established) in heaven." This mandate instructs them that their calling, corporately, will bring, by His command and the Holy Spirit's leading and empowerment, the rule and triumph of His Will on the earth even as God's Will is gloriously revealed to be triumphant in Heaven.¹⁸ As His representatives in their many relations (family, marriage, brotherhood, business, neighbor, citizen, covenant member) their prayers and petitions are heard¹⁹, their worship and praises received²⁰, their disciplines binding²¹, their teaching enlightening²², their obedience honored²³ and their promises confirmed when faithfully undertaken according to the holiness enjoined *by* the Word and in conformity *to* —God's Word, and empowered by the Spirit's direct authority and oversight as commissioned by the Father and Son. As priests they represent God to man and man to God in their prayers, petitions, worship, praises, disciplines, teachings, obedience and promises²⁴. This honor have all the saints of God, His true believers of all generations.²⁵

SECTION 4. Such a priesthood, though a calling of all of God's people, is not an office in the government of the Church of God and may not be allowed to usurp the specific ministerial calling of some so ordained unto church office. Such a sin led to Korah's rebellion²⁶ and Miriam's (along with Aaron's) condemnation²⁷, God thus disallowing any claim to a false "equality" to obviate His specific ordinations of office. The church is the specific government given by God, in both testaments²⁸, ordained unto the instruction, edification and discipline of the saints and their families, along with the nations at large, and, in our era, is given such officers as are called forth in the New Testament.²⁹

SECTION 5. Christ has ordered such a priesthood of believers to form churches for the proper ordering of His kingdom.³⁰ For any Christian to remain aloof from the church visible in worship and membership is to sin grievously against the Lord and fail at Christian calling³¹. The church is erected by God as the visible representative government of God's kingdom, being the primary means used by God to call forth His people to their priestly duties, individually and corporately.³² Thus, it stands in a unique position to be able to instruct God's representative priesthood, the family and the culture at large, even bearing the responsibility of decrying the evils of government in family, business, church and civil ministry while counseling and teaching the same governments³³ their proper responsibilities to God and obedience to His kingdom designs.³⁴

SECTION 6. Presbyterianism is not necessary for the "being" of any single church, but it is necessary for the "well-being" of the church and the churches at large. Thus, God may raise up a church which is independent from others and still be a true church. Yet, its well-being, preservation and calling will be harmed as well as its ability to root transgenerationally if it does not covenant presbyterially as

¹⁸ Mat 6:10.

¹⁹ Joh 14:13-14; Psa 4:3; 1Pe 3:12.

²⁰ Psa 9:1-2; Psa 22:26 – speaks of giving praise and worship, not God receiving it. Wrong footnotes.

²¹ Mat 18:15-16 (should be Mat 18:18-19).

²² Deu 6:6-9.

²³ Exo 20:6; Deu 7:9.

²⁴ Exo 19:6; 1Pe 2:5; 1Th 1:2-3; Psa 135:1-3.

²⁵ Psa 149:1-9.

²⁶ Num 16:1-3.

²⁷ Num 12:1-10.

²⁸ Heb 2:12. Paul's use of the term "church" in the Old Testament cf. Psa 22:22, 25.

²⁹ WCF 25:3; WLC 63; Mat 28:19-20.

³⁰ WCF 25:1-2; 1Th 5:11.

³¹ Heb 10:24-25.

³² Outside of His Church there is no ordinary means of salvation. WCF 25:2; BC 28

³³ This in no way is meant to justify an Erastian view of church-state relations.

³⁴ Psa 148:5-13; 1Ti 2:1-2.

1 Scripture demands.³⁵ Thus, Presbyterianism is necessary for the maturity of the church, but it is not
2 essential to the existence of the church visible.

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³⁵ Deu 1; Act 15.

CHAPTER 2
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST³⁶

SECTION 1. Christ has ascended³⁷ and is exalted at the right hand of His Father. He has been pleased to send His Spirit to apply the work of His glory and holiness in this world, thus rebuking the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.³⁸ Unto that end, the Church of Christ was ordained "as the pillar and support of the truth."³⁹

SECTION 2. The universal Church visible consists of all baptized persons who profess a saving faith in Jesus Christ, along with their baptized children, in every nation and culture and who abide in submission to the Word of God.⁴⁰

SECTION 3. The universal Church visible is called by God to be organized in local churches and regional presbyteries. Such presbyteries are properly called churches in their representative capacities, confessing a common faith and covenanting together under the governance of such presbyterian union.

SECTION 4. Presbytery derives its authority from Scripture.⁴¹ The Law of God stipulates that in ecclesiastical government, there are problems which extend beyond the ability and/or discernment of any local government, thus calling forth the need for specialized adjudication and the mutual aid and discernments of other churches and officers.

SECTION 5. Such presbyterian church government may, when necessary, organize churches (a minimum of at least three churches) of a region into a regional presbytery, with all of such presbyteries (a minimum of at least two) being formed into a synodical presbytery, and all of such synodical presbyteries (a minimum of at least two)⁴² being organized into an American presbytery.⁴³ Adjudicated matters are the only areas where the broader assemblies may make decisions that are settled and binding when the appellate process has been exhausted. Advice and counsel is a right of regional presbytery but is not binding upon the churches unless settled by adjudication.⁴⁴

SECTION 6. The local church is designed and called by God to be the fundamental unit of authority in the presbyterian system of government. Its rights, responsibilities, and callings may not be bypassed nor otherwise usurped by any other church or presbyterial authority. It is the church of original jurisdiction in all cases whatsoever except those noted in this Book of Church Government and the Directory of Discipline. The local church is designed by God to provide for the following callings and responsibilities: the establishment of a covenantal ordering of the body of believers and officers (with help and advice of regional presbytery);⁴⁵ the faithful preaching of the whole counsel of Scripture with

³⁶ WCF 25.

³⁷ Eph 1:20.

³⁸ Joh 16:8.

³⁹ 1Ti 3:15.

⁴⁰ WCF 27:2; WLC 62; Gen 17:7; Gal 3:7-9.

⁴¹ Deu 1:13-17.

⁴² Act 15:23; The preponderance in Scripture of the peculiar expression "two or three" with respect to witnesses and testimonies can lead to the conclusion that judicial/covenantal authority and its creation are characterized constantly by such testimony. Invariably, where the expression "two or three" is found, governance and oversight is being exercised. Deu 19:15, (See also 19:7-9 where there are two sets of three cities set for judicial investigation and refuge.) See also Mat 18:16, 20; Mar 14:30.

⁴³ Perhaps the model in Exo 18:21-22, 25-26 and Deu 1:15-17 where "tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands" describes appellate jurisdictions will become the model for use once the initial transition from weakness to strength, from no presbytery to a strong presbytery, takes place. In the mean time, "where two or three are gathered in my name" will suffice for forming the presbyterian system.

⁴⁴ Act 15:2.

⁴⁵ footnote needed.

a thorough expounding of the Law of God as a foundation for ethics, counsel, rule and hermeneutical principles;⁴⁶ the reading and teaching of God's Word;⁴⁷ the rightful administration of the sacraments of baptism⁴⁸ and the Lord's Table;⁴⁹ the proper ordering of worship before the Throne of God on the Lord's Day sabbath as well as any other stated services, ministries, and gatherings;⁵⁰ the fellowship of a particular church family and the mutual edification of the members;⁵¹ the call to prayer, praise, and fasting;⁵² the collecting and distribution of the tithes and offerings;⁵³ the application of works of mercy;⁵⁴ the proper oversight and counsel of God's people;⁵⁵ the faithful application of discipline;⁵⁶ the establishment of covenantal union within a presbyterian system;⁵⁷ the public testimony of righteousness;⁵⁸ and blessing the people.⁵⁹

SECTION 7. The all-consuming, comprehensive goal of the being of the Church of Christ throughout the world is to glorify God by leading men to the adoration of the glorious Trinity, to expound His revealed will in the Bible, to make visible the invisible governance of God in the world,⁶⁰ and to testify of the defeat of His adversary and ours, Satan with his minions, hosts, philosophies, standards, usurped governments, and works of unrighteousness.⁶¹ Each church and presbyterian system of governance must strive with utmost strength to contribute toward the attainment of such a comprehensive goal.

⁴⁶ WCF 21:5; WLC 155, 158-160.

⁴⁷ WCF 21:5; WLC 155-157, 159; 2Ti 4:2.

⁴⁸ WCF 28:1

⁴⁹ WCF 21:5; 28:1; 29:1-3.

⁵⁰ WCF 21.

⁵¹ Heb 10:25; 1Co 12:1-27.

⁵² WCF 21:3, 5.

⁵³ Deu 14:28-29; Mal 3:10; 1Co 16:1-3.

⁵⁴ Lev 19:9-10; 14-15; Mar 3:1-5; Act 6:1-3; 1Co 12:28; WCF 21:8.

⁵⁵ 1Pe 5: 1-3; Heb 13:7.

⁵⁶ Mat 18:15-17; 1Co 5.

⁵⁷ Deu 1:13-17; Act 15.

⁵⁸ footnote needed.

⁵⁹ footnote needed.

⁶⁰ WCF 1:1; WLC 1; Mat 6:10.

⁶¹ Col 2:15; Rom 16:20.

CHAPTER 3 CHURCH POWER

SECTION 1. The source of church authority is Jesus Christ, upon whom she is founded as her Rock.⁶² Officers of the church receive their authority, not from men, but from God Himself.⁶³ As such, she exercises a spiritual power over men,⁶⁴ meaning that her power is exercised primarily in her sway over the soul⁶⁵ and its consequent governance of the body and stewardship of the believer.⁶⁶

SECTION 2. There is a threefold power in the church by which the officers exercise jurisdiction, guidance, and order. The threefold power the "*potestas dogmatica*" (Section 3),⁶⁷ the "*potestas gubernans*" (Section 4)⁶⁸ and the "*potestas misericordiae*" (Section 5).⁶⁹

SECTION 3. The *potestas dogmatica* is a divine task wherein the church has a duty to the truth. As such, she is a witness to those without, and a witness and teacher to those within the church.⁷⁰ She exercises this power several ways. First, she preserves the Word of God from error and expounds its content from a diligent search of its internally established, God inspired meaning.⁷¹ Second, she testifies to the truth by the rightful administration of the ordinances, that is to say, the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments.⁷² Third, she frames her confessions with precision as derived expositions of the Word.⁷³ Fourth, she cultivates the study of theology and ethics.⁷⁴

SECTION 4. The *potestas gubernans* is a divine task wherein the church regulates and governs its affairs so that "all things are done decently and in order."⁷⁵ As such, the church carries into effect all the laws commanded by God to the church. In addition, numerous occasions arise in which she must make enactments or regulations in order to apply the precepts of God properly to the specific situations in which God has placed her. In order to accomplish the administration of "order and decency", she is given authority to guard the holiness of the church by admitting those who are approved and by excluding those who live dishonorably and impenitently or who depart from the truth.⁷⁶

SECTION 5. The *potestas misericordiae* is a divine task wherein the Lord commands the church to make provision for her poor as a first responsibility⁷⁷ and afterwards, to go to the poor and bring them the means of charity and benevolence according to the manner prescribed in God's Laws. Such charity and benevolence would include the administration of the Word.⁷⁸ By such means, the church engages

⁶² Deu 32:6; Mat 16:18.

⁶³ 1Ti 3.

⁶⁴ Mat 16:18-19.

⁶⁵ Gal 5:22-25.

⁶⁶ Rom 12:1-2; 1Ti 3:15-16.

⁶⁷ Act 5:42.

⁶⁸ 1Ti 3.

⁶⁹ Act 6:1-3.

⁷⁰ Mat 28:18-20.

⁷¹ Psal 147:19-20; Act 7:38; Rom 3:1-2; 2Ti 3:16-17.

⁷² Mat 16:18-19; 2Ti 3:16; 4:2; WCF 21:5; 28:1, 5; 29:1-3; WLC 159.

⁷³ Act 15: 23-32, WCF 31:3.

⁷⁴ 2Ti 3:16; Psal 19:7-11; 119:97-100.

⁷⁵ 1Co 14:40.

⁷⁶ Mat 16:18-19; 1Co 5; 11:34; Gal 1:8; Tit 1:5.

⁷⁷ Deu 15:7-11; Gal 6:10.

⁷⁸ Act 6:1-7.

in acts of mercy which tend to the debilitation of Satan's kingdom, divesting its usurped, predatory governments of any deceitful cloak of goodness and tenderness.⁷⁹

SECTION 6. The church of Christ has such power and authority as is given to her, vested in the whole body of members and not in its officers alone. Each believer-priest⁸⁰ is endued with the Spirit of the Living God and is called by Christ to join in the worship, edification and testimony of the church. Each church functions and grows as the body of Christ, fitly-framed and fashioned together, according to the working of Him who works in every member to supply a due measure of each part.⁸¹

SECTION 7. The power of the body of believers in each congregation includes the authority to both desire and call special offices and the officers who would attend to them. Such oversight as is vested in the officers of the particular church is discharged by those whom the members of the congregation call to such authority by a vote of the congregation.⁸² However, the congregation is responsible before God to vote into office such men as are fit for office.⁸³

SECTION 8. The elders (called in Scripture *presbyters*) of the church are the only governors of the church and, corporately, are called the congregational presbytery (session, consistory) of the church. The congregational presbytery consists of the minister (teaching elder) and ruling elders of the church. The members of the congregational presbytery alone are to represent the church in presbyterian, synodical presbyteries, and general assemblies.⁸⁴

SECTION 9. The government of the church is given in Scripture as the rule by the elders of the particular church. Their joint jurisdiction in church and presbyterian assemblies is set forth in both Testaments. It is organized and administered according to the pattern set forth in the New Testament, with precedents derived in the Old Testament, particular attention being given to the principles of holy conduct and rule established in the Law of God (Pentateuch).⁸⁵

SECTION 10. The organization of courts, both courts of original jurisdiction and courts of appellate jurisdiction, is set forth in the Word of God. Such courts are empowered to adjudicate according to the derived authority vested in the churches, given by the Covenant Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.⁸⁶

SECTION 11. "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship."⁸⁷ In this we find the precept expressed that all church power is only ministerial, not being independent nor sovereign in its exercise of power. It is also declarative of ultimate Authority as expressed by God in His Word, the Scriptures alone being the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice.⁸⁸ No church authority may adjudicate matters on the basis of its own man-made rules and authority but must bind the conscience by making decisions derived from the Scriptures.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ Pro 12:10.

⁸⁰ See DCO 1:4.

⁸¹ 1Co 12.

⁸² Voting members must be communicant members of the local congregation. The session of each church will determine which communicant members shall vote.

⁸³ Deu 1:13-18; 1Ti 3; Tit 2; 1Pe 5:1-4; Psal 15:1-5.

⁸⁴ Deu 1:13-18; Exo 3:16-18; Act 15; 1Ti 4:14; Rom 12:7-8 (ruling); 1Co 12:28; Tit 1: 5.

⁸⁵ Exo 3:16, 18; Deu 1:13-16; Rom 15: 4; 2Ti 3:15-17.

⁸⁶ Deu 1:13-17; Act 15 (be more specific).

⁸⁷ WCF 20:2.

⁸⁸ WCF

⁸⁹ Deu 4:2; 12:32; Rev 22:18-19.

1 SECTION 12. No church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction.⁹⁰ No civil penalties
2 derived from the culture at large may be inflicted in a church court or by church officer(s).⁹¹ No aid
3 from a civil authority may be sought by any officer or authority in the presbyterian system "in the
4 exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security."⁹²

5 SECTION 13. Presbytery may not lay claim to the properties, lands, buildings, parsonages or other
6 assets owned by the individual churches, members, or officers. No act of discipline (or otherwise) of
7 presbytery may be construed as a claim to the title, ownership of the properties, lands, buildings,
8 parsonages or other assets owned by the individual churches, members, or officers.

9 SECTION 14. Church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction, derived from God's Word, and
10 every member is commanded by God to submit to its authority as an obedience offered to Christ.⁹³
11 Indeed, God has ordained that persons are tested by God by the manner in which they respond to their
12 neighbor, in general, and to derived authority in particular.⁹⁴ This certainly includes the church's
13 authority and government, as well as civil government and parental authority. Therefore, if the
14 decisions of the church officers are rendered according to the precepts of Scripture then they "are to be
15 received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the
16 power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word."⁹⁵

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⁹⁰ 1Ti 3:14-15; cf. 1Ti 2-3 Distinctions are made in civil, home and church authority.

⁹¹ Psal 10:2-7, WCF 31:2, 5; Luk 12:13-14; Joh 18:36.

⁹² OPC Book of Order p. 6; 2Ch 26:16-21.

⁹³ 1Ti 5:17; Heb 13:7; Tit 3:1.

⁹⁴ Lev 19:18; Mat 5:43-48; 19:16-24; 22:39-40; Rom13:8-10.

⁹⁵ WCF 31:2; (put in Bible footnotes from WCF section); Num 11:14-17; Act 15 (be specific).

CHAPTER 4

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

SECTION 1. The church of Christ is one Body with her Lord, even as a husband and his wife are one.⁹⁶

Such unity is achieved through the operations of the Holy Spirit who dwells in both, thus demonstrating similar dispositions and aims in the saints as in the Lord.⁹⁷ Because of the oneness of the saints with their Lord, the saints have a covenanted unity among themselves, whereby, being united to the same Head,⁹⁸ and having the same Spirit dwelling in them,⁹⁹ they have the same graces of faith, hope, love, etc. and are rooted and grounded in the same doctrines of Christ, and have a mutual affection to, and care for one another.¹⁰⁰ Christians must, therefore, utilize the gifts given to them for the edification of the church as faithful stewards.¹⁰¹ However, proper honor must be accorded to those who, by calling of office, rule and teach the church, so as to maintain peace in the body, without compromising the purity of the church.¹⁰² The beauty and edification which the church has with her Lord and with one another is like the oil which flowed down Aaron's beard¹⁰³ from his covenanted consecration as High Priest. Such beauty of the body as the fellowship the saints enjoy with Christ must be maintained in the church by church governments, seeking always to obviate schism which is an abomination to God,¹⁰⁴ without compromising the integrity of the truth.

SECTION 2. There are many antichrists,¹⁰⁵ false prophets and false shepherds in the world.¹⁰⁶ Against these corruption's of Satan the church must bear constant testimony, warning the people of God while understanding that any who persevere in following such corruption cannot be regarded as true Christians.¹⁰⁷ Communion with such corruption is adultery in the spiritual sense and is abominable to God for the deceits such ones perpetrate and the judgment which would be brought upon the church if she compromises with them in doctrine,¹⁰⁸ organization,¹⁰⁹ covenant,¹¹⁰ or ethic.¹¹¹ The church must remain separate in doctrine, organization, covenant, and ethic, as it is Satan's chief strategy to cause the church to unite with such subtleties, thus counterfeiting the truth and God's Will to assume the Name of the "church" while corrupting it as his own.¹¹² The church is Christ's wife and must not respond to any but her own Husband's divine voice, therefore the church must exercise discipline, maintain orderliness, preserve purity, and seek maturity in the application of His Word.¹¹³

⁹⁶ Eph 5:31-32.

⁹⁷ Joh 17:5-24.

⁹⁸ Eph 1:22.

⁹⁹ footnote, one spirit.

¹⁰⁰ Joh 17:6-26 (weak, more needed).

¹⁰¹ Rom 12:3-13.

¹⁰² 1Ti 5:17; 1Pe 5:1-3; Heb 13:7.

¹⁰³ Psa 133:1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Pro 6:16-19.

¹⁰⁵ The pope is that Anti-Christ in the sense that no other long standing office claiming to be Christ on earth exists. He is also "an" antichrist as well and thus those who hold that he is only "an" antichrist will be accepted for fellowship in the presbytery. (See Const. I,B,1,a, 1Jo 4:3).

¹⁰⁶ 2Pe 2:1-22; Jud 11-19; Mat 7:15; 1Jo 4:1-2.

¹⁰⁷ Gal 5:19-21.

¹⁰⁸ Jud 11-19.

¹⁰⁹ 1Co 10:15-23 (for covenant???? Does not make sense).

¹¹⁰ Mat 12:25-27.

¹¹¹ Lev 17:7; Deu 32:17-18; Psa 106:34-40.

¹¹² Rev 2:9; 3:9; Mat 7:21-23.

¹¹³ Eph 5:23-29; Joh 10:27 (more needed).

1 SECTION 3. "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error;¹¹⁴ and have so
2 degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, there shall
3 be always a church on earth to worship God according to His Will."¹¹⁶
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¹¹⁴ 1Co 13:12; Rev 2 & 30; Mat 13:24-28.

¹¹⁵ Rev 2:9; 3:9; 18:2 and in WCF.

¹¹⁶ WCF 25:5; Mat 13:28-30; 16:18 ; Psa 102:28; Isa 1:9.

CHAPTER 5

OFFICES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

SECTION 1. The church of Christ is established upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.¹¹⁷ The apostles were ordained to be witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus, bearing testimony by the empowering of the Holy Spirit to the things which they had seen and heard, thus establishing the foundations of the Christian Church, and beginning its public testimony to a lost world.¹¹⁸ They spoke and wrote by revelation from God, writing the New Testament as the fullness of inspired truth.¹¹⁹ When their calling was complete, and the foundations of the Church secured, their office was not continued in the Church and the signs and powers of the apostolate ceased.¹²⁰ There were some who were designated apostles who were not apostles by office, yet were sent to perform some temporary function, as requested by the church.¹²¹

SECTION 2. The officers which Christ has appointed for the edification of His church and the perfecting of the saints are either extra-ordinary, being given to the Church for the age of its infancy and are since ceased, or ordinary and given to the Church as perpetual. Those extra-ordinary offices (now ceased) are apostles, prophets, and evangelists.¹²² Those ordinary and perpetual officers are pastor, elders, deacons, and teachers.¹²³

SECTION 3. God has been pleased to build His church through the ministry of men and, as such, He calls and provides some with special gifts for teaching, preaching, ruling and serving such government of the church.¹²⁴ Some such gifts are only exercised most profitably when duly called by the church into official capacity.¹²⁵ Such officers in the presbyterian system are minister of the Word, (pastor, missionary, teaching elder, doctor) ruling elder, and deacon.¹²⁶

SECTION 4. The ordinary and perpetual offices in the local church are held by minister of the Word, ruling elder and deacon.¹²⁷ Within the economy of the office of eldership, there are two distinctive callings. The ministry of the Word of God is given to the minister of the Word, also called the pastor or teaching elder who administers the Word of God regularly in the church (preaching, teaching, training, theological development and expertise, counseling) and the sacraments.¹²⁸ The ruling functions are primarily given to the ruling elders, who share such oversight with the minister of the Word.¹²⁹ The office of deacon is that office established by Christ which administers works of mercy on behalf of the church.¹³⁰

¹¹⁷ Eph 2:20.

¹¹⁸ Heb 1:1-2; 2:3-4.

¹¹⁹ (Note re: removing Joh 14:26, does not have to do with writing & speaking, but understanding); 2Ti 3:15-16; 2Pe 1:19-20; 1Th 2:13.

¹²⁰ Heb 1:1-2; 1Co 13:8-10.

¹²¹ Act 6:8, 8:4-7 (deacons no longer waiting tables but promoted to evangelists [assistant apostle] and doing preaching, signs and wonders); 2Ti 4:5.

¹²² Eph 4:11-12; Heb 1:1-2.

¹²³ Eph 4:11-12; cf. 1Ti 3; Jam 3:1 (teachers/ministers); 1Pe 5:1-3 (elder/presbyter), Rom 12:7-8 (rulers), 1Co 12:28 (governors).

¹²⁴ Rom 12:7-8; Eph 4:11-12.

¹²⁵ 1Co 9:13-14; 1Ti 5:17-22; Heb 13:7, 17, 24.

¹²⁶ 1Ti 3:8-13.

¹²⁷ 1Ti 3; Rom 12:7-8; 1Co 12:28 (ruling, governors).

¹²⁸ 1Co 11:17-30 (esp. 23-30); 2Ti 2:15; 2Co 5:20 with 1Co 1:21.

¹²⁹ 1Ti 5:17; Heb 13:7, 17, 24.

¹³⁰ Act 6:1-3; 1Ti 3:10-13.

CHAPTER 6 MINISTER, PASTOR, TEACHING ELDER, OR DOCTOR

SECTION 1. The pastor is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the church.¹³¹ It belongs to the office of the pastor:

- 1) To pray for the sick, in private or in public, to which a blessing is promised.¹³²
- 2) To read the Scriptures publicly.¹³³
- 3) To officiate in the Lord's Day (sabbath) worship (mornings and evenings when both or either are stated services of the church).¹³⁴
- 4) To dispense the Word, being charged by God to preach and thus feed the flock over which God has made him an overseer. To feed the flock by the faithful preaching of the Word is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring the Word of the Lord to bear upon the conscience by means of teaching, convincing, reproving, exhorting, and comforting.¹³⁵
- 5) To catechize the congregation which is a part of preaching.¹³⁶
- 6) To dispense other divine mysteries in counseling, rule, discernment, prayer, leadership, writing and other pastoral stewardships.¹³⁷
- 7) To administer the sacraments on a regular basis.¹³⁸
- 8) To bless the people from God.¹³⁹
- 9) To help the needy.¹⁴⁰
- 10) To represent the church before presbyterian assemblies.¹⁴¹
- 11) To counsel civil magistrates when requested to do so.¹⁴²

SECTION 2. The pastor who fills this office shall be sound in the faith, possess competency in human learning and be able to teach and rule others. He should be known for sobriety, a man of wisdom and discretion. He should exhibit the dignity of an holy life and rule well his house. He should have a good report of those who are without.¹⁴³ To that end, churches are strongly urged to use the *Checklist For Church Officers* found in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for

¹³¹ Jer 2:8; 3:15; 17:16; 23:1; Eph4:11-12.

¹³² Psa 35:13; Neh 8:6.

¹³³ Neh 8:2-7.

¹³⁴ Neh 8:3-8.

¹³⁵ Ezr 7:6, 10; Neh 8:2-8; 2Ti 2:14-15, 3:15-16; 4:2; Act 20:27-28; 2Co 5:18-20 (cp. 1Co 1:21); Joh 21:15-17.

¹³⁶ 2Ti 3:15-16; 4:2.

¹³⁷ 1Ti 6:11-21; Note the functions which Timothy is required as a pastor to perform.

¹³⁸ 1Co 10:15-17; 11:19-27.

¹³⁹ Neh 8:6; Num 6:24-26; 2Co 1:2; 13:14.

¹⁴⁰ 1Ti 3:2-7; 5:16; Tit 1:8.

¹⁴¹ Act 15:30-36.

¹⁴² Ezr 7:10, 12-14, 21-27; 10:2-3; WCF 31:5.

¹⁴³ 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9.

1 Teaching Elders whether they be ordained or seeking ordination. Every candidate for office shall set
2 forth in writing any exceptions/scruples they have that are not already allowed by Const. I,B, 1 or 2
3 and be prepared to abide by the provisions of DCO 31.

4 SECTION 3. Every pastor shall be a member of a regional presbytery and of a local congregational
5 presbytery which is a member of the same regional presbytery.¹⁴⁴ An assistant pastor, while a member
6 of a local congregational presbytery, does not thereby have a vote in that presbytery, however, he may
7 be designated as a congregational representative to a broader presbytery, and may serve on any
8 committees or as an officer thereof .

¹⁴⁴ Deu 1:13-17; cf. Deu 12:12, 19; 18:6-8; Act 15; Tit 1:5-9 (seems a little weak—firm up).

CHAPTER 7

MISSIONARIES

SECTION 1. Missionaries are ministers of the Word who preach the Word, administer the sacraments and undertake all the functions that belong to the office of the pastor (though he be free from a pastoral charge in a particular flock) so as to bring in other sheep. His ministry shall continue in a place until a congregation shall have been regularly organized.¹⁴⁵

SECTION 2. As a minister of the word, the missionary is authorized to perform the following functions: labors in home or foreign mission fields, chaplains in the armed forces or other institutions, a stated pulpit supply or special preacher to the churches, an editor or similar ministry involving media communications.¹⁴⁶ A minister of the word is given the special authority of a missionary from his overseeing congregational presbytery.

SECTION 3. The missionary may, with the approval of his overseeing congregational presbytery, receive members into the church, which is being organized under his call, as well as appoint ruling elders and deacons.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Act 15:30-35; Tit 1:5; (many more, find them).

¹⁴⁶ Act 8:4-8; 10:34-48; 18:24-19:1; cf. 1Co 3:5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Tit 1:1-5; Note: It is apparent from the testimony of Scripture that until the apostolic office came to an end, the apostles acted as the presbyterian adjudicatory until such authority was in place. The same principle was true in the Old Testament economy in that, prior to the establishment of elders among the tribes, the patriarchs were the highest adjudicatory. It is apparent that at some point during their stay in Egypt as a people, eldership in Israel among the tribes replaced patriarchal authority as the supreme adjudicatory (Exo 4:13; 24:1,9).

CHAPTER 8 RULING ELDERS

SECTION 1. Even as the Lord ordained in the Old Covenant that the Levites joined with the elders in the governance of the people, so it is that God has given gifts to some in the New Covenant to exercise rule in the local congregational presbytery along with the pastor. Such men hold office as ruling elders and may not assume the duties given to the pastor except as requested by him and approved by the regional presbytery, as may be necessary for good order.¹⁴⁸

SECTION 2. The ruling elder may be licensed by the regional presbytery to exhort (i.e. to speak a word of edification) in a duly constituted worship service where Christ rules through two or more elders, at least one of which should ordinarily be present.¹⁴⁹

SECTION 3. By approbation of the local congregation, elders must be chosen from among that congregation over which they will preside in authority. Such elders must be men fitted for office as given in Scripture¹⁵⁰ To that end, churches are urged to use the *Checklist For Church Officers* found in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for Ruling Elders. Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples they have that are not already allowed by Const. I,B, 1 or 2 and be prepared to abide by the provisions of DCO 31.

SECTION 4. The modern tendency in the churches is to demean this office, especially in preference to the pastor. The ruling elders as a body constitute the primary authority which represents the flock to which the pastor is responsible, under God.¹⁵¹

SECTION 5 Elders should pray with and for their people, attend to the sick, mourn with those who mourn, watch over the heritage of the Lord- the children of the church- being concerned for their instruction and nourishing.¹⁵² Finally, they must have a concern for the doctrine and conduct of the pastor, helping him in his labors.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Rom 12:7-8 (ruling); 1Co 12:28 (governments); 1Ti 5:17.

¹⁴⁹ This section was changed at 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes 13 B on DCO 8..

¹⁵⁰ Deu 1:5-18; and Psa 15; ITi 3:1-7.

¹⁵¹ Heb 13:7, 17.

¹⁵² Exo 12:21-42, need more references.

¹⁵³ Num 11:16-17.

CHAPTER 9 THE DEACONS

SECTION 1. The office of the deacon is called forth into the ministry of mercy of the local church. Such works of mercy are responsible for the care of members of the church who stand destitute of help, especially widows who are widows indeed,¹⁵⁴ as well as individuals who are unable to function on their own behalf due to mental or physical debilitation, and have not the care needed, especially by their families.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the congregational presbytery, which has charge of overseeing the deaconal board (all the deacons assembled and organized for their works of mercy), shall choose the field of work outside the church for the care of the poor.¹⁵⁶ In addition, the deacons shall help the families and church in other ministries of the session's choosing.¹⁵⁷ Such ministry is not to be confused as rule of the church which alone is committed to the congregational presbytery of the church.¹⁵⁸

SECTION 2. The deacon is chosen by the congregation, being nominated by the congregational presbytery,¹⁵⁹ and must fulfill the character of the deacon¹⁶⁰ To that end, churches are urged to develop their own *Checklist For Deacons* based upon some of those things appropriate to the office of deacon found in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for Deacons. Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples they have that are not already allowed by Const. I,B, 1 or 2 and be prepared to abide by the provisions of DCO 31.

SECTION 3. The deaconal board shall meet regularly to plan its ministries, shall keep a record of its proceedings, shall elect its own deaconal board officers (moderator, secretary, treasurer and/or others of its choosing in conformity with the desire of the congregational presbytery of the church).¹⁶¹

SECTION 4. The deaconal board, in keeping a record of its proceedings and finances, shall report to the congregational presbytery.¹⁶²

SECTION 5. Deacons may be called upon to counsel and teach the poor or others in works of mercy and helps as the congregational presbytery shall designate.¹⁶³

SECTION 6. When meeting with the congregational presbytery of the church in its official capacity, the two bodies together shall be called the church council.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁴ Act 6:1-3; 1Co 12:88 (helps); 1Ti 5:3-10, 16; Jam 1:27.

¹⁵⁵ 1Th 5:12-14.

¹⁵⁶ Deu 10:17-20; Luk 14:13-14; 1Co 13:3; Gal 2:10.

¹⁵⁷ Lev 19:14-15; Act 6:1-3; Gal 2:10; 6:10

¹⁵⁸ (See DCO 6 & 8).

¹⁵⁹ Act 6:1-6.

¹⁶⁰ 1Ti 3:8-11; Act 6:3 and Psa 15.

¹⁶¹ 1Co 14:40.

¹⁶² 1Co 14:40.

¹⁶³ Act 6:5-6; 1Co 12:28; 1Th 5:12-14.

¹⁶⁴ 1Co 14:40; Php 1:1; 1Ti 3.

CHAPTER 10

THE VARIED ASSEMBLIES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM

SECTION 1. The pastor is primarily under the oversight of his own congregational presbytery, rather than primarily under the oversight of regional presbyteries, synodical presbyteries, or the American presbytery. Generally, pastors have the love of their congregation, the trust of their ruling elders, and the closeness of their people as a whole who, not only provide for his financial well-being, but provide for his calling, fellowship, care, and oversight for him and that of his family. Matters pertaining to his calling and person are the concern of his congregational presbytery and church, as matters of original jurisdiction, unless otherwise stated in this Book of Church Government or the Directory of Discipline.

SECTION 2. All the governing assemblies within the presbyterian system are designed to use and maintain the truth and uphold righteousness while opposing heresy and sinful practices and thus strengthen the peace, purity and unity of the church.¹⁶⁵ The congregational presbytery exercises authority and has jurisdiction over the local church.¹⁶⁶ The presbytery, at all levels, each only exercise such authority as is delegated to them by this Book of Church Government, or such representatives as authorized by the respective assemblies of the respective churches from time to time.¹⁶⁷

SECTION 3. Disputed matters of doctrine and discipline may be referred to a broader assembly for adjudication.¹⁶⁸

SECTION 4. Presbyteries have the right to erect committees or special commissions and delegate to them specific interim powers when necessary with time limits and specific powers¹⁶⁹ not to exceed one year for any assembly broader than the congregational presbytery.¹⁷⁰

SECTION 5. Membership on such committees need not be limited to the membership of the appointing assembly but must be limited to membership of the CRPC at large.¹⁷¹ Committees at the local church level may have members from outside of the CRPC with the approval of the congregational presbytery.

SECTION 6. Each church is ordinarily expected to send its pastor and one elder to represent it at the regional presbytery meetings that shall convene no less than once per year.¹⁷² Each officer sent will have one vote in regional presbytery. If the pastor cannot attend, the church has power to authorize the sending of two ruling elders.¹⁷³ No church may be denied its representation.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁵ Deu. 1:13-17; Ps. 107:32; Rom 1:7; 10:15; 14:19; Eph. 4:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:12.

¹⁶⁶ Heb. 13:24. Need more. Cp. Rom. 6:1-5.

¹⁶⁷ Deu. 1:13-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:10. Note: Paul, though exhorting them by inspired revelation as to what to do in a case of discipline, waits to forgive the individual involved until such time as the Corinthian church first forgives. The same approach is taken in Philemon where Paul instructs Philemon by inspired revelation concerning his duty yet awaits Philemon's response first and "without [his] mind I would do nothing". (Phm 14) Paul repeatedly protects local authority and as "broader authority" awaits their response before assuming to act.

¹⁶⁸ Ex. 18:24-26; Deu. 17:8-9; Acts 15.

¹⁶⁹ Acts 15:25.

¹⁷⁰ 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹⁷¹ Deu. 1:13-17.

¹⁷² 1 Tim. 5:17 Note: Both functions (teaching and ruling) of a given churches oversight should be represented at presbytery.

¹⁷³ 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹⁷⁴ Deu. 1:13, 15, Acts 15:2.

CHAPTER 11

THE ELECTION OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

SECTION 1. Every congregation shall elect ruling elders and deacons,¹⁷⁵ except in extra-ordinary circumstances.

SECTION 2. Recommendations for officers may be submitted, in written form, by any covenant member of the church¹⁷⁶ or by a broader presbytery, to the congregational presbytery for consideration.

SECTION 3. The congregational presbytery alone has power to present men as nominees for office in that local congregation.¹⁷⁷

SECTION 4. It is necessary that before any man be elected to, or ordained and installed into, the office of elder or deacon that he should first be tried and proved by the congregational presbytery of the church wherein service is anticipated, because hands are not to be laid suddenly upon any,¹⁷⁸ and both elders and deacons must be of honest and good report.¹⁷⁹ Such examination must include an understanding of the whole counsel of God, the Confession and its Catechisms, this Book of Church Government, and the constitution and any other covenants of said church.¹⁸⁰

SECTION 5. If the congregational presbytery is satisfied with the tested individual(s), then his (their) name(s) will be brought to the congregation which then votes upon his (their) nomination.¹⁸¹

SECTION 6. A man must receive three-quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the voting members present. Such balloting must always be by secret written ballot. No votes shall be taken by proxy. If there are no elders of the church then the overseeing congregational presbytery shall choose who shall preside over all congregational meetings until such time as the church has officers of its own calling.

SECTION 7. The call to office for an elder or deacon will be for the length of time that the officer remains a member in good standing of the local church, or petitions congregational presbytery for relief of his office and that with good cause.

¹⁷⁵ Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1; Tit 1:5; Heb 13:2

¹⁷⁶ Acts 16:

¹⁷⁷ Acts 15:22 (elders of local congregation make decision), 20:28; 1 Cor 14:4

¹⁷⁸ 1 Tim 3:6, 5:22; Jam 3:

¹⁷⁹ 1 Tim 3:2, 7, 10; Tit 1:6-

¹⁸⁰ John 3:10; 1 Tim 3:1-11; Tit 1:5-

¹⁸¹ Deut 1:13; Acts 7:3; 1 Cor 14:4

CHAPTER 12
ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1. Church officers are not only to be chosen by the church, but also to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer as a solemn act of the church.¹⁸²

SECTION 2. The outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church is established by the approbation of the church, his acceptance of the call and the ceremony of ordination with imposition of hands in a worship service.¹⁸³

SECTION 3. In the church where there is an insufficient number of elders, ordination may be performed by officers assigned by the regional presbytery. Such officers may be from any presbytery in the CRPC.¹⁸⁴ Missionaries may ordain ruling elders and deacons per Chapter 7, Section 3 of this Directory of Church Order.¹⁸⁵

SECTION 4. He who is clearly released from his office in one church unto office in another, cannot be recognized as an officer in both churches.¹⁸⁶ No man may hold two or more offices at the same time in the church or churches. However, where it seems necessary for a pastor or elder to hold offices in more than one church as in cases of several churches utilizing the services of one pastor or in the case of an elder from one church serving also on the session of another church at their request, one church alone shall be a sending church and shall alone have jurisdiction over an officer whose services are so divided. Such arrangements must be done both with the consent of the congregational presbyteries involved as well as the regional presbytery and one church shall be selected as the sending church of such an officer in such cases.

SECTION 5. Installation is the act by which a man who has been ordained is placed in position to do such a work. When a man receives his first call to perform a service, his ordination and installation shall be at the same time. Ordination to any office is for life but a church may determine whether a sabbatical is to be allowed.¹⁸⁷

SECTION 6. The installation of the deacons and ruling elders shall be performed by the congregational presbytery of the church into which they have been called.¹⁸⁸

SECTION 7. When an officer, by reason of advanced age, retires or is retired by his congregational presbytery from his position and is no longer performing in his officially recognized capacity, then the body who called him may entitle him "emeritus" in recognition of his meritorious conduct with the title of his previous office.¹⁸⁹ If he no longer operates in a valid calling he may not vote in any presbytery.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² 1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 1:24.

¹⁸³ Deu. 1:13-17; Acts 6:2-6; 1 Tim. 4:6-16.

¹⁸⁴ 1 Tim. 4:14.

¹⁸⁵ Tit. 1:3-5; Acts 14:23.

¹⁸⁶ 1 Cor. 14:40. Note: No record is given of any person holding two ordinary offices in the church of Christ.

¹⁸⁷ Tit. 1:3-9.

¹⁸⁸ 1 Cor. 14:40; Acts 6:2-6.

¹⁸⁹ Lev. 19:32; Pr. 16:31.

¹⁹⁰ 1 Cor. 14:40.

CHAPTER 13
THE MEMBERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL PRESBYTERY OF THE
CONGREGATION

SECTION 1. The government of the church is a mixed government. It is a monarchy in respect of Christ, the Head and King of the church.¹⁹¹ In respect of the body, or brotherhood of the church, the power given to the church with its order and structure models a constitutional republic.¹⁹²

SECTION 2. The sovereign power which is peculiar unto Christ is exercised:

- 1) In calling the church out of the world unto holy fellowship with Himself. Thus, if any church, duly constituted with the marks of a church, apply to presbytery for inclusion therein, though it be independent, it may not be challenged for authenticity as a church due to its independent origin, or status (lack of previous presbyterian oversight).¹⁹³
- 2) In instituting the ordinances of His worship, and appointing His ministers and officers for the dispensing of them.¹⁹⁴
- 3) In giving Laws for the ordering of all our ways and ways of His House and Kingdom.¹⁹⁵
- 4) In giving life and power to all of His institutions and to His people by them.¹⁹⁶
- 5) In protecting and delivering His church against and from all the enemies of their peace.¹⁹⁷

SECTION 3. The power granted by Christ unto the body of the church and brotherhood, is a prerogative or privilege which the church does exercise:

- 1) in choosing their own officers;¹⁹⁸
- 2) in admission of their own members;¹⁹⁹
- 3) the power to admit any member also gives grant to a power to remove any from their fellowship again.²⁰⁰

SECTION 4. It is lawful and expedient that there be fixed congregations, that is, a certain company of Christians to meet in one assembly ordinarily for public worship.²⁰¹ Such company must not be less than three (3) covenant heads²⁰² at least two of whom are ordained as elders.²⁰³

¹⁹¹ Is. 9:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:15-17; Heb. 7:1-3; Rev. 15:3.

¹⁹² Deu. 1:13-17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7. A constitutional republic is a form of government in which covenantal representatives (elders) rule the government, being limited in their rule to the constitutional documents which give order, rights, powers and authority to such offices. This statement in no way is to be used so as to derive, authorize or order church government from any civil form of government. Further, historically, the church has set the standard for rule in that civil governments follow the pattern and standard set by the church in their governance and not the reverse.

¹⁹³ 1 Cor. 1:11-12. Note: There is no place for Chloe's home to appeal except the apostle.

¹⁹⁴ Mat. 26:26-29; 28:19; Rom. 10:15; Eph. 4:10-13.

¹⁹⁵ Ex. 20:1-17; Deu. 5:6-21; Ps. 19:7-14; Is. 8:16-18; Rom. 7:22-25; Jam. 1:25; 2:8; 2:9-12.

¹⁹⁶ Mat. 28:18-19.

¹⁹⁷ Ps. 34:7-9.

¹⁹⁸ See previous note.

¹⁹⁹ 2 Cor. 3:1.

²⁰⁰ Mat. 18:17; 2 Cor. 2:6.

²⁰¹ 1 Cor. 1:2.

²⁰² Mat. 18:19-20. Covenant heads refers to the husband (who is a communicant member of the church) in each family unless there is no husband presiding over the family, which cases include the following communicant members: single women, widows, and women without husbands in the congregation.

²⁰³ Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23 with explanation ("Fixed" pertains to its regional representation).

SECTION 5. The Holy Spirit always, where it mentions church rule, and church government, ascribes it to elders.²⁰⁴ The work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of obeying their elders and submitting themselves unto them in the Lord. It is shown then that an organic or complete church is a body politic, consisting of some who rule and some who are governed in the Lord.²⁰⁵ Every church must have at least one ruling elder, in addition to the pastor, in order to constitute its own congregational presbytery.

SECTION 6. The authority which Christ has committed to the congregational presbytery is to shepherd²⁰⁶ the church of God, and accordingly, to call the church together upon any weighty occasion. When the members are so called:

- 1) they may not refuse to come without just cause,²⁰⁷
- 2) nor, when they are come, to depart before they are dismissed,²⁰⁸
- 3) nor speak in the church without permission of the elders,²⁰⁹
- 4) nor continue so doing when they require silence,²¹⁰
- 5) nor may they oppose neither contradict the judgment or sentence of the elders without sufficient and weighty cause. Such disorders tend to the confusion of the church and are subject to reproof or censure if continued.

SECTION 7. It also belongs to the congregational presbytery to:

- 1) rule the church with its court;²¹¹
- 2) examine any officers²¹²
- 3) examine individuals who wish to become members;²¹³
- 4) examine catechumens for public profession of faith;²¹⁴
- 5) receive accusations brought lawfully before the church and investigate said charges;²¹⁵
- 6) refuse such as are disorderly, excommunicate or receive them again;²¹⁶
- 7) prepare any matters which shall be brought before the church;²¹⁷
- 8) call congregational meetings and stated services, setting the times, place and reasons of assembling;²¹⁸

²⁰⁴ 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 11:2, 13:17, 24.

²⁰⁵ Heb. 13:17.

²⁰⁶ 1 Pet. 5: 1-4. Shepherd here draws reference to both feeding with the Word and proper discipline and oversight of the flock committed to the trust of the session of the church. The minister of the Word is primarily the officer charged with the preaching of the Word and the ruling elders are primarily charged with the rule of the church.

²⁰⁷ Num. 10:7; Heb. 10:25.

²⁰⁸ Acts 15:30.

²⁰⁹ 1 Cor. 1:10-13.

²¹⁰ Num. 12:2; Job 29:21; 1 Cor. 14:19, 29-34.

²¹¹ Ex. 18:13-26; Mat. 18:17; Heb. 13:24.

²¹² 1 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 13:17, 24.

²¹³ Ex. 20:20.

²¹⁴ (very remote); Heb. 13:24; 1 Tim. 4:16; 5:17 (whole book of 1 Timothy).

²¹⁵ Mat. 18:17; 2 Cor. 12:16-21.

²¹⁶ 2 Thes. 3:11-15; Mat. 16:19; 18:17-18; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:6-11.

²¹⁷ Mat. 18:17.

²¹⁸ 1 Cor 14:40; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; 10:25; Acts 14:23.

- 1 9) declare and publish the counsel and will of God concerning all matters pertaining to the rule,
2 ministry, finances, service and worship of the church;²¹⁹
- 3 10) pronounce sentence in judicial matters according to the Directory of Discipline and its own
4 church constitution, creeds and covenants;²²⁰
- 5 11) supervise the deaconate, any board of trustees, and all organizations and ministries belonging to
6 the church;²²¹
- 7 12) have final authority over the use of the church properties and assets;²²²
- 8 13) enter into contracts;²²³
- 9 14) officiate in hedging or closing the communion table in the administration of the sacrament;²²⁴
- 10 15) to send delegates from its membership to broader presbytery meetings;²²⁵
- 11 16) to veto any matter that has not been formerly approved by the congregational presbytery when
12 undertaken by any member or officer of the church in matters representing the church in which
13 they are acting as spokesman for the church;²²⁶
- 14 17) nominate men for office;²²⁷
- 15 18) share in counseling responsibilities when requested by the pastor;²²⁸
- 16 19) to engage in visitation;²²⁹ and 20) exhort.²³⁰
- 17 SECTION 8. The local church consists of a definite membership organized as a distinct congregation
18 (church).²³¹ The membership of the church is composed of both communicant and non-communicant
19 members.²³² Communicant church members are those who have been baptized, have a credible
20 profession of faith, are enrolled in the church and enjoy all the rights of church membership.²³³ Non-
21 communicant church members are the baptized children of communicant members.²³⁴
- 22 SECTION 9. The rights of all church members ordinarily include access to pastoral oversight,²³⁵
23 government and oversight of the church,²³⁶ worship,²³⁷ instruction²³⁸ and fellowship in the body.²³⁹

²¹⁹ 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24 (since the elders rule over the deacons, then they rule over the financial matters)

²²⁰ Mat. 18:17.

²²¹ 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:10; Acts 6:1-6; find O.T. deaconal basis.

²²² Heb. 13:17.

²²³ Ex. 19:5-8; Num. 11:16-17.

²²⁴ Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luk. 22:14-23; 1 Cor. 10:15-17; 11:19-27.

²²⁵ Acts 15 (not conclusive, see if more).

²²⁶ Heb. 13:17.

²²⁷ Deu. 1:13-17; Tit. 1:5.

²²⁸ Jam. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.

²²⁹ Jam. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.

²³⁰ 1 Pet. 5:1-3; Heb. 13:17, 22; Acts 14:20-22.

²³¹ Rom. 16:5-20.

²³² Acts 16:14-15.

²³³ 1 Cor. 1:9, 14.

²³⁴ 1 Cor. 7:14.

²³⁵ 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

²³⁶ Mat. 18:15-17.

²³⁷ John 4:22; Phil. 3:3.

²³⁸ 1 Cor. 4:15.

²³⁹ Rom. 12:10.

1 Additionally, the rights of the communicant membership include the use of the Lord's Table, baptism
2 of their children,²⁴⁰ marriage with a believer²⁴¹ and the burial of the dead.

3 SECTION 10. The congregational presbytery shall choose its moderator, secretary, deaconal overseer
4 and treasurer as well as other functions as is necessary for good order.²⁴² In cases where the
5 congregational presbytery is larger than two members, the pastor shall not hold the secretary nor
6 treasurer functions of the congregational presbytery unless, upon his appeal and with the concurrence
7 of the congregation (three-quarter vote of the voting members) such is approved by the congregational
8 presbytery. Congregational presbytery will also choose which elder shall attend the broader presbytery
9 meetings along with the pastor. If the pastor is unable to go to a meeting of the broader presbytery for
10 good and weighty cause, then he shall petition his congregational presbytery that it send in his place an
11 elder of his congregational presbytery, whom he shall designate.²⁴³ Every member of congregational
12 presbytery has an equal vote.

13 SECTION 11. The pastor must be present if a quorum is to be achieved, unless he notifies the
14 congregational presbytery of his inability to be present, for good cause. The congregational presbytery
15 may never conduct business with fewer than two elders present who are entitled to vote.²⁴⁴

16 SECTION 12. The congregational presbytery shall convene at the call of the moderator, or by request of
17 presbytery, or by the request of a quorum of the members of the congregational presbytery or upon its
18 own adjournment.²⁴⁵ A congregational presbytery shall do business if it first has a quorum of its
19 ruling elders. Such a quorum of ruling elders shall consist of: 1) one ruling elder if there are less than
20 three; 2) two ruling elders if there are up to four ruling elders in the church; 3) one half of all ruling
21 elders if there are five or more in the church.

22 SECTION 13. If the church has no pastor, the congregational presbytery, itself, shall choose a minister
23 from the regional presbytery or may request that the presbytery provide a minister who shall meet with
24 the congregational presbytery in its deliberations. Such a man shall have voting authority and, if
25 agreeable to the congregational presbytery, shall be the moderator of its meetings.²⁴⁶

26 SECTION 14. The congregational presbytery shall keep the following records solely for its own
27 ecclesiastical use:²⁴⁷ 1) the rolls of the members of the church, both communicant and their non-
28 communicant children, and voting members 2) a record of births, baptisms, deaths, censures,
29 restorations and removals, 3) the minutes of the congregational meetings.

30 SECTION 15. The names of members shall be placed upon or removed from the rolls of the church by
31 order of congregational presbytery, according to the Directory of Discipline. If a member requests to
32 be transferred to another CRPC congregation, the secretary of the congregational presbytery (or clerk)
33 shall send a letter of transfer, commending him and his family to their care. The secretary of the
34 congregational presbytery of the receiving church shall notify the sending church of the date of his

²⁴⁰ 1 Cor. 7:14.

²⁴¹ Neh. 13; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-25; 1 Tim. 2:15, 4:3.

²⁴² 1 Cor. 14:40.

²⁴³ Acts 15:1-2.

²⁴⁴ Mat. 18:19-20. A quorum shall consist of the pastor and the number of ruling elders specified in Section 11. If the pastor cannot be present for good cause and the meeting cannot be rescheduled for some pressing necessity then the quorum shall consist of the ruling elders as specified in Section 11.

²⁴⁵ 1 Cor. 14:40.

²⁴⁶ 1 Cor. 14:40.

²⁴⁷ 1 Cor. 14:40; cf. 1 Cor. 7:14; 15:29; (reference here is to ceremonial washing in the old covenant concerning the death of a covenant member for which account had to be made); 2 Cor. 2:7.

reception, upon which notification the secretary of the sending church shall remove his name from the roll of the sending church.²⁴⁸

SECTION 16. If a member desires removal to a church outside of the CRPC and the congregational presbytery cannot dissuade him from taking such action, then the congregational presbytery shall grant him a letter of standing which shall designate his good standing in the congregation or shall send a letter of standing with complaint to the receiving church. If the congregational presbytery believes corrective action must be taken, then it shall bring disciplinary action against him. Once it has discerned that the individual has departed in the manner described, the congregational presbytery may discipline or remove the individual from the roll of the church.²⁴⁹

SECTION 17. Just reasons for a member's removal of himself from the church are:

- 1) if a person cannot continue without partaking in sin—heresy or apostasy;²⁵⁰
- 2) in case of personal persecution.²⁵¹ In case of general persecution, then the church as a whole risks being scattered.²⁵²
- 3) In case of a real, and not only pretended, lack of competent subsistence, a door being opened for a better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification.²⁵³ In these, and like cases, a member may lawfully remove himself and the church cannot lawfully detain him.

SECTION 18. It is unlawful and sinful to withdraw from public membership for these reasons:

- 1) To separate out of contempt for the church's fellowship.²⁵⁴
- 2) Out of covetousness.²⁵⁵
- 3) A mere seeking of personal advancement without spiritual nourishment.²⁵⁶
- 4) Out of schism.²⁵⁷
- 5) Out of a lack of love.²⁵⁸
- 6) Out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness or some evil only conceived which might and should be tolerated in the church and addressed and healed with a spirit of meekness.²⁵⁹
- 7) Out of evil, though not easily discerned, of which the church is not yet convinced nor admonished.²⁶⁰

SECTION 19. If a member is called to remove only for a time and wishes to go to a church where they are temporarily located (within the CRPC), then letters of recommendation shall be sent by the

²⁴⁸ 2 Cor. 3:1.

²⁴⁹ 1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Cor. 3:1.

²⁵⁰ 2 Cor. 6:17; 2 Pet. 2.

²⁵¹ Acts 20-22.

²⁵² Acts 8:3-4.

²⁵³ 1 Tim. 5:8.

²⁵⁴ Heb. 10:25.

²⁵⁵ 1 Cor. 1:12.

²⁵⁶ 1Jo 2:19.

²⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 12:24-25; 1Jo 2:19.

²⁵⁸ Gal. 5:13-6:1.

²⁵⁹ 1 Cor. 12:24-26.

²⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 11:18-19.

member's sending church requesting such oversight. Such an individual shall participate in all rights as a member, except voting in congregational meetings.²⁶¹

SECTION 20. If a congregational presbytery becomes so small (less than two elders) or does no longer exist, the regional presbytery shall provide for elections and ordination of officers as are needed from within the congregation. In lieu of this and if the congregation agrees, then presbytery may appoint ruling elders and/or ministers from the regional presbytery (unless the presbytery decides otherwise), to act as a temporary congregational presbytery in order to strengthen the existing congregational presbytery.²⁶² Minutes of the meetings of such temporary congregational presbytery to be forwarded to members of the regional presbytery from which such appointments were made as well as the congregational presbyteries from which temporary congregational presbytery appointments were made. Decisions of the temporary congregational presbytery are subject to review and revision by the appointing regional presbytery. Temporary congregational presbytery appointees from other churches are not eligible for election as office-bearers of the congregation. Congregations under oversight of a temporary congregational presbytery which do not practically qualify as a particular congregation (per DCO 25:3) must declare their church to be a mission work and follow the procedures set forth in DCO 25 to be again particularized.²⁶³

SECTION 21. This power of government in the elders does not prejudice the power of privilege in the brotherhood²⁶⁴ as neither the power of privilege in the brethren does prejudice the power of government in the congregational presbytery. They may agree to act together as we see in the example of the apostles and brethren. However, though government belong to the elders, the power of privilege remains with the brotherhood.²⁶⁵ For example, the power of judgment in matters of personal censure, as in Matthew 18:15, and the power of liberty in matters of liberty, I Corinthians 8. All other liberties and rights given in Scripture are reserved to the people of the congregation.²⁶⁶

SECTION 22. A pastor may not leave his congregation to assume another pastoral charge within presbytery without the advice and consent of his congregational and regional presbytery. If his congregational presbytery does not approve he may then make his appeal to presbytery, as may his congregational presbytery. A pastor may not leave his congregation to assume another pastoral charge outside his regional presbytery without his credentials being passed by his presbytery to the outside body.

SECTION 23. A previously unaffiliated church cannot become subject to any presbytery but by approbation of the congregation.²⁶⁷

²⁶¹ Rom. 16:1-2.

²⁶² Tit. 1:1-5.

²⁶³ This section updated at 6-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes for grounds and details.

²⁶⁴ Brotherhood refers to the brethren of the particular congregation. They have the same privileges as the royal priesthood of Chapter 1, Section 3.

²⁶⁵ See Chapter 1, Section 3.

²⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 8:9, 10:29.

²⁶⁷ Deu. 1:13-17; Gal. 2:1-13.

CHAPTER 14

REMUNERATION OF CHURCH OFFICERS

SECTION 1. The apostle concludes that necessary and sufficient remuneration is due unto the pastor. Moreover, the Scripture does not only call elders laborers and workmen but also speaking of them does say, that the laborer is worthy of his hire.²⁶⁸ If the church has financial strength, then it may remunerate the ruling elders, after it has secured the subsistence for the minister.

SECTION 2. The congregational presbytery shall determine the amounts and kinds of remuneration which shall be supplied to the officers of the church.²⁶⁹

SECTION 3. As the Levites of old who had properties given to them of their ownership, it is at least necessary that the church strive to provide housing for the pastor and his family. If there is strength, then the church may provide a home for the pastor to own.²⁷⁰

SECTION 4. Scripture requires this remuneration as a bound duty and due debt and not as a matter of alms nor of free gift.²⁷¹ It is the duty of the church members to tithe to their own church.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ 1 Tim. 5:17-18.

²⁶⁹ 1 Tim. 5:18.

²⁷⁰ Lev. 25:32.

²⁷¹ 1 Cor. 9:4-14.

²⁷² Heb. 7:5.

CHAPTER 15

ADMISSION OF CHURCH MEMBERS

SECTION 1. Membership in the churches of Christ upon earth does not by God's appointment stand so wide open that all sorts of people good or bad may freely enter therein at their pleasure. Persons who are solicitous of church membership must first regularly attend the duly constituted services of the church (especially the Lord's Day services), attend membership classes with permission of congregational presbytery for instruction in the standards of the church and then be examined by the congregational presbytery as to character and faith, including transfer of membership from another church outside presbytery. The officers are thus charged with "keeping the doors of the church" by such examination of character, profession of faith and regularity of attendance.²⁷³ Such people as are scandalous in conduct and upon credible testimony of evidence or witnesses are perceived as a danger to the flock may be confronted and exhorted not to further attend so as not to disturb the peace of the church.²⁷⁴

SECTION 2. The things which are requisite to be found in all communicant church members are:

- 1) repentance from sin (as defined by God's Law and according to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms)²⁷⁵,
- 2) faith in Jesus Christ (according to Scripture and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms)²⁷⁶,
- 3) belief in the inerrancy and content of Scripture (according to Scripture and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms),²⁷⁷
- 4) acceptance of the covenantal authority and discipline of the church (according to Scripture, the particular church constitution of each church, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as well as the Book of Church Government),²⁷⁸
- 5) acceptance of the Covenant of the church (if there is one) which they will sign. Each congregation is encouraged to write a covenant²⁷⁹ in order to obviate any objection which would claim ignorance of good order in the church.²⁸⁰

SECTION 3. The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church. Weak Christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in church members and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in the faith.²⁸¹

²⁷³ See previous footnotes concerning each of these points.

²⁷⁴ Prov. 26:20-26.

²⁷⁵ Rom. 1:17-32; 2:15; 3:28-29; WCF 6:6; WLC 24.

²⁷⁶ Eph 2:8; WCF 16; WLC 72, 73, 153.

²⁷⁷ Ps. 119; Mat. 5:18-19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; WCF 1.

²⁷⁸ 1 Cor. 14:40.

²⁷⁹ See Appendix A for a copy of the Covenant of Church Membership.

²⁸⁰ Often new members will later claim that the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith involve complexities which they did not understand at the time of membership. Regrettably, this is used as an excuse to claim ignorance of basic tenets of covenanting unto good order so as to avoid schism and maintain the integrity of the church and their own character. The covenant as listed in Appendix A strives to impress upon a new member such basic obligations and exposure of common deceits without developing into doctrinal complexities.

²⁸¹ Rom. 14:1.

SECTION 4. Children of adult members enter solely upon admission of at least one parent being under a holy covenant. Such children, if not previously baptized in the faith, must be brought forward for holy baptism in order to be accounted members of the church covenant.²⁸²

SECTION 5. In case any through excessive fear or other infirmity be unable to make their personal testimony of their faith in Christ in public, it is sufficient that the elders, having received private satisfaction, give an account of their satisfaction in the case to the church in public.²⁸³

SECTION 6. A new member shall be received and have his name placed on the roll of the church only by order of the congregational presbytery. The circumstances involving reception of any new member are the following:

1) by letter of transfer within the CRPC;²⁸⁴

2) by letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice outside the CRPC;²⁸⁵

3) by an affirmation of faith;²⁸⁶

4) by a confession of faith;²⁸⁷

5) by being a noncommunicant baptized member;²⁸⁸ or

6) by being a noncommunicant unbaptized child of a member (who will be subject to baptism).²⁸⁹

SECTION 7. A member may be received by a letter of transfer from another church in the CRPC.²⁹⁰ The congregational presbytery shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and the congregation apprised by public announcement. All the rights and privileges of membership then belong to this covenant member. No rights or privileges shall be qualified, until any pending appellate process has been exhausted by the broadest CRPC court to which a complaint can be made except in the circumstance described in DCD 13:2.²⁹¹

SECTION 8. A member may be received by a letter of transfer or its equivalent from another church of like faith and practice which has been approved by the congregational presbytery or regional presbytery. Prior to being received into membership by letter of transfer, the congregation must be apprised by public announcement to the church.²⁹² The congregational presbytery may examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone,²⁹³ confesses an hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace,²⁹⁴ and is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God.²⁹⁵ The congregational presbytery shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership. All the rights and privileges of membership then belong to this covenant member. Such

²⁸² Gen. 17:11-12; Ps. 127:3-5; Mat. 18:1-5; 19:13-14; 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 7:14.

²⁸³ Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 14:40; Gal. 6:2.

²⁸⁴ Rom. 16:1-16.

²⁸⁵ 2 Cor. 3:1.

²⁸⁶ Acts 2:46-47.

²⁸⁷ Acts 8:37-38.

²⁸⁸ 1 Cor. 7:14.

²⁸⁹ 1 Cor. 7:14.

²⁹⁰ Rom. 16:1.

²⁹¹ Phm 1-2, 12-20.

²⁹² Phm 1, 12.

²⁹³ HC 1.

²⁹⁴ HC 20, 21, 60.

²⁹⁵ 1Pe 1:14-15.

rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CRPC court to which a complaint can be made.²⁹⁶

SECTION 9. A member may be received by an affirmation of faith. An affirmation is made by an individual who has previously confessed his faith and united with a church other than a church of like faith and practice and now desires to become a member of a church of the CRPC.²⁹⁷ The congregational presbytery shall examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone,²⁹⁸ confesses an hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace,²⁹⁹ and is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God. The congregational presbytery shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and he has made a public profession of faith before the congregation. All the rights and privileges of membership then belong to this covenant member. Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CRPC court to which a complaint can be made.³⁰⁰

SECTION 10. A member may be received by a confession of faith. A confession of faith is made by one who has not previously been a communicant member of a church, and now desires to become a communicant member of a church of the CRPC.³⁰¹ The congregational presbytery shall examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone,³⁰² confesses an hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace,³⁰³ and is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God. The congregational presbytery shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and he has made a public profession of faith before the congregation. All the rights and privileges of membership then belong to this covenant member. Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CRPC court to which a complaint can be made.³⁰⁴

SECTION 11. Noncommunicant unbaptized children whose parent(s) or guardian(s) is/are members of the church shall be received by baptism.³⁰⁵

SECTION 12. Noncommunicant baptized members may be received with their parent(s) or guardian(s).³⁰⁶

²⁹⁶ Phm 1-2, 12-20.

²⁹⁷ Acts 2:46-47.

²⁹⁸ HC 1.

²⁹⁹ HC 20, 21, 60.

³⁰⁰ Phm 1-2, 12-20.

³⁰¹ Acts 8:37-38.

³⁰² HC 1.

³⁰³ HC 20, 21, 60.

³⁰⁴ Phm 1-2, 12-20.

³⁰⁵ Acts 16:31-33.

³⁰⁶ 1 Cor.7:14.

CHAPTER 16
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES

SECTION 1. The fellowship of the churches is exercised in many ways.

- 1) By way of mutual care in taking thought for the welfare, necessity and safety of each other.³⁰⁷
- 2) By way of consultation one with another when there is need or occasion, as determined by presbytery or congregational presbytery.³⁰⁸
- 3) A letter of admonition or counsel may be sent by the presbytery to a church if so requested by another church in presbytery when there is concern over schism, scandal or other troubled concerns and, must be read to the congregation in special congregational meeting assembled for such reason within 2 months or the regularly scheduled congregational meeting (within 2 months) unless the congregational presbytery refuse and appeal to synodical presbytery at its next meeting. If there be time constraints involved, then presbytery must so indicate when it sends such a letter and, if needed, synodical presbytery will send a special court to hear the appeal and parties to the issue.³⁰⁹
- 4) Fellowship activities among the members of the churches can be arranged through the congregational presbyteries involved and should be encouraged where possible.³¹⁰
- 5) Ministerial helps can be offered as has already been stated, including the use and loan of officers of other churches.³¹¹
- 6) Ministry can be coordinated through the churches themselves in conjunction with other churches, especially in matters pertaining to charity work.³¹²
- 7) Administration of the sacraments, funerals, ordinations, courts, marriages and other ministerial helps can be provided by other churches in presbytery, if requested by the congregational presbytery in need or as otherwise specified in this Book of Church Government.³¹³

³⁰⁷ 2 Cor. 8.

³⁰⁸ Acts 15.

³⁰⁹ Acts 15.

³¹⁰ Rom. 16:1-2.

³¹¹ 1 Thes. 3:1-10.

³¹² Acts 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 8;.

³¹³ Acts 4:32-37; 2 Tim. 4:9-22.

CHAPTER 17
ECCLESIASTICAL MEETINGS

SECTION 1. The congregational presbytery may choose times and places convenient for its meetings.

SECTION 2. Congregational presbytery must provide orderly means by which members may address the congregational presbytery.³¹⁴

SECTION 3. A reasonable attempt must be made by the Moderator to notify each elder of the time and place of such meetings or of any change in the scheduling of such a meeting. Such changes can only be made by the Moderator of the congregational presbytery.³¹⁵

SECTION 4. All matters to be brought before the congregation are brought solely by the congregational presbytery who alone can call a congregational meeting. The date, time, and location of all congregational meetings must be announced either orally or by insertion in the church bulletin at the worship services of at least two (2) Lord's Days prior to the time set for the meeting, or by circular letter to all voting members at the last address they have provided to the church, mailed at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting.³¹⁶

SECTION 5. If business cannot be concluded or if the congregational presbytery so desire, another meeting can be arranged for any time subsequent to the one announced. The congregational presbytery may put the congregation upon notice at any congregational meeting of its intent to call for another meeting at any time subsequent (up to 6 months in duration) without specifying the time and place until at least 1 week ahead, except in meetings where a vote will be taken. In such cases, the congregational presbytery must announce ahead 2 weeks (which announcement can be made in congregational meeting).

SECTION 6. A quorum of one half of the voting members of the congregation is needed to convene a meeting.³¹⁷ Voting is by voting members of the congregation as defined by the local church constitution and by-laws. It is understood that any limitation on the exercise of the franchise by one or more members of a family must be according to an objective basis; examples of such objective criteria would include (but are not limited to) the following: voting by heads of household only; voting by male heads of household only; voting only by those who can subscribe to a particular statement of faith; voting only by those who tithe their income to the local church; voting only by those who have been communicant members for a certain period of time. If voting is limited to those who have been communicant members for a certain period of time, that period of time cannot exceed one year. Any communicant member who believes that the rules regarding the franchise are being enacted or applied in an arbitrary way has the right to complain with respect to the matter; and a broader court has the authority to overturn any rules or application of the rules with regard to congregational franchise which may be found to be arbitrary.

SECTION 7. The act of a majority present at an ecclesiastical meeting at which a quorum is present, when the vote is taken, shall be the act of the body meeting unless a specific amount of majority, e.g. 2/3 or 3/4, is otherwise required by the DCO, in which case, that specific majority being achieved shall be the act of the body meeting.

³¹⁴ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³¹⁵ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³¹⁶ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³¹⁷ See previous footnotes concerning these issues. Chapter 13, Sections 10-11.

SECTION 8. Any issue which the congregational presbytery brings to the congregation for vote will be determined by majority vote except as otherwise specified below.

SECTION 9. Issues which require the formal presentation and approval of the congregation in its meeting are:³¹⁸

- 1) The calling of officers — three-fourths (3/4) vote of the congregation assembled by voting members, voted upon in written secret ballot, for approval.
- 2) Changes in the standards of the church,— not including the Standards of the CRPC,—three-fourths (3/4) vote of the congregation assembled by voting members, voted upon in written secret ballot, for approval.
- 3) Buying and selling of church properties shall be done according to the local church constitution and by-laws.
- 4) Legal matters pertaining to the civil magistrate X three-fourths (3/4) vote of the congregation assembled by voting members, voted upon in written secret ballot, for approval.
- 5) Withdrawal from presbytery — three-fourths (3/4) vote of the congregation assembled by voting members, voted upon in written secret ballot, for approval. This vote will take place only after 90 days notice has been given to the communications clerk of the presbytery and the presbytery has been given opportunity to send representative(s) to meet with the congregation in its congregational meeting.
- 6) Dissolution of a particular congregation — three-fourths (3/4) vote of the congregation assembled by voting members, voted upon in written secret ballot, for approval. This vote will take place only after 90 days notice has been given to the communications secretary of the regional presbytery and the presbytery has been given opportunity to meet and send representative(s) to meet with the congregation in its congregational meeting as set forth by the regional presbytery which, alone, has the right to dissolve a CRPC congregation (DCO 18:11, 2).

SECTION 10. For the purpose of keeping order, the Moderator of congregational presbytery has the authority to limit length of discussion to avoid filibuster or disorderly conduct. Only voting members may speak in congregational meetings.³¹⁹ Covenant heads³²⁰ of families are encouraged to hear, to weigh and to represent non-covenant heads so as not to divide households.

³¹⁸ The following issues pertain to the rights and privileges of the brotherhood of a particular congregation.

³¹⁹ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³²⁰ Covenant heads refers to the husband (who is a communicant member of the church) in each family unless there is no husband presiding over the family, which cases include the following communicant members: single women, widows, and women without husbands in the congregation.

CHAPTER 18
THE BROADER PRESBYTERIES³²¹

SECTION 1. The regional presbytery is the governing body of the regional church.

SECTION 2. A regional church consists of all the members of the member congregations which sends representatives to its regional presbytery.

SECTION 3. The broader presbyteries shall be composed of two elders from each church, normally one ruling elder and one minister of the word. Each church is entitled to two votes, so exercised by the two delegates sent. Privilege of the floor shall be exercised only by the delegates so empowered by the churches unless otherwise permitted by the broader assembly. If a church has not the ability to comply to the above, then it shall render an account thereof to the broader assembly. Each church shall provide credentials for its delegates and alternate delegates. No proxy voting will be allowed. A quorum shall consist of the assembling of at least one-half (½) of the member churches of the broader presbytery irrespective of the number of delegates sent.

SECTION 4. Presbytery has the power to grant the privilege of the floor to whomever it may deem appropriate.

SECTION 5. Each regional presbytery meeting will be opened by an officer of the convening church³²² responsible for that presbytery meeting. The docket order will ordinarily be as follows:

(Convening church brings the docket and runs the meeting until the election of a moderator. The convening church secretary records the meeting until a secretary is elected.)

Call to Order

Opening in Prayer

Devotion

Singing of a Psalm or hymn,³²³

Submission of credentials.³²⁴

Roll Call of members, guests and observers.

Declaration of Quorum.³²⁵

Election of Moderator, Secretary and Preparer of the Short Report from voting members present at the meeting.

(New Moderator takes over)

Reading aloud of the "Introductory Principles of the CRPC".³²⁶

³²¹ See previous footnotes concerning presbytery and its officers.

³²² The host and convening churches shall be the same church, if possible, as long as the location of the Presbytery is rotated.

³²³ Changed "song" for "hymn" 11-2008 Presbytery. See minutes XV, D, (3).

³²⁴ Switched order of "submission of credentials" and "Roll call of member..." 11-2008 Presbytery. See minutes XV, D, (2).

³²⁵ Order changed to comply with practice 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. H. for grounds and details.

- 1 Should privilege of the floor be given to guests?
- 2 Docket presentation, orders of the day and adoption³²⁷
- 3 Reports from the Churches, Ministers and Mission Works
- 4 Review and Approval of Former Minutes
- 5 Business from previous minutes.³²⁸
- 6 Communications
- 7 Overtures
- 8 Additional Business (as allowed by the DCO)
- 9 Website changes approved in light of business at this meeting.
- 10 Determining next date and convening church responsible for the next meeting.
- 11 Issuing and signing of any needed certificates or credentials.³²⁹
- 12 Reading and approval of the short report.
- 13 Approve the concept minutes at the end of each day and end of total meeting. (Provide written minutes
- 14 in electronic and paper form at the end of each meeting.)
- 15 Adjournment & Prayer
- 16 *The Moderator will conduct his duties until the meeting is adjourned and then his function shall cease.*
- 17 SECTION 6. The regional presbytery shall choose a secretary for its meetings who may be an officer of
- 18 any church.
- 19 SECTION 7. Committees shall choose such an individual and any other officers needed, unless regional
- 20 presbytery shall choose. Time and place will be determined by the same means.
- 21 SECTION 8. A communications clerk will be elected for the regional presbytery for an indefinite period
- 22 of time as determined by the presbytery for the purpose of receiving and forwarding all
- 23 communications by post, by phone, or e-mail to the convening church responsible for the next
- 24 presbytery meeting.
- 25 SECTION 9. All matters to be submitted to regional presbytery for its next meeting must be presented
- 26 by a congregational presbytery or by a minister of the Word. Such matters, when so presented, must
- 27 be sent to the communications secretary in order to be forwarded by him to the convening church³³⁰.
- 28 When the minister of the Word alone intends to bring an issue before the regional presbytery, he must
- 29 inform the congregational presbytery under whose authority he works of his intention and the content

³²⁶ Reading of the Introductory Principles at each meeting established 11-2008 Presbytery. See Minutes XV, E.

³²⁷ Eliminated “deliberation of the docket” previously following this item at 11-2008 Presbytery. See minutes XV, D, (1).

³²⁸ This subsection addition was made at 11-2014 American Presbytery. See minutes for details.

³²⁹ This paragraph was added at the 11-2012 Presbytery. See Minutes 14 B for details and grounds.

³³⁰ It is obvious that any issues to be submitted by the session of the convening church itself need not be sent to the communications secretary but must be forwarded to the other churches and ministries as any other matter.

of the matter to be submitted and so indicate in his overture. If the congregational presbytery differs with him concerning the matter, he must attach a statement concerning the matter in question at the time he forwards his request. Additionally, the difference must be stated in a separate report prepared and forwarded by the secretary of the congregational presbytery. These documents will be forwarded to the regional presbytery so that it may hear the matter.

SECTION 10. All judicial matters will be handled according to the Directory of Discipline. In all non-judicial matters, the convening church must, at least 35 days prior to the convening of the regional presbytery, provide a docket and list of overtures to all congregational presbyteries in the regional presbytery. Anyone presenting an overture to the presbytery must send it to the communications secretary and the convening church at least 45 days prior to the convening of the regional presbytery, unless necessity prevents such 45 day notice, of which necessity presbytery must be informed. Regional presbytery judges that necessity truly existed³³¹ by hearing the matter and voicing its agreement by a three-quarters (3/4) vote majority of all delegates. It will then go on to deliberate the matter as it would any other matter by affirming, amending, denying or refusing to hear the matter any further. Regional presbytery may also send the matter back to the ministry, church or churches where it originated with instructions as to further handling of the matter. Regional presbytery may also assign the matter to a ministry, church or churches for further action with instructions to that effect.

SECTION 11. The regional presbytery has the power to offer whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its authority. While always respecting the rights and liberties guaranteed to the individual congregations, the regional presbytery has the power:

- 1) to receive congregations;
- 2) to unite and dissolve congregations at the request of the people and congregational presbyteries involved;
- 3) to visit congregations as specified;
- 4) to receive and issue all appeals according to the Book of Church Government;
- 5) to resolve all questions of doctrine or discipline;
- 6) to condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity and peace of the church;
- 7) to examine, license, ordain and authorize the training of all pastoral candidates;
- 8) to install and ordain, judge and remove pastors according to the Directory of Discipline;
- 9) to offer its united counsels to its member churches; and
- 10) if a member of the CRPC without a local CRPC church to attend, or desiring membership in the CRPC, appeals to the regional presbytery for admission, the presbytery will have power to direct such a person to a local CRPC church for admission. However, the congregational presbytery of such a church may refuse admission to its membership but not without cause. Regional presbytery shall not have the power in such cases to impose the membership of an individual upon a local church by any means whatsoever including judicial authority.
- 11) to commend. From time to time, a published work (books, video or other published media) may be submitted to the CRPC for its commendation. It is not necessary for any to request such commendation. If requested, the CRPC may grant its commendation to such a published work. However, such commendation will not be binding upon the churches in the CRPC. If a published

³³¹ Necessity here means that bringing the matter to presbytery without two weeks notice was unavoidable for some reason, which reason must be explained to presbytery for its approval before the matter in question may be deliberated by the presbytery.

work is not commended or not submitted for commendation, the CRPC herein gives notice that (unless otherwise stated by the CRPC) such shall not be construed disparagingly.

12) to recommend a ministry. From time to time, a ministry may be submitted to the CRPC for its recommendation. It is not necessary for any to request such recommendation. If requested, the CRPC may grant its recommendation to such a ministry. However, such recommendation will not be binding upon the churches in the CRPC. If a ministry is not recommended or submitted for recommendation, the CRPC herein gives notice that (unless otherwise stated by the CRPC) such shall not be construed disparagingly.

13) The broader presbyteries have the authority to make decisions with respect to areas of the DCO, DCD and DCW which do not cover a particular situation as it would be impossible to include all contingencies therein.³³²

SECTION 12. If an emergency shall require a regional presbytery meeting sooner than the next scheduled meeting, the convening church of the next stated meeting³³³ shall, at the request of any two ministers (from two existing particular churches) and two ruling elders (from two existing particular churches), call a special meeting. In the event that insufficient teaching or ruling elders exist in two churches of that regional presbytery, then teaching and/or ruling elders from three churches shall be required. It is strongly advised that informal queries be made of the most convenient dates for such a presbytery to take place prior to the formal calling of the meeting so as to assure maximum attendance and a quorum. "Emergency" shall herein be defined as such extenuating circumstances that cannot reasonably wait until the next regularly scheduled presbytery such as matters pertaining to examination of candidates, concerning adjudication but not for adjudication itself, reports from presbytery committees upon which urgent decisions are needed, and so forth. Unless unavoidable, matters of a grave and serious nature should not be conducted in such meetings. For this purpose correspondence shall be sent, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, to every minister and clerk of every congregational presbytery that is a member of the regional presbytery, at least ten days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meetings except the particular business of the emergency for which it has been convened. The decisions of any emergency meeting of presbytery shall be reviewed and must be ratified at the next regularly scheduled meeting of presbytery in order to continue to bear binding authority.³³⁴

SECTION 13. Each day's meeting shall open and close with prayer.³³⁵

SECTION 14. All presbyteries beyond that of the congregational presbytery shall be considered in existence only during the time of duly called meetings. There is not authority of the broader presbytery capable of being exercised outside of such meetings except as granted in the mandate given to an individual or committee for a specific purpose as the presbytery's representative.

SECTION 15. If the only presbytery above the congregational level is the American presbytery, the normal duties of the regional presbytery will devolve upon the American presbytery. The American presbytery will follow the normal procedures for the conduct of business as found in DCO 18, with the understanding that any of the particular requirements may be suspended at any time, according to established CRPC³³⁶ procedures. Furthermore, any meetings of the American presbytery may be held via telephone conference call, in which one or more members of the presbytery may participate from a distance."

³³² 13) added at 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. Q. for details and grounds.

³³³ "of the stated meeting" added at 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. G. for details and grounds.

³³⁴ Changes in this section made 6-2007 Presbytery. See minutes for details.

³³⁵ 1 Tim. 2:8.

³³⁶ "normal parliamentary" replaced by "established CRPC" 11-2008 Presbytery. See Minutes XV, D, (13).

1 SECTION 16: **Standard American Presbytery meeting days and times** are hereby established on
2 Mondays from 7 p.m. to Wednesdays at 3 p.m. for purposes of scheduling on such dates as are
3 determined by the American Presbytery unless otherwise stated by the convening church at the time
4 when the docket is sent out.³³⁷ Convening churches, hosting churches, delegates and presbyters
5 should plan accordingly. The attendance of presbyters/delegates are required during these times
6 except in case of emergencies, excuse from the assembled presbytery, orders of the day or
7 adjournment.

³³⁷ Changed to convening church giving estimated time of conclusion at 07-2008 American Presbytery. See minutes.

CHAPTER 19

CONGREGATIONS WITHOUT PASTORS

SECTION 1. A congregation which has no pastor shall continue to conduct worship and undertake all business under the authority of its congregational presbytery. Regional presbytery may be asked to provide a pastor for the congregation.³³⁸

SECTION 2. Normally, only ministers and licentiates of the CRPC shall be employed in pulpit supply. However, for lack of such supply availability, the congregational presbytery may ask another minister or licentiate to supply, with approval of the regional presbytery.³³⁹

³³⁸ With no minister present the sacraments will not be administered in the congregation.

³³⁹ See previous footnote concerning licentiates.

CHAPTER 20

RECEPTION OF ORDAINED MINISTERS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS.

This chapter contains the process by which previously ordained men shall be examined and received by the regional presbytery.

SECTION 1: The request from a local church for an ordained minister from another denomination to be placed as a Minister of the Gospel in their church shall include the following accompanied documentation:

- 1) References and letters of recommendation from whatever reputable source, especially from his former churches and denominations attesting to his character and integrity as a Minister of the Gospel including the time and circumstances under which the person providing the reference.
- 2) Copy of Letter of Call to the Candidate from the calling church (if relevant).
- 3) Copy of Letter to the Church of Acceptance of the Call by the Candidate (if relevant).
- 4) Letters of academic attestation (as many as possible and as relevant).
- 5) The Candidate's answers to the questions of the *Checklist for Church Officers* (Appendix A) and his agreement to abide by the limitations in DCO 31 should any exceptions/scruples be noted.
- 6) The Candidate's completion of the *Questionnaire For Candidates Licensing, Ordination Or Reception As Ministers From Other Denominations* (Appendix B) if required in advance by presbytery .

SECTION 2: Presbytery (or her appointees) shall determine that the accompanied documentation is in good order and that the Reception Examination may take place. The Reception Examination (sometimes referred to as a *Colloquium Doctrum*) is not as thorough as an examination for ordination, but shall still seek to cover the same basic areas to determine the candidate's qualifications and compatibility within the CRPC. It is strongly advised that such documentation be submitted 45 days in advance to give presbyters opportunity to thoroughly examine them and inquire about anything that might be missing so as to preclude a candidate's arrival without all the proper documentation. It shall be the task of the convening church to verify that what is submitted meets the requirements of this chapter and to notify the calling church of any omissions as soon as possible, for their prompt submission.

SECTION 3: The presbytery shall conduct this examination to at least cover the following areas by appointing examiners in each of these areas sufficiently in advance to insure their preparation for the examination process:

- 1) Doctrine and Creeds
- 2) Church History
- 3) Church Polity
- 4) Ethics
- 5) Pastoral Theology & Practice

6) View & Knowledge of Scripture

7) Personal Faith & Life

8) Understanding and agreement of covenantal commitment within the CRPC.

9) Any other areas of importance to the members of the Presbytery

SECTION 4: Presbytery may recess at any time(s) during examination, but at the conclusion shall go into Closed Session to discuss the Examination and determine if the Ministers has sustained the Examination to make him eligible for transfer into the CRPC. There should be a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote in favor of the candidate's performance in items 1) and 8) in Section 3 above, and at least a majority in all the others for his total examination to be sustained.

SECTION 5: Upon sustaining the Examination, the Minister shall be informed and prayer of thanks given. If the Candidate has not sustained the examination, he shall be notified if and how he may rectify the areas of concern and shall also be notified that he, through the calling Church, may request a revisiting of the issues of concern.

SECTION 6: Plans and details for the reception of the Minister into the CRPC shall be established as is convenient for both the minister and the calling church utilizing the following principles, procedures and vows:

1) At the time for installation the home church should request a minister of Presbytery to preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Afterwards the moderator shall briefly inform those assembled concerning the warrant and nature of the office of minister of the Word of God and concerning the duties which the minister's service will place upon him, and shall endeavor to give them a proper sense of the solemnity of both ordination to the office and installation in his field of service. Then addressing the candidate he shall propose to him the following questions:

a) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

b) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?

c) Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church?

d) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?

e) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son?

f) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

g) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the Gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before those among whom you labor wherever you may be?

h) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking

1 *upon you the work of a Minister of the Word of God in this church you are influenced by a*
2 *sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of His church?*

3 *i) Are you now willing to undertake the work of a Minister of the Word of God, and do you*
4 *promise to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties of this ministry as God may give you*
5 *strength?*

6 2) The candidate, having answered these questions in the affirmative shall by prayer be solemnly
7 received into the calling of Minister of the Gospel in this church and reception as a minister of the
8 Gospel in the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church. Prayer being ended, the officiating
9 minister, on behalf of both the local presbytery and the regional presbytery shall declare him to be
10 installed as of a Minister of the Word of God and received into the Covenant Reformed
11 Presbyterian Church. The presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

CHAPTER 21

LICENSING CANDIDATES TO EXHORT³⁴⁰

SECTION 1. The Holy Scriptures require that some trial be previously made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the gospel, in order that this sacred office may not be degraded by being committed to weak or unworthy men and that the churches may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose candidates for ordination shall first be licensed by regional presbyteries to exhort (i.e. speak a word of edification) as probationers. (The word “exhort” is used in lieu of “preach” to distinguish the word spoken by this probationer from that of a duly called, lawfully ordained minister of the Word with the full authority of the Lord Jesus Christ through His Church. Such licensure shall not authorize the licentiate to administer the sacraments of the Lord.) After a period of probation sufficient to make trial of their qualifications and service, and having received reports that their services are edifying to the church, the regional presbyteries may in due time proceed to ordain such probationers, or licentiates, to the sacred office.

SECTION 2. A candidate for licensure must be a male, communicant member of a local congregation of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church. Upon request by his congregational presbytery, he will be examined by the regional presbytery in which his church membership resides. The regional presbytery shall receive a written recommendation from the congregational presbytery of which the candidate is a member, certifying that in its judgment his Christian faith and potential gifts qualify him to stand trials for licensure with a view to ordination to the gospel ministry. It is of particular importance, at this time, that the regional presbytery inquire as to the grace of God in him and whether he be of such holiness of life as is requisite in a minister of the gospel. It is therefore the duty of the regional presbytery to examine him respecting his Christian faith, life, service, and the motives influencing him to desire the sacred office. The regional presbytery must show its continuing concern for the progress of all the licentiates under its care, and shall continually guide, counsel, and help them as they further prepare themselves for the work of the ministry. However, the primary care and oversight of the licentiate remains with the congregational presbytery in which his membership resides. Churches are strongly urged to use the *Checklist For Church Officers* found in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for Licentiates, which information should then be made available to the regional presbytery when licensing approval is sought. Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples they have that are not already allowed by Const. I,B, 1 or 2 and be prepared to abide by the provisions of DCO 31.

SECTION 3. It is highly reproachful to religion and dangerous to the church to entrust the preaching of the gospel to weak and ignorant men. The presbytery shall therefore ordinarily license a candidate only if he has received a four year bachelor degree or its academic equivalent from a college or university, and has completed an adequate course of theological study equivalent to at least one year and a half. Proofs of academic attestation shall be provided to the presbytery by the local church requesting the licensure of the candidate.

SECTION 4. Except under unusual circumstances beyond the control of the candidate and affirmed by the vote of the presbytery, trials for licensure shall usually not extend beyond one calendar year from the first meeting of the regional presbytery at which any portion of a candidate’s trials for licensure were commenced.

³⁴⁰ The chapter title changed at 07-2009 American Presbytery with subsequent changes made in Sections 1, 6, 9, 10 & 14 and Section 15 added. See Minutes 13, B under DCO 21 changes.

SECTION 5. The candidate for licensure shall be examined by the regional presbytery, or by a committee appointed for that purpose, in the English Bible, ecclesiastical history, theology, his ability to exegete the Scriptures, and, ordinarily, the original languages of the Scriptures. The regional presbytery shall also satisfy itself, by receiving testimonials or by other means, of the candidate's piety and exemplary life and his personal zeal for and experience in presenting his faith to others. If the examination of candidates is referred to a committee, an examination at least in theology shall also be held before the regional presbytery; and if one-fourth of the presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination in theology and exegesis of the Scriptures, the candidate will be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the regional presbytery.

SECTION 6. In order to make trial of his gifts to explain and vindicate and practically to enforce the doctrines of the gospel, the presbytery shall further require that the candidate prepare (1) an edifying word, which the presbytery may ask to be delivered in its presence, and (2) an essay on an appointed theological subject and (3) an exegesis of an assigned Old Testament and New Testament passage of Scripture.

SECTION 7. No exception shall be made of any of the educational or other requirements for licensure (other than original languages) unless the regional presbytery judges, by a three-fourths vote of the members present, that the exception is warranted by the manifest qualifications of the candidate for the holy office of the gospel ministry. If the regional presbytery finds that the candidate lacks competency in the Hebrew and Greek languages, or one of them, it may judge by a vote of the members present to waive these requirements only when the applicant has given an affirmative answer to the following question:

Do you promise that you will make a continuing endeavor to attain competency in those languages until the regional presbytery is satisfied?

SECTION 8. If the regional presbytery is satisfied with the trials of a candidate for licensure, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner. The moderator shall propose to him the following questions:

1. *Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*
2. *Do you honestly and without reservation embrace the doctrinal standards of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church with the conviction that the same are a summary of the system of truth of Holy Scripture, and do you promise to teach and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith?*
3. *Do you promise to seek the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church?*
4. *Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this regional presbytery of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, and any other presbytery under the jurisdiction of which you may come?*

SECTION 9. After the candidate has answered these questions in the affirmative the moderator shall offer prayer suitable to the occasion and shall address the candidate in the following or similar words: *"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority that he has given to the church for its edification, we license you to exhort, i.e. to speak a word of edification, wherever God in His providence may call you; and for this purpose, may the blessing of God rest upon you, and the spirit of Christ fill your heart. Amen."*

SECTION 10. The presbytery shall record the licensure in its minutes and provide the licentiate with a certificate of licensure in the following form:

At _____ on the _____ day of _____ the Presbytery of _____ of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, having received testimonials

1 in favor of _____, of his being in the communion of the church, of his piety and
2 exemplary life, of his proficiency in divinity and other studies, and of his personal zeal for the
3 gospel and his ability to present it to others, approved all these parts of trial; and he having
4 adopted the Confession of Faith of this Church, and satisfactorily answered the questions to be
5 put to candidates to be licensed, the presbytery did license to exhort as a probationer for the
6 holy ministry within the bounds of this presbytery, or wherever else he shall be orderly called.
7 This certificate shall either be renewed or expire at the next regular presbytery meeting
8 following the two year anniversary of the date of issuance.

9 SECTION 11. When any candidate for licensure shall have occasion, while his trials are going on, to
10 remove from the bounds of his own regional presbytery into those of another, the latter presbytery, on
11 his producing proper testimonial from the former, may take up his trials at the point at which they were
12 interrupted, and conduct them to a conclusion.

13 SECTION 12. A licentiate shall move outside the limits of his regional presbytery for an extended
14 period of time only by permission of his presbytery; in such a case an extract of the record of his
15 licensure and a statement of his service as a licentiate, signed by the clerk, shall be his testimonials to
16 the regional presbytery under whose jurisdiction he shall come. When a licentiate shall undertake
17 regular duties within the bounds of a regional presbytery he shall place himself under the jurisdiction
18 of its presbytery.

19 SECTION 13. Ordinarily, when a period of two years have passed (or at the next regular presbytery
20 meeting following the two year anniversary), if a licentiate's services do not appear to be edifying to
21 the church, or he is not actively seeking a call to ministerial service except for reasons of furthering his
22 preparation for the ministry, the regional presbytery in which the licentiate currently resides may, if it
23 think proper, decline to renew, or recall his license.

24 SECTION 14. Ruling elders *not* seeking ordination may be licensed by the regional presbytery to exhort
25 (see DCO 8:2). The educational and other requirements for licensure set forth in this chapter will serve
26 as guidelines for the regional presbytery, but may be adjusted and/or waived according to the regional
27 presbytery's wisdom. In no case shall the examination in theology on the floor of the presbytery be
28 waived (see section 5 above).

29 SECTION 15: Licentiates from outside the CRPC, upon request of their receiving congregational
30 presbytery, shall be re-examined for licensure upon transfer of membership to the CRPC. The services
31 of a licentiate with a "license to preach" from outside of the CRPC may be utilized within the CRPC at
32 the discretion of the congregational presbytery who seeks his services, but his license "to preach" will
33 be considered as a license to exhort within the CRPC and shall otherwise abide by such limitations as
34 any licentiate from within the CRPC as set forth by our Constitution and By-Laws.

CHAPTER 22

EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION

This chapter contains the process by which previously unordained men shall be examined by the regional presbytery.

SECTION 1: The request for Ordination Examination from a local church shall include the following accompanied documentation:

- 1) Letter of recommendation from the Church where the Candidate is a member.
- 2) Copy of Letter of Call to the Candidate from a Church (if relevant).
- 3) Copy of Letter to the Church of Acceptance of the Call by the Candidate (if relevant).
- 4) Letters of academic attestation (as many as possible and as relevant).
- 5) The Candidate's answers to the questions of the Checklist for Church Officers (Appendix A) along with any other letters of attestation or reference and his agreement to abide by the limitations in DCO 31 should any exceptions/scruples be noted..
- 6) The Candidate's completion of the *Questionnaire For Candidates Licensing, Ordination Or Reception As Ministers From Other Denominations* (Appendix B) if required in advance by presbytery .

SECTION 2: Presbytery (or her appointees) shall determine that the accompanied documentation is in good order and that the Examination may take place. It is strongly advised that such documentation be submitted 45 days to give presbyters opportunity to thoroughly examine them and inquire about anything that might be missing so as to preclude a candidates arrival without all the proper documentation. It shall be the task of the convening church to verify that what is submitted meets the requirements of this chapter and to notify the calling church of any omissions as soon as possible, for their prompt submission.

SECTION 3: Presbytery (or her appointees) shall appoint specific Presbyters to be Examiners and backups for each area, as defined below in SECTION 7 to be called upon whenever examinations are needed. Examiners shall be prepared with basic questions in their area of examination.

SECTION 4: Examiners will provide relevant texts (for sermon and exegesis) to the Candidate in advance.

SECTION 5: It is understood that the Examination is to be a "pastoral examination". The exam is not meant to be exhaustive in any area (which would assume that one could know it all). It is meant to give the Candidate an opportunity to show his wisdom and ability in applying the Scriptures pastorally in the various areas (as compared to merely knowing academic details). As such the Examination may also expose areas of "weakness," where a Candidate may need to improve or further develop his understanding, proficiency, or orthodoxy.

SECTION 6: It is thus understood that the Examination is to be especially geared toward discerning the Biblical orthodoxy of a Candidate. (i.e. That what he knows is in keeping with Biblical and confessional Truth).

SECTION 7: The following areas shall be included (Examiner shall first examine and then allow time to Presbyters. Presbytery may set time limits depending upon the total time allotted for the

examination process, but these time limits may be extended by majority vote.) :

1) Sermon Examination (on specific text)

2) Old Testament Exegesis Examination (exegesis of specific text demonstrating his proficiency in the use of the Hebrew language in such). See "Exegesis Examination Guidelines" found in DCO Appendix E.³⁴¹

3) New Testament Exegesis Examination (exegesis of specific text demonstrating his proficiency in the use of the Koine Greek language in such). See "Exegesis Examination Guidelines" found in DCO Appendix E.

4) Doctrine and Creeds

5) Church History

6) Church Polity

7) Ethics

8) Pastoral Theology & Practice

9) View & Knowledge of Scripture

10) Personal Faith & Life

SECTION 8: Sermon Examination shall normally consist of a written message delivered to the Examiner and the message delivered orally (a) to the Presbytery (with local Church members invited to attend), or (b) the message delivered in a stated worship service (with the examiner and at least one other Presbyter present).³⁴²

SECTION 9: After the Sermon Examination, Presbytery shall go into Closed Session for discussion and confirmation that the remainder of the Examination may continue.

SECTION 10: Presbytery may recess at any time(s) during examination, but at the conclusion shall go into Closed Session to discuss the Examination and determine if the Candidate has sustained the Examination. There should be a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote in favor of the candidate's performance in items 2, 3 and 4, and at least a majority in all the others for his total examination to be sustained.

SECTION 11: Upon sustaining the Examination, the Candidate shall be informed and prayer of thanks given. If the Candidate has not sustained the examination, he shall be notified how he may rectify the areas of concern and shall also be notified that he, through the calling Church, may request a further exam.

SECTION 12: Plans and details for Ordination and Installation shall then be established as is convenient to the calling Church following the procedures similar to those in Chapter 21 (Licensing Candidates to Exhort) but using the following procedures and vows:

1) At the time for ordination and installation the moderator of the presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside over the meeting of the presbytery with the congregation present. The

³⁴¹ Identical changes made to subsections 2) & 3) at 11-2014 American Presbytery. See minutes for details.

³⁴² *Sermon* changed to *message* and *preached* changed to *delivered* at 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes 13, B on DCO 22.

home church should request a minister of Presbytery to]....preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Afterwards the moderator shall briefly inform those assembled concerning the warrant and nature of the office of minister of the Word of God and concerning the duties which the minister's service will place upon him, and shall endeavor to give them a proper sense of the solemnity of both ordination to the office and installation in his field of service. Then addressing the candidate he shall propose to him the following questions:

a) *Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*

b) *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?*

c) *Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church?*

d) *Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?*

e) *Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?*

f) *Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel, and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?*

g) *Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the gospel, as well as in all the duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before those among whom you labor wherever you may be?*

h) *Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you the work of a Minister of the Word of God you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of his church?*

i) *Are you now willing to undertake the work of a Minister of the Word of God, and do you promise to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties of this ministry as God may give you strength?*

2) The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, he shall then kneel, and by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, according to the apostolic example, he shall be solemnly ordained to the holy office of the gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise and the moderator shall declare him to be ordained a minister of the Word of God and installed as of a Minister of the Word of God. The presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

CHAPTER 23
THE MINISTERIAL CALL³⁴³

SECTION 1. A minister or licentiate may be called to the pastoral ministry of a congregation either by the congregational presbytery or by the congregational presbytery of oversight where no congregational presbytery exists in which the church is a member.

SECTION 2. The congregational presbytery shall issue any invitations to preach/exhort³⁴⁴ and is the only body which shall have the authority in the congregation to issue a call.

SECTION 3. The one called should normally preach/exhort at least twice to the congregation and must sustain a thorough examination before the congregational presbytery. A minister, even from within the CRPC, must be examined by the congregational presbytery extending the call so that there is familiarity with the minister's understanding. The examination by the congregational presbytery must include theology, the Westminster standards, and any subordinate confessions of the church (including its Covenant).

SECTION 4. The congregational presbytery will also inquire of any exceptions/scruples the potential ministerial candidate may have with regard to the Westminster standards. Any such exceptions/scruples shall be recorded and the congregational presbytery will indicate by vote whether it finds such exceptions/scruples to be allowable. The congregational presbytery will make these exceptions/scruples known to the congregation should it nominate the candidate to the congregation. The congregational presbytery, should a call be issued by the congregation, will forward those exceptions/scruples and the action taken to the regional presbytery for consideration. More information pertaining to ministerial scruples is set forth in DCO 31.

SECTION 5. The congregational presbytery shall issue the call only after a congregational meeting has taken place at which the congregational presbytery presents its report supporting the call. The congregation shall agree by vote, with the vote being taken by secret ballot. Three-fourth ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the voting members present at the meeting is necessary to issue the call. If the vote meets this requirement but is not unanimous, the moderator and the congregational presbytery shall seek to persuade the minority to concur in the call. A new ballot shall be taken. This ballot shall be the decision of the congregation. A report of all the proceedings shall be sent to the regional presbytery.

SECTION 6. If, at any time before the second ballot (Section 5 above) the congregational presbytery deems there to be serious dissension in the congregation, it may wait in order to meet privately with those who dissent. If so, then a new congregational meeting shall be called, if the congregational presbytery so choose, and the process shall begin again.

SECTION 7. The congregational presbytery may send as many officers to the next regional presbytery meeting as it shall deem necessary in order to present its desire to call the candidate. Any dissenting officer may be present to explain to the regional presbytery the dissent of those who would wish to deny the call. The dissent may not address the terms of the call (Section 8).

SECTION 8. The terms of the call are matters strictly between the congregational presbytery and the one called as to financial matters, housing, benefits, vacation time, and contingency matters. If requested by the candidate or the congregational presbytery, the regional presbytery has the right to inspect and

³⁴³ Many of the issues of this section have already been footnoted. Otherwise they pertain to 1 Cor. 14:40.

³⁴⁴ *Exhort* added to *preached* in Sections 2-3 to cover the case of a licentiate at 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes 13, B on DCO 23.

to give counsel to both parties regarding the terms of the call but has no power either to mandate or forbid such terms. Once the terms are approved by the congregational presbytery, such terms are not subject to appeal to regional presbytery unless: 1) the terms have been violated by the minister of the Word or the congregational presbytery, and 2) the issue has already been adjudicated by the congregational presbytery.

SECTION 9. The regional presbytery, upon receiving a call to a candidate from the congregational presbytery, may find the call in order, may refer it to the congregational presbytery, or deny the call. If the regional presbytery does not find the call in order, there must be a written report to the congregational presbytery containing a thorough explanation of the regional presbytery's action, said report to be composed and adopted by the regional presbytery prior to the close of that meeting. The ministerial candidate will indicate to the congregational presbytery and the regional presbytery his intention to accept the call if sustained in examination prior to said examinations proceeding.

SECTION 10. The regional presbytery will inquire of any exceptions/scruples the potential ministerial candidate may have with regard to the Westminster standards. Any such exceptions/scruples shall be recorded and the presbytery will indicate by vote whether it finds such exceptions/scruples to be allowable and so inform the candidate. Any exception/scruple that is not allowed by the regional presbytery will be cause for refusing to ordain and/or install the man as a minister in the calling church. In the case of a current CRPC minister, an exception/scruple previously found to be allowable in his case will continue to be allowed by the regional presbytery. Any new or changed exceptions/scruples are subject to review and approval by the regional presbytery. More information pertaining to ministerial scruples is set forth in DCO 31.

SECTION 11. If the call is to a licentiate of the CRPC, the regional presbytery must first decide if he has satisfactorily completed his probationary training and determine his fitness for office through examination. The trials for ordination for a licentiate of the CRPC shall consist of those mandated for licensure, with the addition of examinations in apologetics and the CRPC Book of Church Government. The regional presbytery may waive those areas of examination previously sustained for licensure within the CRPC with the exception of theology, which must be held before the regional presbytery. If one-fourth of the presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination in theology, the candidate shall be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the regional presbytery. If the licentiate lacks competency in the Hebrew and Greek languages, and this requirement was previously waived in accordance with Section 7 of Chapter 20 of the DCO, the regional presbytery may vote to refuse to ordain the man until satisfied with progress, proceed with ordination after setting a further period of time for the licentiate to satisfactorily complete any study in the original languages the presbytery deems fit (see Section 11 below), or waive the requirement in consideration of unusual and/or special circumstances by a three-quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of the presbytery.

SECTION 12. If the call is to a licentiate from outside the CRPC, the procedure outlined in Section 10 will be followed, with the exception that no part of trial may be waived until and only if the regional presbytery: (1) is satisfied that the licentiate was examined by a denomination or other ecclesiastical body of similar faith and practice, and (2) receives information about licentiate's previous examinations (other than from the licentiate) and is satisfied by those examinations in those areas. Further, if the regional presbytery finds that the candidate lacks competency in the Hebrew and Greek languages, or one of them, it may judge by a vote of the members present to waive these requirements prior to ordination only when the applicant has given an affirmative answer to the following question:

Do you promise that you will make an effort to attain competency in those languages until the regional presbytery is satisfied?

The regional presbytery will set specific time limits for completion of such efforts and require that the congregational presbytery report at that time to the regional presbytery concerning progress or lack

thereof. At that point, the regional presbytery will determine what further action would be appropriate.

SECTION 13. If the regional presbytery is satisfied with the trials of a licentiate for ordination, it shall then proceed to ordain and install the man in the office of minister for that particular congregation in a timely manner. The regional presbytery shall coordinate the calling of a meeting of the local congregation for a service of ordination and installation, or may appoint a committee to serve as the regional presbytery's representatives to do the same, and said committee to report back to the presbytery at the next regular meeting. Teaching elders of the regional presbytery shall conduct the service of ordination and installation.

SECTION 14. If the call is to a minister outside the CRPC, the regional presbytery shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications in regard to piety, faith, and learning that are required of licentiates under Section 11. This evidence shall include testimonials from qualified persons of his satisfactory exercise of the gifts for the ministry of the Word. The presbytery may require examination in any or all the areas set forth and referred to in Section 11, but they are not required. The presbytery or its committee will determine the best course of action in each case. In no case shall an examination in theology on the floor of presbytery be waived. If one-fourth of the presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination in theology, the minister shall be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the regional presbytery.

SECTION 15. If the regional presbytery is satisfied with a candidate falling under Section 14, it shall then proceed to install the man in the office of minister for that particular congregation in a timely manner. The regional presbytery shall coordinate the calling of a meeting of the local congregation for a service of installation, or may appoint a committee to serve as the regional presbytery's representatives to do the same, and said committee to report back to the presbytery at the next regular meeting. Teaching elders of the regional presbytery shall conduct the service of installation.

SECTION 16. If the call is to a minister (with or without a current call) within the CRPC, there shall be no examinations. The regional presbytery, after fulfilling the requirements of Sections 9 and 10 and finding no hurdle to proceeding, will install the minister in a timely manner.

SECTION 17. No minister may leave his charge without the prior approval of both his congregational and regional presbyteries.

SECTION 18. Failure of a pastor or church to abide by the terms of its contract may be appealed to the regional presbytery when it becomes apparent that all attempts to agree have failed. Either party may appeal to the regional presbytery which shall determine the nature of the problem, hold the contracting parties to the contract (determining explicitly the duration of same), discipline for refusal to abide by the terms or send the issue back with a mandate to reconcile. If the church is delinquent, its officers shall be chargeable to the regional presbytery and disciplined for willful failure and breach of contract. Such officers, if in gross rebellion, may be divested of office and further disciplined as the case may require. If the pastor be in breach of contract, then the congregational presbytery may divest him of office and discipline him further as the case may require. If the breach of contract occur as a result of unforeseen contingencies beyond the control of any parties, or failure of the church to function as a church, then the congregational presbytery may dissolve the contractual relationship, require whatever payments can be made from its assets, and assist the parties in their attempts to continue the relationship and/or functioning of the church, at the discretion of the regional presbytery.

SECTION 19. While ministers are members of their local church, their ministerial credentials are held by the regional presbytery. In CRPC churches, ministers are under the original jurisdiction of the congregational presbytery of the local church in matters of character, behavior, and ethic, while in matters of doctrine and credentials the regional presbytery has original jurisdiction.

SECTION 20. The congregational presbytery of the church is the court of original jurisdiction in all

1 matters of ethics, character and behavior for the minister of the Word as well as all members. The
2 regional presbytery will receive the ministerial credentials for the minister of the Word from an outside
3 body when it receives him into its oversight. Upon establishing a minister of the Word in a particular
4 call, the regional presbytery then will "pass" to the calling congregational presbytery all matters
5 contained in his credentials which are not doctrinal so that the congregational presbytery retains its
6 original jurisdiction without jurisdictional conflict. If the minister of the Word should leave his call in
7 order to pursue a call elsewhere, the regional presbytery will inquire of the congregational presbytery
8 concerning the ethical portion of his credentials. Finding that, and all other matters pertaining to him
9 over which the congregational presbytery has authority to be in order, and he to be in good standing;
10 the regional presbytery will "receive" from the congregational presbytery the oversight and use of that
11 portion of his credentials and will either pass his credentials to a body outside the regional presbytery
12 to which he intends to minister or pass the ethical portion of his credentials to another body within the
13 regional presbytery.

CHAPTER 24

DISSOLVING MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIPS

SECTION 1. When a pastor desires to resign his pastoral call in order to accept another or similar call within the CRPC, he shall follow the provisions already stipulated herein.

SECTION 2. If a minister of the Word is disposed to accept another call as pastor, he shall inform the congregational presbytery of his desire and ask them to concur in requesting the regional presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregational presbytery declines to concur, then he may appeal to the regional presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship with the congregation. The regional presbytery, upon receipt of the appeal for a dissolution of the pastoral relationship, may grant the appeal, require the continuance of the pastoral relationship, or require the parties involved to give the matters further consideration. If the pastoral relationship is dissolved, the congregational presbytery shall declare the pulpit vacant as of the specified date.

SECTION 3. If any congregational presbytery desires to be relieved of a minister of the Word it may ask him to resign through a properly called congregational meeting³⁴⁵ (three-fourths (3/4) vote of the assembled voting members). If the minister of the Word agrees to do so, the congregational presbytery shall be requested to assign a mutually acceptable date. The congregation shall continue the terms of its agreement until that date.³⁴⁶

SECTION 4. If the minister of the Word is not willing to resign his call, then the congregational presbytery may petition the regional presbytery to dissolve the ministerial relationship.³⁴⁷

SECTION 5. The regional presbytery may grant the appeal, but not before the minister of the Word has had opportunity to present his position and claims to it in the next regional presbytery meeting.³⁴⁸ Regional presbytery may urge the congregation to reconsider its position and send commissioners to help the church and the minister of the Word in such a case.

SECTION 6. In all cases of appeal, until the appropriate court shall determine the case, all parties shall continue to fulfill their duties, obligations and contracts.³⁴⁹

SECTION 7. If a minister desires to dissolve his relationship with a body which is not a presbytery, he shall inform his congregational presbytery of his desire. The body may appeal this decision to the congregational presbytery if it chooses.³⁵⁰

SECTION 8. If a minister desires to resign his call in order to undertake another kind of labor, he shall offer his written resignation and seek the concurrence of the body and his respective presbyteries, asking for its approval in the labor he seeks to undertake. The congregational presbytery shall determine the matter as already stated, and will indicate if such labor is in accord with his ministerial vows.³⁵¹

SECTION 9. If a congregational presbytery approves the labor he desires to undertake and the body he is leaving is in agreement, then the parties shall determine a mutually acceptable date and inform the

³⁴⁵ See DCO 17:4.

³⁴⁶ 1 Tim. 5:19-20.

³⁴⁷ 1 Tim. 4:14; 3Jo 1:9-10.

³⁴⁸ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³⁴⁹ Deu. 1:17.

³⁵⁰ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³⁵¹ See Appendix B.

1 regional presbytery of this agreement. If the body does not agree, then it may send representatives to
2 the regional presbytery to plead its case. Regional presbytery may agree to the resignation or deny
3 it.³⁵²

4 SECTION 10. When a minister desires to resign a call without other ministerial work in view, he shall
5 follow the procedures outlined above. If the regional presbytery grants his request, then it shall advise
6 him concerning any future resumption of ministerial labor.

7 SECTION 11. A minister without call must be reviewed in one year. After a second year without a call,
8 he shall be reviewed and warned. Thereafter, he may be removed by the regional presbytery. Non-
9 pastoral calls for ministers must be to ministries that the regional presbytery approves.

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³⁵² Rom. 11:29; 1 Cor. 14:40.

CHAPTER 25
MISSIONS

SECTION 1. Foreign missions, their agencies and bodies are to be undertaken by local churches who may invite participation of other local churches.³⁵³

SECTION 2. Congregations may start a mission work in the hope of establishing a church. If so, and regional presbytery agree, the congregational presbytery of the founding church shall continue to be the ecclesiastical authority of the daughter work. Such individuals in the work, though not yet constituted a church, may become members at the discretion of the congregational presbytery and their own voluntary desire to come under such oversight.³⁵⁴

SECTION 3. A mission work with two or more families and which has a sufficient number of men to constitute a Session may petition its mother church to become a local church, which, if approved, must also be approved by the regional presbytery.

SECTION 4. A mission work shall maintain its own roll of members, in the same manner as a local church. In matters requiring congregational vote of the mission work, the communicant members may vote, according to criteria for voting established by the governing body of the local church which has oversight of the mission work.

SECTION 5. For purposes of mission work oversight, an acting congregational presbytery may be established for a mission work at the discretion of the founding congregational presbytery and must consist of two or more elders which need not be members of the mission work. The powers of the acting congregational presbytery are to be determined by the founding congregational presbytery. An acting congregational presbytery may not try judicial cases.

SECTION 6: Any particular church, where the majority of members leave the congregation or where the congregation leaves the CRPC leaving a minority of former members within the CRPC and which no longer meets the requirements of particular congregation in the CRPC (DCO 25:3), shall be declared by the regional presbytery of which it is a member, a mission church. In such a case, that mission church may operate under the temporary oversight of a particularized CRPC church or may operate under the oversight of the regional presbytery until such time as it is capable of being a particularized church in its own right with office-bearers from within its own congregation.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Acts 11:22.

³⁵⁴ Mat. 28:19-20.

³⁵⁵ This section added at 6-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes for grounds and details.

CHAPTER 26
ORGANIZING AND RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS

SECTION 1. A group of believers may be organized through the efforts of one or more congregations. If organized through the efforts of a church or churches in the regional presbytery, upon attaining status as a church, it shall be its own authority and no longer under the jurisdiction of any other church or churches.³⁵⁶

SECTION 2.³⁵⁷ In organizing a congregation from a mission work the presiding congregational presbytery shall do the following:

- 1) supervise the creation of a new constitution which accepts and reflects all the standards of the CRPC.
- 2) a list of members shall be drawn up and shall become the charter roll of the new congregation;
- 3) the overseeing congregational presbytery shall present a petition to the regional presbytery to organize them;
- 4) the congregational presbytery shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of presenting nominations for officers and begin the process of calling a new pastor as needed;
- 5) such a meeting shall be held apart from the attendance of the members of the mother church.
- 6) the charter roll members may vote in all matters placed before them by their presiding congregational presbytery;
- 7) nominees for office shall sustain examinations by the presiding congregational presbytery which shall inform the regional presbytery of the new congregational presbytery and the names associated with it.

SECTION 3. A congregation not belonging to the CRPC, may be received under the authority of the regional presbytery with the sponsorship of at least one member church of the CRPC. The sponsoring congregational presbytery shall examine the petitioning congregational presbytery with respect to their subscription to the standards of the CRPC.³⁵⁸ The sponsoring congregational presbytery may bring a motion to the broader presbytery to receive the sponsored congregation into the presbytery.

SECTION 4. Regional presbytery shall guarantee that all the requirements normally needed for the calling to office of any other officer in the CRPC, shall be met in all the officers of any congregation received.³⁵⁹

SECTION 5. The presiding congregational presbytery shall be construed as the presbytery most closely related to the churches in the locale chosen. If there is any question of which congregational presbytery shall preside, then the broader assembly in existence shall determine the issue.³⁶⁰

SECTION 6. The CRPC shall receive all founding churches and their officers without subsequent examination as they are already organized, so long as they have officers as listed herein and are agreeable to the standards of the CRPC.³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ All churches in the New Testament have the same respect accorded to them by the apostles.

³⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 14:40.

³⁵⁸ Acts 11:20-23.

³⁵⁹ 1 Tim. 4:14; Tit. 1:1-5.

³⁶⁰ Deut. 1:17; 1 Cor. 14:40.

³⁶¹ 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:1-5.

1 SECTION 7. The founding churches are: Covenant Reformed Church of Brookfield, Wisconsin;
2 Covenant Reformed Church of Rayville, Missouri and its mission work The King's Reformed
3 Presbyterian Church, Fellsmere, Florida; Providence Reformed Church, Ft. Collins, Colorado; and
4 Westminster Reformed Church, Sheldon, Iowa.³⁶²

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³⁶² Originally submitted to the first formative meeting of the CRPC on June 23, 1998 by Pastor Wayne Sedlak on behalf of the session of Covenant Reformed Church.

CHAPTER 27

WITHDRAWAL OF CHURCHES

SECTION 1. No church may leave the CRPC over an issue that was a matter of allowable diversity as set forth in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2 at the time that the church applied for membership or was organized.

SECTION 2. A congregation may withdraw from the CRPC only according to the following procedure:

- 1) Before calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of taking any action on withdrawing from the CRPC, the congregational presbytery shall inform the regional presbytery at the next stated face-to-face³⁶³ meeting of the CRPC (adhering to the forty-five day notice as set forth in DCO 18:10) of its intention to call such a congregational meeting.³⁶⁴ The congregational presbytery shall provide grounds for its intended withdrawal in this communication to the regional presbytery. The convening church shall include the item in the docket for the upcoming meeting of the regional presbytery.
- 2) At the meeting of the regional presbytery, the regional presbytery will:
 - (a) respond verbally or in writing to the congregational presbytery at the meeting; or,
 - (b) prepare a written response to the congregational presbytery through representatives appointed for this purpose, with said written response to be presented to the congregational presbytery no later than three weeks after the adjournment of the regional presbytery meeting.³⁶⁵
- 3) Further, the regional presbytery may appoint up to two presbyters to be present at any congregational meeting of the church contemplating withdrawal. Said representative(s) will be granted the privilege of the floor at any congregational meeting called to vote upon withdrawing from the CRPC.³⁶⁶ If no representative(s) is (are) appointed for this purpose at the stated meeting of paragraph B above, the right of the regional presbytery to be present at the congregational meeting (see DCO 17:9.5) is waived.
- 4) If the congregational presbytery is not dissuaded by the actions of paragraph B above, it may issue a call for a congregational meeting. The date of said congregational meeting shall be no less than ninety days following the communication to the regional presbytery mentioned in paragraph A above (see DCO 17:9.5) and no sooner than four weeks following the regional presbytery meeting of paragraph B above.³⁶⁷ The call for the congregational meeting shall contain the congregational presbytery's recommendation to voluntarily withdraw with its written grounds. If the regional presbytery has prepared a written response (1.B.ii above), it shall be distributed with the call to the congregational meeting.
- 5) If the call for a congregational meeting for the purpose of voting on withdrawing from the CRPC is issued, the congregational presbytery will inform the regional presbytery. The communications secretary will forward this notice to all ministers and churches of the CRPC. Any CRPC presbyter may communicate in writing his concerns and arguments for not withdrawing to the congregational presbytery. The congregational presbytery may, but is not obligated, to present any, any part of, or all of the communications received under this paragraph to the congregation. Only the representatives appointed in paragraph C above will be permitted to attempt to dissuade the congregation from withdrawing on the floor of the congregational meeting.

³⁶³ "face-to-face" added at 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. R. for details and grounds.

³⁶⁴ Prov 12:15; 15:22; 20:18; Eph. 5:21

³⁶⁵ Acts 15:23; Prov 11:14; 18:17

³⁶⁶ Prov 18:13, 17

³⁶⁷ Prov. 21:5

6) Withdrawal from the CRPC requires three-fourths of voting members, voting by written secret ballot, for approval (see DCO 17:9.5).

7) If the vote of the congregation approves withdrawing, that church shall no longer be considered a congregation of the CRPC as of the next stated meeting of the CRPC, or on the date six months after the vote of the congregation, whichever date is sooner.³⁶⁸

SECTION 3. No special meeting of the CRPC (as set forth in DCO 18:12 for “emergency presbytery meetings”)³⁶⁹ shall be called for the purpose of dealing with a notice of intention to withdraw.

SECTION 4. Any church contemplating withdrawal will inform its members that individuals may continue as members of the CRPC if they so desire. The congregational presbytery will provide a list of such members to the CRPC no later than the next stated meeting of the CRPC. The regional presbytery will take action to provide for the oversight of said members.³⁷⁰

SECTION 5. Reimbursement of costs associated with the attendance of the regional presbytery’s representatives as per paragraph 1.C above will normally be borne by the church contemplating withdrawal. ³⁷¹ If said church informs the regional presbytery that it cannot bear that cost, the communications secretary will inform the regional presbytery and ask the churches to help reimburse the costs of regional presbytery’s representatives.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ 1 Cor 14:33

³⁶⁹ Parenthetical statement added at 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. R. for details and grounds.

³⁷⁰ Acts 20:28

³⁷¹ 2 Cor 10:8

³⁷² 2 Cor 8:13-15

CHAPTER 28

DISSOLUTION OF CHURCHES

SECTION 1. A congregation may petition the regional presbytery with the approval of both the congregational presbytery and the consent of the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting per DCO 17:9, 6) to submit a request to dissolve the congregation to the regional presbytery.

SECTION 2: The Regional presbytery will grant the request to dissolve and shall oversee the transfer and dismissal of all members of the particular congregation seeking to dissolve in consultation with the congregational presbytery (per DCO 18:1 and 2).

CHAPTER 29 THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS AMENDMENT

SECTION 1. The Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, consists of its standards of doctrine, polity, and worship, as adopted by the church. Subordinate to the Constitution are the By-Laws: Principles and Practices of Church Life, consisting of the Directory of Church Order; Directory of Church Discipline; and Directory of Church Worship.

SECTION 2. Amendments to the By-Laws: Principles and Practices of Church Life. [Except as noted in Section 6 below,] The Directory of Church Order, the Directory of Church Discipline and the Directory of Church Worship may be amended only in the following manner:

- a. Proposed amendments may be made only by congregational or regional presbyteries, or by a teaching elder, and must be accompanied with grounds when submitted to the American presbytery. If the proposed amendment(s) are by a teaching elder alone, he must follow the provision of DCO 18:9. The forty-five day requirement of DCO 18:10 applies.
- b. The American presbytery, after due discussion, shall propose the amendment(s) to the regional presbyteries. Grounds must accompany the proposed amendment(s) when sent to the regional presbyteries (which may be the same or different from the original grounds).
- c. The regional presbyteries will have six months to vote on the proposed amendment(s). Each regional presbytery shall notify the American presbytery of the action taken by each regional presbytery. Approval of the proposed amendment(s) is by majority vote of members voting. Failure of a regional presbytery to vote on the proposed amendment(s) or to report the action taken by the regional presbytery prior to the convening of the meeting of the American presbytery following the expiration of the six month voting period will be construed an abstention by that regional presbytery.
- d. The American presbytery will take action on the proposed amendment(s) at the next regular meeting of the American presbytery falling after the six month voting period. If a majority of the reporting regional presbyteries approve the amendment(s), the said amendment(s) will become effective on the first day of the second calendar month following adjournment of that meeting of the American presbytery. (For example, if the American presbytery adjourns on March 31, the amendment(s) would be effective as of May 1. If the American presbytery were to adjourn on April 1, the amendment(s) would be effective as of June 1.)

SECTION 3. Amendments to the doctrinal standards. [Except as noted in Section 6 below,] The Constitution³⁷³, may be amended only in the following manner:

- a. Proposed amendments may be made only by congregational or regional presbyteries, or by a teaching elder, and must be accompanied with grounds when submitted to the American presbytery. If the proposed amendment(s) are by a teaching elder alone, he must follow the provision of DCO 18:9. The forty-five day requirement of DCO 18:10 applies.
- b. The American presbytery will determine, by majority vote, if a suggested amendment is worthy of consideration. If so determined, it will appoint a committee to consider any suggested change and to report with recommendations at its next regular meeting or at a subsequent meeting as determined by the American presbytery.

³⁷³ “Constitution”, as defined in DCO 29:1, replaced “The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, or any portion of the Three Forms of Unity” per Minutes of November 5-7, 2007 American Presbytery, Item XIV, T.

c. At the meeting at which the committee reports, the American presbytery may determine, by a two-thirds majority of the members voting, to propose the amendment(s) to the regional presbyteries.

d. The regional presbyteries will have six months to vote on the proposed amendment(s). Each regional presbytery shall notify the American presbytery of the action taken by each regional presbytery. Approval of the proposed amendment(s) is by two-thirds vote of members voting. Failure of a regional presbytery to vote on the proposed amendment(s) or to report the action taken by the regional presbytery prior to the convening of the meeting of the American presbytery following the expiration of the six month voting period will be construed an abstention by that regional presbytery.

e. The American presbytery will take action on the proposed amendment(s) at the next regular meeting of the American presbytery falling after the six month voting period. If a majority of the reporting regional presbyteries approve the amendment(s), it (they) shall be adopted only after approved by a majority vote of the members voting at this meeting of the American presbytery. If adopted, the said amendment(s) will become effective on the first day of the second calendar month following adjournment of that meeting of the American presbytery. (For example, if the American presbytery adjourns on March 31, the amendment(s) would be effective as of May 1. If the American presbytery were to adjourn on April 1, the amendment(s) would be effective as of June 1.)

SECTION 4. [Except as noted in Section 6 below,] Organic union of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church with another denomination shall follow the same procedure as in Section 3 above.

SECTION 5. [Except as noted in Section 6 below,] None of the provision of Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter, nor of this fifth section, shall be modified except by the process that is set forth in Section 3.

SECTION 6. Temporary provisions. Until such time as the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church grows to consist of a minimum of three regional presbyteries, some of the provisions of Sections 2 through 5 are not tenable. Therefore, the following temporary provisions will be followed until the January 1 of the year following the establishment of a third regional presbytery within the CRPC. Should a regional presbytery cease to exist and thereby bring the total number of existing regional presbyteries back to two or fewer, these temporary provision will again be in force at that point.

a. With regard to Section 2:

i. 2.a applies.

ii. Proposed amendment(s) will be given a first reading by the American presbytery at the meeting at which said amendment(s) is (are) introduced. A period of discussion for clarification, but not for argument, will follow.

iii. The American presbytery, by two-thirds vote, shall then determine whether to take up the proposed amendment(s) for consideration at that meeting, or to place it (them) on the docket for the next regular meeting.

iv. The proposed amendment(s) will be adopted by a majority vote of the members voting. The amendment(s) will become effective at the adjournment of that meeting.

b. With regard to Section 3:

i. Sections 3.a and 3.b apply.

ii. At the meeting of the American presbytery at which the committee brings its recommendations, the presbytery will receive the report and recommendations.

iii. At its next regular meeting, the American presbytery shall vote on the proposed amendment(s) after a period of discussion and debate. The proposed amendment(s) will be adopted by a three-quarter majority vote of the members voting. The amendment(s) will

1 become effective at the adjournment of that meeting.

2 c. With regard to Section 4: Section 4 applies as modified by the temporary provisions for
3 Section 3 found in this sixth section.

4 d. With regard to Section 5: Section 5 applies as modified by the temporary provision for
5 Section 3 found in this sixth section.

CHAPTER 30

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

SECTION 1. Standardization of Minutes for Broader Presbyteries.

1. All references to persons in the minutes be standardized, as possible, to include their office, first name or initial, and last name. Any non-delegates of the CRPC referred to in the minutes will be designated as such with appropriate titles. Church offices to be listed as teaching elder (TE), ruling elder (RE), deacon.
2. Minutes should include motions and decisions that are made on them, but not the details of the discussion unless called for.
3. Movers and seconders of motions made during the process of a meeting shall not be listed in the minutes unless they come as part of advanced submitted overture.
4. Devotionals shall include the Scripture used.
5. Songs and Psalms sung shall be listed by titles.
6. Documents may be attached.

SECTION 2. Records of Broader Presbyteries All official records of the broader presbytery meetings are to be held in the care of their respective Communications Secretaries. Draft copies and other collateral materials may be kept and used by individual attendees but are not the official record of the presbyteries.

SECTION 3: Closed Session Records: The records of a closed session part of a presbytery meeting are to be made available to presbyters of that presbytery only and shall be kept confidential. (E.g. Members of the American presbytery shall have access to the closed records of the American presbytery; members of regional presbytery shall have access to the closed records of that regional presbytery.) Closed session records of a congregational presbytery are under the authority of that congregational presbytery. Only the presbytery and their fellow elders shall be privy to such records (not deacons) with the following restrictions:

1. They are not to be published (refers to making any items known to any non-CRPC presbyter) in whole or in part in any form without prior approval of the presbytery that holds the closed records.
2. During the closed session, a determination as to what shall be recorded shall be made.
3. Re-opening closed session issues shall require a closed session to be heard.
4. Closed trial records shall be handled by applicable DCD procedures.
5. The congregational presbytery alone through its clerk may make requests for closed records of broader presbyteries.

SECTION 4. Communications Secretary The Communications Secretary shall provide a copy of the final minutes along with attachments from the last broader presbytery meeting for approval of the next presbytery along with the docket for the next broader presbytery meeting.

SECTION 5. Certificates and Credentials A member of presbytery shall be designated as the maker of certificates. Any changes in format (i.e. wording other than the names of the person and the signers) shall receive the approval of the regional presbytery. All requests shall be submitted to the designated maker of certificates. That designated maker of certificates, as well as the moderator or secretary of the last regional presbytery meeting may sign the certificates. Two signatures are required. All certificates and forms for credentials must be approved by the regional presbytery. The maker of certificates shall also issue credential cards for ministers in good standing, with the same requirement

of two signatures. Approved certificates and credentials should have an expiration date shortly after the next anticipated presbytery date and should be made available after each presbytery meeting with the needed signatures.³⁷⁴

SECTION 6. Position Papers: All position papers approved by the broader presbytery will be filed in Appendix A in a section titled Position Papers alphabetically and indexed appropriately.

SECTION 7. Short Reports: The short report will consist of the time and dates of the presbytery and a short sentence on each significant item passed and on major items for discussion. More space may be considered where more explanation needed at the discretion of the preparer. The short report should generally be no more than two or three paragraphs. The general intent of the short report is to provide a presbytery approved statement for the churches to bring to their congregations and/or place in their church bulletins.

SECTION 8. The Authorized Version of the Bible will be used by the presbytery for public statements, unless the presbytery specifies otherwise by majority vote in each case. We do not accept as reasonable, any exclusive understanding of the Authorized or King James Bible as the only English version authorized by God for use in His churches (much less “inspired” or “inerrant”), though it is both acceptable and edifying for churches and brethren to use the Authorized Version as their church Bible or for personal use.

SECTION 9. Use of Robert’s Rules of Order: Robert's Rules of Order have no authoritative standing in the CRPC. (Presbytery may use them for wisdom on parliamentary procedure, but the authority of their application comes solely from the presbytery as it meets together with a quorum.)³⁷⁵

SECTION 10. As broader presbyteries have the power to make decisions on matters that come before it which are not clearly set forth in the DCO, DCD or DCW [as per DCO 18:11, 13)], in such cases where a party is seeking direction that is not covered in these by-laws or something that is a matter of interpretation where there is a known (or concern about a) difference of opinion as to the meaning of some part of these by-laws, they shall do so by bringing such matters up at a meeting of the presbytery (regular stated being the preferred). The presbytery will then advise the party with the query as to its decision in that special case not covered in the by-laws or with respect to the interpretation of the by-laws, so as to settle the matter. Such decision may be revisited. If the matter cannot be quickly settled or further study is needed, then the presbytery may establish a committee to bring forth its recommendations at the next regularly stated meeting. These by-laws and they alone, along with any decisions of the presbytery, are the covenant by which presbyters in the CRPC are bound as long as they not be found to be contrary to the Constitution in any way (a decision which the regional presbytery will need to make, and which is appealable). Standard or historic practices of other churches, other denominations or “Presbyterianism” or “the Reformed Church” practices may be useful in many ways, BUT are NOT to be a basis of “common law” for use in the CRPC unless otherwise set forth in its Constitution or By-laws.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ This sentence was added at the 12-2012 Presbytery. See minutes 14 B for details and grounds.

³⁷⁵ This section was added at the Special Called Presbytery of July 30, 2007.

³⁷⁶ This section was added at the 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. Q. for details and grounds.

CHAPTER 31

EXCEPTIONS/SCRUPLES FOR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

SECTION 1. All use of the phrase “exceptions/scruples” in this chapter pertains to those NOT already set forth in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2 unless otherwise specified.

SECTION 2. All exceptions/scruples not covered elsewhere in these By-laws are covered by Sections 3 through 8 below.

SECTION 3. Any exceptions/scruples which arise after reception as an officer or licentiate will be dealt with as follows:

- 1). He shall notify the presbytery in writing of any exceptions/scruples. All counsel or decisions reached by a presbytery shall be spread in the minutes. Any approval of any exceptions/scruples must be approved by the broadest assembly or two-thirds of the regional presbyteries.
- 2). Any such exceptions/scruples shall not be publicly preached/exhorted³⁷⁷, taught or promoted unless set forth in the Constitution I, B, 1 or 2.
- 3). He may not vote on any matters pertaining to any of his exceptions/scruples during any presbyterial or congregational meeting. In the event that the presbytery does not grant approval to his exception(s)/scruple(s), he may withdraw them. If he cannot do either, the presbytery may proceed to deal with the man as otherwise provided by the By-Laws.
- 4). He may not propose any change for presbyterial consideration of any item to which he holds as an exception/scruple.

SECTION 4. Exceptions or clarifications set forth in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2 may be discussed and debated from time to time for better understanding and clarification when it is agreeable to the presbytery in which such discussion or debate is being proposed.

SECTION 5. In these or other discussions or writings, the public or private denouncing or deriding of individuals or churches which practice various positions set forth in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2 is not acceptable within the CRPC. Any discussion of said matters must be done in a gracious fashion, and in such a way as not to disturb the peace and unity of the church.

SECTION 6. It is not allowable to bring charges in any church court against anyone within the CRPC for a position set forth as allowable in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2.

SECTION 7. Any member who holds to or changes his position with respect to any exceptions/scruples **set forth** in Constitution I, 1 or 2 whether remaining in his church after changing his position or transferring to another church which does not hold to such a position, must do so knowing that the peace of the church should not be disturbed on matters over which there is allowable diversity.

SECTION 8. Any member who holds to any exceptions/scruples **not set forth** in Constitution I, B, 1 or 2 which are agreeable to the church in which he is a member must not disturb the peace of the church over such positions.

³⁷⁷ Exhort added to preach for the case of a licentiate per 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes 13, B on DCO 31.

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Appendix A

Checklist for Church Officers

The following Checklist for Church Officers shall be set forth as a highly useful tool for all CRPC churches at the discretion of the congregational presbytery in evaluating and examining any officer (minister, ruling elder or deacon) of any churches, especially the office of Minister of the Gospel.

Checklist For Church Officers:

1. Written testimony of his life history and conversion to Christianity. (Ministers shall add a written statement as to their call to the ministry.)
2. A written history of church or denominational affiliations noting the approximate length of tenure, ministry engaged in, any offices held and circumstances and reasons for leaving. An applicant must disclose any pending or past disciplinary action by any ecclesiastical body (church or higher/broader assembly).
3. A written testimony from his wife (if applicable), concerning her conversion to Christianity, her testimony of support to her husband's ministry. Where possible, this should also include an interview with the wife without her husband present.
4. Letters of reference from personal Christian friends (three or more) who have known the applicant and his family for not less than two years and will testify that his children (where applicable) are in submission to their parent's (both husband and wife) authority.
5. An applicant disclose in writing any history of sin of a public nature or with the potential thereof (i.e. where all parties involved have not sought and received forgiveness), such as sexual misconduct, dishonesty, drunkenness, abuse of authority or other sins unbecoming a Christian (if not otherwise disclosed above regarding past or pending discipline). It would be in the best interests of the applicant to disclose which be categorized as a "skeleton in the closet" to avoid problems that might result from non-disclosure.
6. In the case of an applicant who has been divorced, a full explanation of the causes of the divorce should be submitted in writing along with proof. Taking into account WCF 24:6, all circumstances following the divorce and, if sinful, what evidence there has been of repentance, the presbytery shall determine if this divorce would disqualify or significantly hinder the applicant's ministry.
7. An applicant should disclose any debt (not secured by tangible collateral) beyond the equivalent of three months income so that presbytery may determine its possible effect upon his ministry.
8. The applicant should have three letters of references from ministers who adhere to reformed or Calvinistic theology.
9. An applicant disclose the nature of his baptism.
10. The applicant be willing to relinquish his membership in any ecclesiastical bodies of jurisdiction (i.e. having authority over him).
11. He disclose membership in any secret societies along with a justification for such membership.
12. An applicant provide in writing prior to his examination any areas where he has concerns, disagreement or questions with the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Book of Church Government of the CRPC. Every candidate for office should take special note regarding the limitations that are placed upon him regarding any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by Const. I,B, 1 or 2 and be prepared to abide by the provisions of DCO 31.
13. An applicant agree that all questions or disputes with the constitution (standards) of the CRPC are to be carried on only at presbytery and the higher/broader assemblies and that he will not preach or teach any questionable or disputed doctrines and practices.
14. An applicant be willing to make the vows applicable to his office according to the CRPC Book of Church Order.
15. An applicant agree to teach or preach the Word of God as summarized in the Westminster

Standards and other acknowledged standards listed in the BCG in his church on a regular basis.

16. An applicant agree not to turn to the world to solve differences between the church and its members.
17. An applicant disclose any pending, anticipated or actual civil or criminal actions involving him or any organizations within which he has a responsible part.

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LICENTIATE AND ORDINATION CANDIDATES AND TRANSFERRING MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

The following Questionnaire shall either be provided Candidates for the Gospel Ministry in the CRPC as well as for those ministers transferring in from outside the CRPC ahead of time or be used as the basis for the required questions to be asked on basic issues on the floor of presbytery. All of these questions to which answers are known should be completed and provided to the Presbytery 45 days prior to any meeting, though they may also be utilized by the local church at an earlier time. A candidate is not expected to study for these questions, but simply asked to provide answers based upon what he presently knows on these subjects. Followup questions can be expected on the floor of presbytery.

If the answers are provided ahead of time, please use a separate paper to answer these questions, using both the question number and a simple summary of the question being answered. (NOTE: *The capitalized categories at the beginning of each question or category of questions is to assist the presbyters during the examination process. Applicant should leave them in the submitted Questionnaire.*)

1. <DOCTRINES & CREEDS> The CRPC holds to the original 1643 edition of the Westminster Standards (Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms) with some latitude for allowable exceptions as listed in the Directory of Discipline, Chapter 21 (DCD21). All exceptions by any officer or candidate for office to these standards, except as stated in DCD21 must be written out in advance. Please use this space or additional paper to state what, if any, exceptions you have. Also, please note any interpretations you have, which you do not consider exceptions, but which could be construed as outside the original intent of the framers of the Westminster Assembly or of the norm within historic Reformed understandings of these documents.
2. <DOCTRINES & CREEDS> What other Reformed confessional standards are you familiar with and what exceptions might you take with them (generally speaking)?
3. <PASTORAL THEOLOGY> Please answer the following questions on preaching:
 - A. Who may rightfully preach in the church?
 - B. Who has the authority to authorize to preach?
 - C. Explain your position on laymen “preaching.”
 - D. Explain your position on women preaching.
4. <CHURCH POLITY> Explain your position on the following matters pertaining to the church:
 - A. Explain the differences you see between the offices of teaching elder/minister, ruling elder and deacon.
 - B. What is your view on women performing ministerial functions, teaching adult men or holding office in the church? Explain.
 - C. What is your view of how church discipline should be exercised?
 - D. What areas of sinful behavior do you believe are inappropriate for church discipline?
 - E. Simply explain the principles you would follow with respect to determining how quickly to move in the area of church discipline.

- F. Briefly explain your understanding of the role of the regional or broader presbyteries in the church, and your submission/accountability to them as Presbyter.
- G. How do you understand the ordination vows of the CRPC?
5. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Please explain your position on the following matters pertaining to the sacraments:
- A. Who may administer the sacraments and under what circumstances?
 - B. What type of baptism do you believe is able to be received when prospective members are received into a church? (e.g. immersion, Roman Catholic, Mormon, etc.)
 - C. What requirements will you support with regards to prospective members who have young dependent children whom they do not wish to have baptized? Support your position.
 - D. Will you baptize children of non-members of your church?
 - E. What meaning is applied to baptism? (E.g. regeneration, sign and seal of covenant, sign of regeneration, other)?
 - F. How would you respond if a Baptist family came to your church and applied for membership, but did not wish to have their children baptized?
 - G. What view on the Lord's Table do you practice (Consubstantiation, transubstantiation, reformed/covenantal, purely symbolic) and why?
 - H. Who is permitted to commune and what requirements do they have?
 - I. Explain your view of guarding the table as you would practice it in the CRPC.
 - J. Paedocommunion.
 - K. Frequency of the Lord's Table observance.
 - L. What are the outward elements to be used in the Lord's Supper and Baptism?
6. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Please answer the following questions with regards to evangelism and church outreach:
- A. What is the Gospel and how is its preaching used to bring people to salvation?
 - B. What is your view on missions?
 - C. What is your view on how evangelism should be conducted?
 - D. What role does the average church member have in evangelism?
 - E. Explain your approach to church expansion and church growth.
 - F. What is your view of mega-churches?
 - G. What is your view of the home church movement (fathers being the pastors of their own home churches and other slight variations).
7. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> In what way do you differ from any of the doctrines which come from what is

known as the Five Points of Calvinism?

8. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Simply explain your position on “covenant”.
9. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> State your position on “millennialism”.
10. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> In your view what role do apologetics and philosophy have in understanding the Bible?
11. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Have you taken an apologetical view (classical, presuppositional, evidential, or some variation of them)? What is it and why? If not, why not?
12. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS [except for O & P]> Please state your understanding and thoughts with respect to the following:
 - A Arminianism
 - B Amyrauldianism (that while God does not save everyone, nevertheless Christ still died to make salvation possible for everyone.)
 - C The validity of the charismatic gifts and movement for today.
 - D Baptism of the Holy Spirit
 - E Dispensationalism
 - F The Kingdom of God
 - G The logical sequence of salvation (in what sequence do the following take place logically: faith, regeneration/new birth, making a decision for Christ, election, general call and effectual call)
 - H The Ten Commandments. (What place do they have in preaching the Gospel?)
 - I Common Grace
 - J Free will
 - K Free offer of the Gospel
 - L The Lordship Controversy
 - M The carnal Christian
 - N Perfectionism
 - O <ETHICS> Homosexual/Lesbian rights, marriage, membership in the church.
 - P <ETHICS> Abortion
 - Q Socialism
 - R Libertarianism
 - S Reconstruction theology

T Theonomy

U Your views on the following issues relating to the state:

- 1) The relationship between church and state.
- 2) The role of civil government in the economy.
- 3) The role of civil government in education.
- 4) What is your view on church corporations?
- 5) A Christian holding office in the state.

V The necessity of membership in a local church and why.

W The Great Commission

- 1) The Evangelical Mandate
- 2) The Cultural Mandate

13. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Please state your familiarity with, and position on, the doctrines associated with what has come to be known as the Auburn Avenue Theology.

14. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> State your views on the following matters pertaining to creation and science:

- A. What constitutes a “day” in the creation account.
- B. Six-day creation
- C. Framework hypothesis
- D. Day age
- E. Evolution of the species
- F. Adam having animal ancestors
- G. Geocentricity and heliocentricity
- H. Science and the Bible

15. <VIEW & KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE> Please state your understanding of the following:

- A. Redemptive Historical method
- B. Inspiration of Scripture
- C. Textual criticism
- D. Received Text (Textus Receptus)
- E. What version of the English Bible do you use and why?
- F. What versions of the original language texts do you use and why?

16. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> Please state your understanding of the following:
 - A. Exclusive Psalmody
 - B. The use of biblically-based hymns in worship
 - C. Chanting
 - D. Use of musical instruments in worship
17. <PASTORAL THEOLOGY> How do you do exegesis and sermon preparation?
18. <PASTORAL THEOLOGY> What are your basic principles relating to liturgy”?
19. <DOCTRINE & CREEDS> What is your position on the Roman Catholic Church regarding the following:
 - A. A true church?
 - B. The pope being the anti-Christ?
 - C. The Roman Church being anti-Christian.
 - D. Cooperation between evangelicals, Reformed and Roman Catholics.
 - E. Is their Gospel the true Gospel?

Appendix C

Fraternal Relations

The American Presbytery of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church hereby defines fraternal relations according to these guidelines. Unless otherwise specified or determined, fraternal relations with another ecclesiastical body entails the following:

1. Occasional pulpit exchange.
2. Intercommunion.
3. Consultation on matters of mutual interest.
4. Respect for each other's church discipline.
5. A comity arrangement by which each denomination pledges to consult with the other denomination before engaging in new mission works in an area where the other denomination has an existing congregation or mission work.
6. A frank exchange of each other's distinctive views, with the recognition of the reality of the unity of the visible church.
7. A goal of being able to present a united witness to a watching world.
8. Letters of greetings.
9. Apprising each other of the various actions undertaken, by means of sharing of minutes of meetings.
10. The exchange of fraternal delegates as opportunity presents itself.

(Approved at Presbytery November 2, 2005)

Appendix D

Credentials Form

CREDENTIALS

from the

CHURCH

of

Phone Number: _____

We, the undersigned Elders of _____ Church do
hereby authorize:

_____, _____ and

_____, _____,

to serve as our church's delegates to the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church's Regional
Presbytery meeting to assemble at _____ beginning on the
_____ day of _____, A.D. 20__, and ending on the _____ day of
_____, A.D. 20 __

If it is necessary the following officers are empowered to serve as adjunct delegates:

_____, _____ and

_____, _____,

Done in the Congregational Presbytery of the _____
Church assembled on this the _____ day of _____, A.D. 20__

Secretary

President

The Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church

Appendix E³⁷⁸

Guidelines for Exegesis Paper (Both OT & NT)

[The following is meant to provide a guideline for the basics of what is required]

1. Establish a “pericope”:
A pericope is the smallest unit for exegesis. You will be assigned a section for study and out of your study, and based on the literary structure of it, you must decide on a pericope for exegesis. Within that pericope (and out of your exegesis) you will also choose a text for sermon. The pericope may have one or more possible texts, but choose one.
2. Translation and word study:
Work on both of these independent of commentaries. You may use various lexicons and helps for parsing and meanings but stay away from even exegetical commentaries until later. Do a thorough word study; making note of tense, case, number (etc.), as well as variations of meanings and usage. For the NT describe the syntax (For example purpose clauses, result clauses, first, second, and third class condition clauses etc.). Make sure you describe how the participles are used (for example, means, manner, attending circumstance, etc.). For OT describe the verbals (stems: qal, hiphil etc., jussive, infinitives perfect, imperfect) and its syntactical usage (main verb, temporal, causal, purpose, result, etc.)
3. Context:
 - (a) Show a study of the literary context if any (sometimes context can be irrelevant, depending on the type of passage). As relevant the literary context includes the chapter, the book, the Bible. This study can be important in considering the theme/focus of the book and how it is shown in your eventual text and sermon.
 - (b) Show a brief study of the historical context and environment. This includes the situation of the readers (their time/history, culture, political situation, geography, and so on).
 - (c) Show a consideration of the redemptive-historical context. What stage in history is Christ present (promised, coming, arrived, leaving, etc.).
4. Value of component parts:
Make a note of any relatively small things that are mentioned in the pericope that may not have come up in the word study. There are often little “tidbits” which the Holy Spirit gave and they are significant. (For example: In 2Sam. 12 speaking of David’s sin, it is repeatedly mentioned that “king David” sinned.) Note the significance of these.
5. Establish and summarize the preaching text:
Already before, but especially by this stage, you should have a clear idea as to a text for a sermon. As you prayerfully think of the text you should give a summary of the main idea and truths that flow from it.
6. Consult Commentaries:

³⁷⁸ This appendix approved at 11-2013 and added at the 11-2014 American Presbytery. See minutes for details.

Here is the place to test your work. Don't use commentaries as a "prompt" but use them to find anything you may have missed or mistakes you may have made. Also here is the place to point out how "others" have made conclusions that are, in fact, not biblical (prove your point over against theirs).

[NOTE: Be wary of homiletical commentaries which will direct you towards ideas that do not come out of exegesis! Also remember, quality is better than quantity!]

7. Sermon Outline:

From your study you should have a very clear idea of a "theme" (a complete statement which, as much as possible, captures the teaching of the text). Out of your theme state "points" which come develop the theme.

[Following this faithfully will mean you will be able to preach "thus saith the Lord" in that text, and your study will "drive" you to the pulpit (versus the pulpit driving you to study).]

----- To God be the glory! ----

DIRECTORY of CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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THE DIRECTORY OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

PREFACE TO THE CHURCH

On June 17, 1932, Dr. J. Gresham Machen made the following statement in London concerning the great cultural conflict which was engulfing the church of Christ in general and the cause of Presbyterianism in particular. He said:

It is no easy thing to defend the Christian faith against the mighty attack that is being brought against it at the present day. Knowledge of the truth is necessary, and also clear acquaintance with the forces hostile to the truth in modern thought.

At that point, a final objection may arise. Does it not involve a terrible peril to men's souls to ask them-for example, in their preparation for the ministry- to acquaint themselves with things that are being said against the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? Would it not be safer to learn only of the truth, without acquainting ourselves with error? We answer, "Of course it would be safer." It would be far safer, no doubt, to live in a fool's paradise and close one's eyes to what is going on in the world today, just as it is safer to remain in secure dugouts rather than to go over the top in some great attack. We save our souls, perhaps, by such tactics, but the Lord's enemies remain in possession of the field. It is a great battle indeed, this intellectual battle of today; deadly perils await every man who engages in that conflict; but it is the Lord's battle, and He is a great Captain in the fight.¹

A presbytery should be the place in which the Lord's officer-bearers are encouraged and strengthened for the kind of battles which the demands of His ministry place upon them. "Curse ye Meroz... Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they would not come to the help of the Lord..."² is the testimony of Sacred Writ when God's people at Meroz refused to help the rest of Israel in the time of trial.

Regrettably, this call of the presbytery, to strengthen the hands of God's officer-bearers and churches, all too often has run afoul of its sacred trust and has been an hindrance to ministry, ensnaring good men who must expend time and effort in order to disentangle the coils wrapped about their reputations and callings. Wounds, bitterness, disenchantment, and division have been the unhappy results for the church of Christ...leaving some of the finest men to stand crippled in ministry for loss of credibility or discouraged out of ministry for their inability to sustain further damage to themselves or their families. God has raised up faithful bodies of churches in the past and holds and preserves some today in the palm of His almighty hand, so it is our conviction that this presbytery must self-consciously seek to "shepherd" its men and churches so that they will find a refuge among brethren who are not ashamed of them.³

Why are so many good men finding themselves enmeshed and ensnared among the brethren of the household of faith? Doubtless, some have placed themselves there by indiscretion and offense. But, all too often, it has been the courage of being steadfast for the truth, taking seriously that Great Commission which compels them to testify of their Lord's glory before the world...and the church. Luther once testified that the mark of the faithful man was not only that he stands in the fight for righteousness, but that he stands at the hottest place in the fight and refuses to concede the contest there to Christ's enemies...and his. But once such a stand is taken, that individual becomes a dividing line between those convicted to follow and those who know they will not. Like the people of Meroz, the latter will find excuse to abandon such duty and then to condemn it- and those who espouse it -as if it were truly iniquitous. Fear and guilt become key motivations for undermining the reputation and resolve of those who wish to "fight the good fight of the faith".

Our era, the end of the twentieth century, has witnessed profound⁴ changes in all aspects of culture globally. The complexity of medical ethics, the phenomenal development of technology, the expansive networking capabilities of information systems, the global reach of major events, all coupled with an epistemologically,

¹ J. Gresham Machen speaking to the Bible League Meetings in Westminster, London, June 17, 1932

² Judges 5:23.

³ Gal. 6:2, 10.

⁴ "Incredible" changed to "profound" 11-2008 Presbytery. See minutes XV, D, (4).

self-conscious enmity toward the church has left the church frightened and confused, seeking her consolation in being huddled in near seclusion which, though comfortable, fails to take hold of the culture “at large”...refusing to disciple it for lack of ability. Though it is often the case that good Christian people do not lack truth in their personal knowledge of faith, yet they remain confused, unable to cope with the cultural revolution around them. Often, it is not the truths that they hold which fail them. What fails them is “the missing”. Dr. Cornelius Van Til once remarked:

The Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And it speaks of everything. We do not mean that it speaks of football games, of atoms, etc., directly, but we do mean that it speaks of everything either directly or indirectly. It tells us not only of the Christ and His work but it also tells us who God is and whence the universe has come. It gives us a philosophy of history as well as history. Moreover, the information on these subjects is woven into an inextricable whole. It is only if you reject the Bible as the Word of God that you can separate its so-called religious and moral instruction from what it says, e.g., about the physical universe ... It is therefore the system of truth as contained in Scripture which we must present to the world. The various theological disciplines contribute to the setting forth of this system.⁵

The truth of the Scriptures is a system, the neglect of any single portion of which leaves the Church compromised and confused. James makes this point explicit when he says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”⁶ To break the law in one point is to violate the entire system. But the Church at large, for the most part, refuses to even acknowledge the validity, much less the usefulness, of the law of the Lord, the only system of ethics given by God to mankind...and the Church. Again, Dr. Machen’s comments are to the point, especially as he identifies “the missing”:

When we say “sin”, we have said “law”... At the present time, the existence of law is being denied. Men no longer believe that there is such a thing as a law of God; and naturally they do not believe that there is such a thing as sin. Thoughtful men, who are not Christians, are aware of the problem that this stupendous change in human thinking presents to the modern world. Now that men no longer believe in obligatory morality, now that the moral law has been abandoned, what is to be put in its place, in order that an ordinarily decent human life may be preserved upon the earth? It cannot be said that the answers proposed for that question are as satisfactory as the way in which the question itself is put. It is impossible to keep back the raging seas of human passion with the flimsy mud embankments of an appeal...to self interest. Those raging seas can only be checked by the solid masonry of the law of God...Men are wondering today what is wrong with the world. They are conscious of the fact that they are standing over some terrible abyss. Awful ebullitions rise from that abyss. We have lost altogether the sense of the security of our Western civilization. Men are wondering what is wrong...It is perfectly clear what is wrong. The law of God has been torn up, as though it were a scrap of paper, and the inevitable result is appearing with ever greater clearness. When will the law be rediscovered? When it is rediscovered, that will be a day of terror for mankind: but it will also be a day of joy; for the law will be a schoolmaster unto Christ. Its terrors will drive men back to the little wicket gate, and to the way that leads to that place somewhat ascending where they will see the Cross.⁷

Dr. Machen was the man whom God called to oppose the liberalism which captured the Presbyterian Church government in his generation. As he testified, the loss of the law of God in the church has begotten a terrible crisis in society. Two generations have now passed since these fateful words were uttered by one of the most brilliant scholars and theologians with which God has been pleased to gift His church. But the loss is one which has left the church insensitive to her confused estate. She admits to a crisis in the science of hermeneutics and senses the inability of her people (and pastors) to recognize “truth” in areas political, economic, doctrinal and ethical. What’s more, even the “reformed” see their people moving into other, weaker confessional expressions of faith and practice for failure to know how to defend and prove, to their own comfort, such foundational doctrines as a six day creation, infant baptism, Lord’s Day worship (as opposed to seventh day sabbath observance), a limited atonement, predestination and even the Trinity.

⁵ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Co. 1967, p. 8.

⁶ James 2:10.

⁷ J. Gresham Machen, speaking to the Bible League Meetings in Westminster, London, June 17, 1932.

Moreover, so many are easily moved by “novelties” in interpretation and are moved by winds of doctrine without knowing which principles to believe. “Clever” has all too often replaced “principled”, under the guise of being “insightful”. Is this due to the loss of the law of God as the foundational body to all hermeneutical considerations? Is the current debate on church government and discipline sparked by failure of her pastors to consider the law of the Lord as foundational to the *principles* of polity? Do the reformed of today really appreciate the hermeneutical principles involved in establishing, for example, circumcision as the ground and warrant for the doctrine of baptism? If so, why do we fragment our theological interpretative principles by “proving” the doctrine of baptism by one method and, say, church government by another? But if not, why then do we see those same principles and precepts at work in Scripture in the establishment of the very government of the church which shall oversee, sanction, and govern by virtue of the “keys” of the Kingdom?

Is it not the case that our God, in His Wisdom, so forced His Church to carve out her ethics and governments with the same principles by which She proves the purpose, design and use of the sacramental Keys of the Kingdom? Put bluntly, do such New Testament chapters, which discourse upon church government and discipline in passages contained in Matthew 18, Acts 15, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, *stand by themselves as if they were complete* or *do they rely heavily upon the foundational principles of the law*, with its commentaries in the histories, poetry and prophets? Did our Lord Jesus, for example, invent the approach of Matthew 18: 15-18 during His earthly ministry, or was He using the law and the prophets to establish the principles He was expounding? More broadly, if our Lord was “fulfilling the law”, why is it standard practice to expound the Gospel narratives without the expectation (with but few exceptions) that things Christ said or did should be, in themselves, first found as a functional and wise application and understanding of various portions of the law...just as it was the duty of the prophets to perform?⁸

No doubt, recourse to the law of the Lord is fast becoming “a terror” for mankind. But the maturities it brings, the assurances it develops and the blessings it promises is well worth the struggle to be borne in learning its intricacies, bearing its offenses, and propounding its judgments so that we must, like the blessed man of Psalm 1, “meditate therein day and night”. Indeed, ought not the law be formative to any proposed *Directory of Church Discipline*? St. Paul himself found the sins of his heart disciplined, chastened by the law which was such a blessing to him as a Christian and as an apostle. So, ought not the church of Christ say “amen” to the inspired words of the apostle Paul when he wrote:

And the commandment, *which was ordained to life*, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me...*Wherefore the law is holy, and just and good...*For *I delight in the law of God after the inward man*. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. *So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.*⁹

Dr. Machen was right. Though the law brings terror to mankind, it will also bring rejoicing to the church of our dear Lord ... for its design is life because its Designer is Life and Light.

⁸ Isa. 8:16-20.

⁹ Romans 7:22-25.

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE

SECTION 1. Ecclesiastical discipline is the exercise of that authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to His visible Church in order to uphold and maintain the purity, peace and well-being of His covenant people.¹⁰

SECTION 2. Judicial discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses.¹¹ Such offenses are defined as anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of the church which is contrary to the Word of God. The purpose of judicial discipline is:

- 1) to vindicate the honor of the Lord;¹²
- 2) to promote the integrity and purity of His church and to guard other Christians from being tempted, misled, divided, or otherwise harmed;¹³
- 3) to restore fallen Christians to usefulness to God and to fellowship with his church;¹⁴
- 4) to rightful obedience to Christ along with the resumption of any obligations to his covenant responsibilities;¹⁵ and
- 5) to secure, and make damaged parties whole, to the degree possible.¹⁶

SECTION 3. Administrative discipline is concerned with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church and references the governance, oversight, training, guardianship, and control which the church maintains over its members, officer-bearers and courts. The purpose of such discipline is that all covenant rights may be preserved and all obligations faithfully discharged.¹⁷

SECTION 4. When the presbytery delivers a non-judicial statement (i.e. a decision which is not the result of an ecclesiastical trial), which concerns all the churches especially, in light of their ability to request of presbytery a decision in a matter,¹⁸ all such actions shall be regarded as "advice and counsel" which the churches shall make available to their membership by notification in their respective churches¹⁹ unless such advice is specific to a person²⁰, persons²¹, or a particular church²². In such cases, presbytery must state its reason(s) for such public exposure, before it may publish publicly unless those implicated give their permission on the floor of presbytery or by written consent.²³ Before such publication, any person, persons, or ministry implicated have a right to contest any such public exposure and must be notified to that effect. A person's name remains his property and may not be used by others lightly.²⁴ The churches are in no wise obligated to implement such advice and counsel.

¹⁰ Deu. 1:15-17; Mat. 16:19; 18:17-18; John 20:21-23; 2 Cor.13:10-11; Eph.4:3-6; WCF 32.

¹¹ John 20:23; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor.2:1-11.

¹² Lev.19: 1; The frequent use of the expression "I am the Lord" and its variations attests to the honor of the Lord in the performance of holy duties. The church is called to maintain such oversight as would keep the brotherhood faithful.

¹³ Titus 2:14-15.

¹⁴ Prov. 27:6; Matt.18:15.

¹⁵ Prov. 27:6; Matt.18:15.

¹⁶ Exod.22:1,9; Job 20:18; 29:7-17; Lk.19:8-9; Gal.6:1-2.

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 11:27-34; 1 Pet. 5:1-6; WCF 32.

¹⁸ DCO 18:8-9

¹⁹ Acts 15.

²⁰ 1 Tim.1:3-8.

²¹ 2 Tim.2:17-19; 2 John 1-3.

²² 3 John 9-13.

²³ Written consent involves posted letter, e-mail, or notice sent by presbyterial messenger.

²⁴ Pro. 22:1; Ecc. 7:1; Mat. 18:15-20.

- 1 SECTION 5. All members of the church, both communicants and those who are members by virtue of
2 baptism alone²⁵, are under the care of the church and are subject to its authoritative disciplines and courts,
3 both judicial and administrative.²⁶
- 4 SECTION 6. Fundamental to any disciplinary action is the outline of Matthew 18:1-35. The approach of any
5 judicial procedure must incorporate such elements or show cause why such were not applied.²⁷
- 6 SECTION 7. All judgments should be rendered according to the CRPC's understanding of the word of God as
7 interpreted by the constitution.

²⁵ Gen. 7:1; 12:1-2; 17:12-13, 23, 27; 18:19; Acts 11:14; 16:31, 34; 1 Cor. 7:14.

²⁶ Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5.

²⁷ Our Lord gave the 3 basic steps so that they would be followed. The first two steps are often neglected when mere convenience is not possible and expense is a problem. Yet, the first two steps are not just designed for the sake of the accuser, but are equally designed for the accused. It is an observation of both Scripture and experience that a man's pride can obstruct his repentance. God in His wisdom gave these first two steps so that repentance could be more easily offered by the accused at these points in the process since he would not face the humiliation of public embarrassment in order to admit his guilt. Also, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to later claim ignorance or inability when confronted with his guilt in a church court if he has been admonished already in the process of a scrupulous adherence to Matt. 18 demands. Perhaps the real issue involved is that man wants a way out of his accountability, so he allow a laxity to develop with respect to a system of reproof instituted by our Lord. The people of the churches should be taught from the pulpits concerning their responsibilities in such matters.

CHAPTER 2

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE AND THE ELEMENTS OF MATTHEW 18

SECTION 1. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the Head and Governor of His Church. As such, He has not left His Church without counsel as to the judicial governance of His Kingdom. The general outline for handling judicial offense is recited for the church in Matthew 18:1-35. However, the basic elements of this chapter, as in all of our Lord's teaching and ministry, is designed to fulfill the law of God. Hence, the basis for understanding and applying such discipline and oversight is found in that law and its commentary by the Prophets.²⁸

SECTION 2. Our Lord Jesus, in answering the question of His disciples "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1) drew upon two different emphases which must always be considered for potential motive in that they are tied by our Lord to judicial process in this chapter. It is perfectly proper for an court to concern itself with issues of humility (Matthew 18:2-5, 11-27) and offense (Matthew 18:7-11, 15-35) since such humility moves toward redemption and reconciliation while upholding the integrity of the church and the purity of its people in its opposition to offenses. Offense in issues pertaining to motive generally find their origin in a lack of that meekness, while humility seeks always to be just. For such meekness so characterized the great lawgiver Moses, making him a fit vessel to expound an upright system of justice.²⁹

SECTION 3. Issues of humility concern those who make the charges, those who receive the charges and those who handle the charges (witnesses and courts). The court needs to ascertain for itself, as it assesses intent, whether there is a spirit of humility which is demonstrated by the compassion of the one making the charge as he seeks to redeem his brother, and a spirit of humility in the one being charged, by the way in which he responds to a charge.³⁰

SECTION 4. Humility ought not to be interpreted in a manner which precludes a vigorous pursuit of a charge when there is cause, nor a steadfast defense of/by the party being charged.³¹

SECTION 5. The three basic steps of Matthew 18:15-17 are the following:

- 1) When a party trespasses against another, the offended party must go to his brother privately and confront him with the nature of the transgression. It is prudent to specify at the time of the offense, particular details concerning it and any evidence and testimony (if known). Privacy must be hedged by all parties concerned so that repentance on the part of either offender or offended is not further handicapped by the complications of unnecessary public exposure. Failure to protect privacy may be a chargeable offense on the grounds of talebearing, perjury, slander, or schism.³²
- 2) When step one (of this Section 5, herein described above) has been faithfully discharged and no resolution of the matter has been attained, the aggrieved party³³ may bring one or two more witnesses to the offender so that the matter may be objectified as to the nature of the accusation, the position of the accused, as well as all matters and evidence known to that point concerning the offense. Though the presence of one or two witnesses has escalated the matter beyond the privacy enjoined in step 1 above, the public nature of this step must be confined to accuser, accused, pertinent testimony and the

²⁸ David used the same method as our Lord would later outline despite the public nature of the persecution of his life by Saul and the extreme difficulty of using the method developed in the Law (which we now have as a concise three step method in Matt. 18:15-18). First he had Jonathan, as his representative (given the dangerous circumstances), present his innocence to the king (1 Sam. 19: 1-7) which brought David back into Saul's presence. Saul did not stop here and David, now on the run, confronted him with the first of three "witnesses" referenced in Matt. 18 (step 2)- the portion of Saul's robe which David cut off (1 Sam. 24:11-12) and then the other two witnesses presented to Saul-the cruse of water and the royal javelin (1 Sam. 26: 12-25)- thus fulfilling lawful discipline as demanded in Scripture. So David kept the Law's demands in his judicial condemnation of Saul, despite the terribly difficult nature of his circumstances. So what is our excuse in the churches if we neglect this same approach, the very one which our Lord Jesus simply summarized for us in Matt. 18?

²⁹ Num. 12:3.

³⁰ Matt. 5:3; 7:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:8-9.

³¹ Matt. 11:2-6, 21-22; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 2:11-21; 3: 1-4.

³² Lev. 19: 12, 16, 17-18; Prov. 6:19; 1 Thes. 4: 6-11.

³³ "Aggrieved party" may be singular or plural but for the sake of convenience it is listed in the singular unless otherwise noted.

one or two witnesses who are present in order to verify the testimony given by all parties. Such "one or two witnesses" may be compelled for their testimony by a church court if such becomes necessary at a later time. Such "one or two witnesses" ought to be members of the church which has jurisdiction over the accused. Failure to use members, could result in the accuser being handicapped as to his ability to produce such witnesses, since the church court (if process goes this far) cannot compel such witnesses. This step still retains a large degree of privacy which must be protected as above. Privacy must be hedged by all parties concerned so that repentance on the part of either offender or offended is not further handicapped by the complications of unnecessary public exposure. Failure to protect privacy may be a chargeable offense on the grounds of talebearing, perjury, slander, or schism.

- 3) When step one above has been faithfully discharged and no resolution of the matter has been attained, and the aggrieved party has brought one or two more witnesses to the offender as stipulated above in step 2, then and only then, unless otherwise provided in this *Directory of Church Discipline*, accusation by the accuser against the accused may be made to the church court, except when the matter pertains to a minister of the Word concerning doctrine.³⁴ Then, the matter shall go to presbytery as the court of original jurisdiction, but not as an automatic course of action. Matthew 18 must still be used or cause should be shown as to the contrary.

SECTION 6. When offended (concerning step 1 of Section 5 above), members of the churches must be encouraged to go to the offending party and settle the offense themselves in preference to making the minister of the Word or a ruling elder (or some other party who was not an involved participant) responsible for settling offenses for them. The exception to this rule might involve issues that pertain to the policy or instruction of the church where officer-bearers become involved because the allegation seeks a change of policy or instruction or the abuse thereof.

SECTION 7. Concerning step 2 of Section 5 above, when concern is made about the minister of the Word and involves doctrine, the individual shall go to the minister of the Word and inquire of him as to his understanding in the matter being alleged. If he maintains his teaching or preaching without change (or the statement(s) involved were not simply foolish/hasty misstatement(s)) then if he continues his accusation the accuser must go to the congregational presbytery³⁵ in order to fulfill the necessity of having "one or two witnesses" to establish every word between the litigants.³⁶ The members of the congregational presbytery will do everything possible to call to repentance and reconciliation and, that failing, the accuser has the right to pursue an appeal of the doctrinal charge at presbyterial court.

SECTION 8. The accuser in Section 7 may bring other witnesses to the congregational presbytery but may not circumvent the congregational presbytery by doing so.

SECTION 9. A person is assumed to be innocent until proven guilty.³⁷

SECTION 10. If a person (including witnesses) is convicted of having perjured himself in a church or presbyterial court, the person will bear the sanction which was being sought against the accused.³⁸ If the perjurer is not a member of the CRPC, then the sanction shall be a letter of reproof to the perjurer's church and any other sanctions as provided in this *Directory of Church Discipline*. If he is not a member of any church, then he shall be reproved as one who has acted as an heathen.

SECTION 11. In all judicial matters, it is proper and wise for the parties concerned in all steps (Section 5 above) and procedures as well as for the maintenance of good order, in order to protect and provide for the

³⁴ "Doctrine", as herein used, judicially involves charges exclusively concerning teaching or preaching which allegedly violates Scripture, authorized creeds, catechisms, covenants and constitutions of church or presbytery.

³⁵ The congregational presbytery here is not acting as a court but is acting as the witnesses of Matthew 18:16. The reason for this involvement on their part is that they do have an interest in the doctrinal matters of their church. They act to establish all the pertinent details of the confrontation between the litigants. Their involvement does not prejudice involvement of witnesses who may give testimony concerning the details of the allegation. In addition, the entire congregational presbytery may choose to only delegate one or more of its elders to fulfill the obligations of this step.

³⁶ Matt.18: 16; 1 Tim.5:19.

³⁷ Exod. 23: 7; Deut.19: 10-13; 21:1-9; 27:25; 1 Sam. 19:4-6; Job 9:28-29; Psa. 94:21; Prov. 1:11.

³⁸ Deu. 19:16-21; This means that whatever else may occur in the church court, the one who has perjured himself will be sanctioned whether or not guilt was established in the accused.

truth, that all matters and meetings both as to their nature and time as well as the parties concerned, be objectified by provable means³⁹ such as witnesses, memos, letters, and copies of messages sent by e-mail. Failure to objectify a matter or meeting may result in failure to prove allegations or successfully defend oneself against allegations. If a matter is important enough for judicial process, it is important enough for a prepared and objectified approach to the matter. However, failure to objectify a matter by any party, though unwise, does not grant a license to another party to alter (much less perjure) his testimony, nor for the court to dismiss the charge. If particular details are known to any parties involved in the matters and no objectification has been presented, it is none the less the duty of all parties to testify as to the truth of the matter. Failure to speak the truth in church court constitutes perjury.

SECTION 12. Humility⁴⁰ is obstructed by the following practices:

- 1) slighting any of the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 or their proper sequence whereby the offender may have been given opportunity to demonstrate his innocence or repentance;⁴¹
- 2) despising a brother's weakness;⁴²
- 3) esteeming oneself above others;⁴³
- 4) talebearing and gossiping;⁴⁴
- 5) exhibiting a slothful and disorderly spirit which is given to meddling in other's affairs;⁴⁵
- 6) acting as a self-appointed judge in matters not your own;⁴⁶
- 7) seeking to elevate yourself by tearing brethren or authorities down;⁴⁷
- 8) refusing to forgive a matter when proper confession, or retraction and restitution have been offered concerning the matter;⁴⁸
- 9) refusal to be circumspect in guarding the privacy of any matter or reputation involved in the dispute;⁴⁹
- 10) refusing to meet first with the accused or accusing party before pursuing the charge beyond Section 5, step 1;⁵⁰
- 11) refusal to make an appropriate response to testimony levied against him;⁵¹
- 12) prompting others to make accusations which one ought to settle himself; (There are times when silence or a single statement "I will not comment" is appropriate.)⁵²
- 13) developing a "party spirit" by gathering prior witnesses against a person without going to him first;⁵³
- 14) being a witness against your brother without cause;⁵⁴
- 15) causing your brother to stumble by your sin without seeking his restoration;⁵⁵

³⁹ 1 Sam. 24: 4-12; 26:11-21.

⁴⁰ This section on humility is designed to help identify motive and intent on the part of the individual in judicial matters. It is untrue that motive cannot be known. Our Lord said "Ye shall *know them* by their fruits." Matt.7:16.

⁴¹ Matt. 18:12-15.

⁴² Job 31:13; Rom. 14:3.

⁴³ Prov. 8:13; Phil. 2:3.

⁴⁴ Lev. 19:16; Prov. 20:19; 21:23; 26:20; 1 Tim. 5:13.

⁴⁵ Pro. 18:8-9; 20:19; 24:21; 27:17; 1 Tim. 5:13.

⁴⁶ Rom. 14:10, 13.

⁴⁷ 1 Kings 1-2 (Adonijah); Pro. 4:23-26; 16:30; Luke 11:53-54,

⁴⁸ Lev. 19:18; 2 Cor. 2: 7-11.

⁴⁹ Prov. 16:28; Mat. 18:15-16.

⁵⁰ Mat. 18:15-17.

⁵¹ Prov. 15:1-2, 4-7; 15:23; 15:28; 26:4-5; 27:11; 29:19.

⁵² Prov. 6:12-15, 16:28.

⁵³ Prov. 6:12-15, 16:28.

⁵⁴ Prov. 24:28.

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- 1 16) being unfair and vengeful in dealings;⁵⁶
- 2 17) being fraudulent and deceitful with another;⁵⁷
- 3 18) breaching of a known covenantal obligation or one's pledged word;⁵⁸
- 4 19) leading a brother to act unknowingly and taking advantage of him;⁵⁹
- 5 20) oppressing people by taking advantage of their necessities;
- 6 21) being unfaithful to them by not fulfilling one's promises and engagements or being slack and slighting
- 7 in any business they are employed in by their neighbors;⁶⁰
- 8 22) aiming at nothing but just to meet the letter of their engagements, violating its spirit;⁶¹
- 9 23) receiving an accusation against an elder without two or three witnesses;⁶²
- 10 24) accusing an elder without two or three witnesses;⁶³
- 11 25) unjustly neglecting to pay one's debts;⁶⁴
- 12 26) unnecessarily putting people to trouble and difficulty to get what is due from them or give what is due
- 13 to them;
- 14 27) reproaching or speaking evil of them behind their back, by making or spreading false reports about
- 15 them or greatly misrepresenting things about them;⁶⁵
- 16 28) exaggerating their faults;⁶⁶
- 17 29) speaking of them in an unfair and unjust manner;⁶⁷
- 18 30) putting injurious and evil constructions on one another's words and actions;⁶⁸
- 19 31) habitually showing contempt for them;⁶⁹
- 20 32) being willing to receive the worst reports about them;⁷⁰
- 21 33) carrying themselves injuriously toward those over whom they have authority, by behaving very
- 22 assumingly, magisterially and/or tyrannically toward them;⁷¹
- 23 34) carrying themselves very injuriously toward those who are over them, by denying them that respect and
- 24 honor which are due to their place;⁷²
- 25 35) carrying themselves very injuriously toward others by the exercise of a very selfish spirit, and
- 26 apparently having no regard to the good or benefit of their brother, but seeking only to better their own
- 27 interests;⁷³

⁵⁵ Rom 14:13-23; 15:1-2.

⁵⁶ Lev.19:18; Prov. 11:1; 16:11.

⁵⁷ Lev. 19:11; Pro. 6:16-19.

⁵⁸ 1 Tim. 5:8; Tit. 1:16; In Num.30 a husband may undo the oath of his wife without further charge.

⁵⁹ Lev. 19:14.

⁶⁰ Pro. 3:27-28.

⁶¹ Pro. 3:27-28.

⁶² 1 Tim. 5:19.

⁶³ 1 Tim. 5:19.

⁶⁴ Lev. 19:13.

⁶⁵ Lev. 19:11; Pro. 6:16-19.

⁶⁶ Pro 17:20.

⁶⁷ Lev. 19:11; Pro. 6:16-19.

⁶⁸ Pro 17:20.

⁶⁹ Lev. 19:17.

⁷⁰ Pro 17:20.

⁷¹ Ps. 18:26-27; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21.

⁷² Num. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:5.

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- 1 36) manifesting a very haughty and proud spirit with respect to their gifts as though they thought they were
2 more excellent than all;⁷⁴
- 3 37) carrying themselves very injuriously by the exercising of a very willful spirit, being so desperately set
4 on having their own way by bending everything to their own will, never yielding to the wishes of
5 others and never altering their course for the sake of another;⁷⁵
- 6 38) greatly provoking or exasperating another unjustly;⁷⁶
- 7 39) returning evil for evil, for real or imagined injuries;⁷⁷
- 8 40) acting injuriously in public affairs without regard to the public good from a spirit of opposition to some
9 party or particular person.⁷⁸

⁷³ Pro. 8:13.

⁷⁴ 1 Cor. 12.

⁷⁵ Jam. 4:17; 3 John 9.

⁷⁶ Luke 11:53-54.

⁷⁷ 1 Pet. 3: 8-11.

⁷⁸ 2 Tim. 2:23-26.

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CHAPTER 3

JURISDICTION

SECTION 1. Original jurisdiction over a church member belongs to the court of the body of which the individual is a member. Original jurisdiction over a court rests with the next broader court.⁷⁹

SECTION 2. All transfers or certificates of standing need to specify the body to which the person is dismissed and will be sent directly to that body by the dismissing court. The receiving body will notify the dismissing court when the transfer or certificate of standing is received.⁸⁰

SECTION 3. If a person who has been charged with some offense requests that he be dismissed to another body within the CRPC, the court of jurisdiction shall grant the request only for such reasons which demonstrate:

- 1) necessity in establishing the truth and/or justice of a matter;
- 2) greater facility in handling the case;
- 3) conformity to the Book of Church Government and Directory of Church Discipline; and
- 4) if the receiving court agrees to assume such jurisdictional oversight, it may lawfully do so.

If the request is granted, the court of jurisdiction shall inform the receiving court of the charge that has been brought and of any action which may have been taken in reference to the charge, and the receiving court shall conclude the case.⁸¹

SECTION 4. A church must be represented by its pastor and/or elders before any court bringing accusation or charge against it, and has the right to be heard.⁸²

⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 16:1; In the infancy of the church, the apostles were the broadest court over the churches on earth until God replaced them with presbyteries which it was their duty to establish. Deut. 1:13-17; Acts 21 Paul temporarily subordinates his apostolic office—or, at the very least, waives the assertion of its authority—in his obedience to the elders, thus enhancing their authority in the churches. Such formation would have taken time and until then, they certainly acted as the broader court (Matt.16: 18; 1 Cor. 1, 5, 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 2; Gal. 1-2). In that light, Christ did indeed give them the keys of the kingdom to exercise as they became the “foundations” (1 Cor. 3:10; Eph.2:20) of the church of Christ through their decision-making and adjudications. Of course, Christ used them to write the inspired books of the New Testament, which power is not given to any other person, persons, nor entity including the church or presbytery (Heb.1: 1-2), revelation now being concluded.

⁸⁰ Rom.16:1; 2 Cor.3:1.

⁸¹ Acts 15: 1-6.

⁸² Acts15:6.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONGREGATIONAL PRESBYTERY'S JURISDICTION

SECTION 1. The congregational presbytery of a church shall have original jurisdiction over all of the individuals (including the minister of the Word) whose names are on the roll of the church in all of the matters⁸³ except with respect to a charge concerning doctrine in the case of the minister of the Word.

SECTION 2. Congregational presbytery shall receive from regional presbytery all matters pertaining to the character, ethic, and behavior in the credentials of a minister of the Word and shall become the court of original jurisdiction in all such matters from that point onward.⁸⁴ If any matter pertaining to credentials was found to have been willfully misrepresented to presbytery by such minister of the Word, the presbytery will choose one of its members to represent a charge to the congregational presbytery of that minister's church. If not satisfied with the decision of that local court, the presbytery may then, by its own appeal, bring the matter to the appellate level.⁸⁵ Either the congregational presbytery of the local court or the minister of the Word or both may represent the matter before presbytery.⁸⁶ The minister of the Word will choose who will undertake such representation.⁸⁷

SECTION 3. In the case of a member who is a minister of the Word and who has refused to appeal his own excommunication, then his credentials are null and void.

SECTION 4. In all cases of excommunication, the congregational presbytery involved with the adjudication must notify the regional presbytery which, in turn, shall notify all of the churches of the regional presbytery through the convening church. The convening church will notify the next broader presbytery which shall notify the convening churches of the various regional presbyteries. The broader presbytery will notify all other broader presbyteries through their convening churches. Such convening churches will notify all the churches with which they normally meet.

SECTION 5. The names of members shall be removed from the roll of the church only by order of the congregational presbytery.⁸⁸

SECTION 6. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll by a letter of transfer to another congregation within the CRPC approved by the congregational presbytery.⁸⁹ When the member requests a transfer to another congregation and the congregational presbytery dismisses him, the secretary shall send a letter of transfer commending him to its care.⁹⁰ Such a letter may be either a simple transfer or a transfer with complaint.⁹¹ Such complaint will specify any outstanding problems or offenses which are not in process of being tried.⁹² The secretary of the receiving church shall notify the dismissing church of the date of his reception. When the notification is received the member's name shall be removed from the roll of the church and all of the pertinent issues should be recorded in the minutes.⁹³ He is subject to the jurisdiction of the congregational presbytery of the dismissing church until he is actually received by the new congregation.⁹⁴

SECTION 7. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll when he desires to be dismissed to a church of which the congregational presbytery cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice. If the congregational presbytery deems that the spiritual interests of the member will be served by uniting with such a church, it will send a certificate of standing or a certificate of complaint when there are problems or

⁸³ Heb. 13:7.

⁸⁴ Matt. 18: 17.

⁸⁵ 3 John 9-10.

⁸⁶ Acts 15:1-6.

⁸⁷ Acts 9:27-28.

⁸⁸ 1 Cor.14:40.

⁸⁹ 1 Cor.14:40.

⁹⁰ Rom.16:1.

⁹¹ Acts 15:36-41; Philemon 1-2, 10-12.

⁹² Ez. 3:17, 20-21.

⁹³ 1 Cor.14:40.

⁹⁴ Rom.16:1.

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offenses which are not in the process of being tried. When they are informed that he has joined the church, his name shall be removed from the roll and the circumstances will be recorded in the minutes.⁹⁵

SECTION 8. Congregational presbytery may transfer or dismiss a member from the roll of the local church when he is ordained as a teaching elder of another church.⁹⁶

SECTION 9. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll by erasure but not as a means of circumventing disciplinary procedure.⁹⁷ If the member has no cause to leave the church, he is in breach of covenant and the congregational presbytery must move forward in disciplinary procedures concerning him. Children who are minors shall not be disciplined for the sinful decisions and actions of parents. Such children can be erased from the rolls of the church when their parents have been disciplined according to this *Directory of Church Discipline*.

SECTION 10. When a member desires to be dismissed to a church of which the congregational presbytery cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice the member may be disciplined. On being informed that the member has joined such a church, the secretary will erase his name from the roll and record such pertinent issues in the minutes.⁹⁸

SECTION 11. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll by erasure when a member cannot be found. The congregational presbytery may, after two years, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes.⁹⁹

SECTION 12. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll by erasure when they are noncommunicant members whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have been removed from the roll.¹⁰⁰

SECTION 13. Congregational presbytery should remove a member from the roll by erasure after their death. It should be recorded in the minutes.¹⁰¹

SECTION 14. Congregational presbytery may remove a member from the roll by excommunication according to the *Directory of Church Discipline*.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ 1 John 2:19.

⁹⁶ Acts 18:24-27; 19:1; Note the removal of Apollos from Ephesus to Corinth in his teaching capacity.

⁹⁷ 1 John 2:19.

⁹⁸ 1 John 2:19.

⁹⁹ 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁰⁰ They, without prejudice, leave under the authority of their parents/guardians whatever status their parents have with the church upon leaving it. This assumes that their leaving occurs only because of the departure of their parents/guardians.

¹⁰¹ 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁰² Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5.

CHAPTER 5

ORIGINAL JURISDICTION OF PRESBYTERY

SECTION 1. All the members of the regional church who are not enrolled as members of a local church shall be assigned to a local church for purposes of establishing original jurisdiction.¹⁰³

SECTION 2. The presbytery shall have original jurisdiction in matters of doctrine over the ministers of the Word who are on the rolls of the member churches.¹⁰⁴ If the minister of the Word has been dismissed from another body, he is subject to the jurisdiction of that body until his name is placed on the roll of the CRPC. The presbytery shall acquire jurisdiction after they have received his credentials and, at that time, all the rights and privileges of membership belong to him by covenant.¹⁰⁵ Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest court of the CRPC to which a complaint can be made.¹⁰⁶

SECTION 3. Any court broader than the regional presbytery shall only have original jurisdiction in disputes between/among judicatories within its boundaries.¹⁰⁷ However, the American presbytery will have original jurisdiction in all cases involving disputes among any two or more judicatories which do not have the same immediate regional authority.

¹⁰³ 1 Cor.14:40; Titus 1:1-5, 13; 2:15.

¹⁰⁴ Titus 1:4 cf. 2:4, 15.

¹⁰⁵ 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁰⁶ 2 Cor. 8; Titus receives all the authority, honor and privilege upon his reception among the Corinthians being commissioned by the churches of Macedonia and the apostle's authority.

¹⁰⁷ The authorities in the CRPC are, in order, local church (with its congregational presbytery), regional presbytery, synodical presbytery, American presbytery. A court which is broader refers (in this listing) to the court immediately succeeding it and no more. Thus, American presbytery would have original jurisdiction in disputes concerning synods. Synods would have original jurisdiction in disputes concerning its own regional presbyteries. Regional presbytery would have original jurisdiction in disputes concerning its churches. The congregational presbytery has original jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to its members (except as noted in matters of doctrine and credentials as associated with the minister of the Word).

CHAPTER 6

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

SECTION 1. If a congregational presbytery shall cease to exist or become so small that it is not working effectively, the regional presbytery shall direct the congregation to another CRPC church or provide for an election of elders from within the congregation; or the presbytery, if the congregation agrees, may appoint ruling elders or a minister of the Word, or both, from within the presbytery to be an acting congregational presbytery or to assist the existing congregational presbytery temporarily.¹⁰⁸

SECTION 2. If a church ceases to exist, the presbytery of jurisdiction shall secure the church records, exercise care over its members, issue letters of transfer, issue certificates of standing (or complaint) or effect erasure.¹⁰⁹

SECTION 3. If a presbytery ceases to exist, the next broader presbytery shall assign each church and its ministers to some other presbytery.¹¹⁰

SECTION 4. The broader court (in the special circumstances above) shall either conclude the uncompleted cases of discipline begun in the lower court, or such cases can be referred to the court to whose care the accused has been committed.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Titus 1:1-9; This function is one of many “shepherding” functions which presbytery may occasionally undertake.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹¹⁰ Exod. 18: 19-26; 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹¹¹ Exod. 18: 19-26; 1 Cor. 14:40.

CHAPTER 7

JUDICIAL PROCESS—ORDINARY¹¹²

In the CRPC, as in many other denominations, there are two approaches to official church discipline. The first is explained in this chapter and is spoken of as “ordinary”, because it is through this judicial process that most discipline cases are handled. This process is less formal and is especially useful in those common/ordinary situations where the church member who must undergo discipline has admitted his sin, and has expressed no desire to contest any charges nor any censures. This is in no way to be construed as “prejudging the case” since the member charged with sin may seek counsel at any time and may contest the very charge itself as well as any censure that affects his eligibility for the sacraments or his standing in the church. He has a right to demand a formal trial before a court (Judicial Process—Extraordinary; see Chapter 8) subsequent to any charge being made, or after any censure has been determined. If such is the case, or if the nature of the case or the court otherwise determine favor an extraordinary judicial process, then the procedures set forth in Chapters 8 and following are to be observed. The process set forth in Chapter 8 is more formal and more rigorous in procedure and must be granted upon the request of any defendant or may be pursued at the discretion of any court.

The procedure followed in this chapter may be called by other names at the local church level, but must insure, for the sake of justice, that all of the points herein are followed:

SECTION 1: Dealing with Sin in the Church – Personal responsibility.

- 1) If a member sins against another person, or if a member sins and this sin becomes known to another member of the church, the person sinned against or aware of the sin should go privately to the sinner and confront him in person.
- 2) If the sinner repents, there must be forgiveness and reconciliation, and the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother.
- 3) If the sinner does not repent, the member aware of the sin should take one or two others (especially where possible, members of the CRPC) along as witnesses and seek the sinner’s repentance. If this is successful, the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother.
- 4) If the sinner still does not repent, the person aware of the sin shall bring the matter to the session/congregational presbytery, and to it alone, for action. The matter is not to be made known on a wider basis.
- 5) If the sin is known broadly in the church, and therefore cannot be solved privately, charges may be taken directly to the appropriate church court per Matt. 18:15-17, 1 Cor. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:19-20.

SECTION 2: Dealing with sin in the church—Corporate Responsibility

- 1) If the congregational presbytery or broader court learns of a sinning member, it must not ignore the situation.
- 2) If there is evidence that a member is teaching heresy, disregarding or violating the moral law, or showing contempt for the courts of the church, the court shall contact that member in love and with care, and shall investigate the allegations.
- 3) If the sinner confesses and repents, there must be forgiveness and reconciliation, and the matter shall be closed. You have won your brother. Such closure may include counsel or censure appropriate to the circumstances.

¹¹² It with thankfulness to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) that much of the information obtained herein is attributed. Much of that contained in this chapter is drawn from direct quotes from their RPCNA Confession and Testimony, The Book of Discipline, Section I, E-2 through E-8 available on the RPCNA website at www.reformedpresbyterian.org. It should be noted the RPCNA is one of the oldest Presbyterian denomination in the United States, maintains the use of the original Westminster Confession and Catechism as does the CRPC and maintains the same essential standards of discipline as the historic Scottish Presbyterian Churches. This section added at 6-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes for grounds and details.

- 4) If the sinner acknowledges the truthfulness of the accusation but refuses to repent, the court may proceed to the imposition of any formal censure in hope of repentance. (See SECTION 3 for appropriate censures.)
- 5) However, if the accused denies or desires to contest the charges, the court may not proceed to issue a censure beyond admonition or rebuke without conducting a formal trial. (See Chapter 8 for Judicial Process—Extraordinary.) Scripture: Matt. 18:17; Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1.

SECTION 3 The Imposition of Church Censures

- 1) There are five formal degrees of censure. These are admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and excommunication. These formal censures shall be used if the sin is confirmed, and if censure is appropriate, or the sinner is confronted but does not repent and if the sinner does not contest or appeal them, thus requiring going to a formal judicial process. These formal censures shall be put in writing, with a clear statement of the sin, and, if possible, conveyed to the sinner personally by one or more of the members of the court. Included in all such censures is the right to retry the case by formal judicial procedure as provided in Chapter 8, or by appeal to the next broader presbytery. The court is then obliged to assist the appellant in the formal procedures for such process in a timely manner. Any of these censures may otherwise be imposed by the court without first imposing lesser censures except that of excommunication. In addition, the court may remove members from the roll without formal process, as otherwise provided for in this DCD.
 - a. *Admonition*—This is the lightest degree of censure and is commonly used by the court in cases of neglect of duty. Judicial admonition is administered when the offender is confronted with his sin, warned of his peril, and exhorted to repent so that he may be faithful in the future in his walk with Christ. This may be accompanied with restitution or other restorative measures, as the victim and court agree in accordance with the Law of God. The court may also make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the admonition, though this is not required and is left to the discretion of the court, though it may be requested by the sinner.
 - b. *Rebuke*—This is a censure for a more aggravated sin and is commonly used by the court in cases of active transgression or of continued neglect of duty in spite of counsel. It is a setting forth the serious nature of the offense, reproving him of his offense, and exhorting him to repentance and faithfulness in his walk with Christ. This may be accompanied with restitution or other restorative measures, as the victim and court agree in accordance with the Law of God. The court may also make the people under its oversight publicly aware of the fact of and reason for the rebuke at its discretion or at the request of the sinner.
 - c. *Suspension*—This is the temporary exclusion from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments or from the exercise of ordained office or from both. (The matter of exclusion of an ordained officer who is a member of presbytery may only be in such cases as fall under the jurisdiction of the local congregational presbytery and will require notice being served to the next broader presbytery. An officer who is denied the privileges of membership in his church must be suspended from office. However, he may be suspended from office without being denied the privileges of membership.) This becomes necessary when members are guilty of gross sin or of persistent neglect. This censure shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court, and in the name of Jesus Christ. At the discretion of the court, this discipline shall either be “silent censure” (i.e. not made public, but because of the nature of the offense kept silent) or otherwise make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the suspension. The lifting of suspension depends on evidence of repentance.
 - d. *Deposition*—Deposition is the declaration by the trial court to the congregation or ministry in which the office-bearer lately presided, that the offender is no longer an office-bearer of the church. In the case of a minister of the Word, the trial court shall declare the pulpit vacant, the pastoral ties dissolved and the sentence shall be read before the congregation. Such shall be announced to all presbyteries of the CRPC, and read in all the churches and the individual shall cease from preaching or teaching duties or the exercise of other privileges of his office anywhere. Such deposition from office shall cause the presbytery to erase his name from the roll of ministerial members. It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges. This censure shall be imposed for serious

offenses in doctrine or in conduct that obviously disqualify the person for exercising office. The sentence shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court, and in the name of Jesus Christ. The court shall also make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the suspension.

e. *Excommunication*—This is the disciplinary exclusion of a member from the visible church. It should be imposed only for such malignant errors or persistent violations of God's law as are grossly inconsistent with the Christian profession of faith or subversive to the doctrine and order of Christ's Church. All possible efforts should first be made to bring the sinner to repentance. Excommunication shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court and in the name of Jesus Christ. Prayer shall be offered to God for mercy and repentance. In the case of a minister of the Word, if an announcement has not previously been made, the trial court shall declare the pulpit vacant, the pastoral ties dissolved and the sentence shall be read before the congregation. Such shall be announced to all presbyteries of the CRPC, and read in all the churches and the individual shall cease from preaching or teaching duties or the exercise of other privileges of his office anywhere. The court shall make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the excommunication. Members should then relate to the person as one who is outside the visible church and in need of repentance and salvation.

- 2) Where appropriate, the court may elect to remove members from church membership without formal censure, as otherwise provided for in Chapter 15 Cases without Full Process.

SECTION 4 Rights of Appeal

The Presbyterian form of government provides for a gradation of courts whereby the narrower/lower is answerable to the broader/higher. A decision of the narrower court is subject to review and correction by a broader court. Any member of the church may carry his case through the narrower courts even to the broadest court for adjudication except in cases where the member has failed to appear as set forth in DCD 5:8. For sufficient reasons the broader court may decline to act. The action of a narrower court may be brought under the jurisdiction of a broader court by Complaint, Reference, or Appeal.

CHAPTER 8

STEPS IN THE INSTITUTION OF JUDICIAL PROCESS—EXTRAORDINARY

SECTION 1. Offenses are considered either public or private. A public offense is one which is destructive to, or tends toward the destruction of the peace of the church.¹¹³ A private offense causes, or tends to cause, injury or damage to the parties concerned.¹¹⁴

SECTION 2. “Cause” is defined as that which occasions loss, injury, or damage if it directly and in a natural and continuous sequence produces or contributes substantially to producing such loss, injury, or damage so that it can reasonably be said that, but for the conduct or neglect of the party(s) involved, the loss, injury, or damage would not have occurred. Conduct on the part of the accused need not be the only cause.

SECTION 3. In the case of a private offense, a charge may not be admitted until the court has ascertained that the steps of Matthew 18 have been faithfully followed and the offended party has done his utmost to privately redeem his brother and restore fellowship.¹¹⁵ If such a procedure has not been attempted, or the attempt was improperly made, or made in a slighted manner, prior to the placement of a charge before the court of original jurisdiction, then the plaintiff must outline the cause for such failure and the court will rule on the validity of the cause in determining whether or not to admit the charge(s). The plaintiff’s failure to adhere to Matthew 18 is conduct subject to sanction.¹¹⁶ At a minimum, the accuser shall be reproved for “bad faith” and may find the case prejudiced in that his own testimony may be deemed incredible or compromised for lack of integrity in violation of “humility.” At its discretion, the court may subject the plaintiff to charges and ultimately censure, fine or trial in accordance with Section 15 of this chapter.

SECTION 4. Justice is denied when an offense is known to the complainant and such complainant does not initiate the steps of Matthew 18 as soon as possible. It is sin to allow an offense to remain unaddressed, suspended as it were, over its intended victim and used for expediency as opposed to justice. An offense that goes unresolved often leads to a root of bitterness and spirit of vengeance. Examples would include cases such as the following: 1) the case of a person claiming to forgive another and subsequently bringing the complaint back without cause; 2) the case of an accusation made many years after the alleged offense where evidence has been lost, witnesses no longer are available to testify, recollection of occurrences vague, or a change in circumstances more favorable to the reception of an unjust complaint.¹¹⁷

SECTION 5. In the case of public offenses, the court should always seek the least grave effective remedy according to Matthew 18:15-17 or Matthew 5:21-27 or Galatians 6:1.¹¹⁸

SECTION 6. Due diligence must be taken by all parties concerned in the matter that no discussion of any of the issues occurs between individuals not involved in the judiciary process. Such discussion may be construed as a violation of Matthew 18 (refusal to “hedge” what privacy remains in the matter) and a violation of DCD 2:12 (obstruction of humility).

SECTION 7. The following parties may bring a charge of an offense before the court of original jurisdiction:

- 1) the injured party;¹¹⁹

¹¹³ 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 5:1-13.

¹¹⁴ Gen.27:41; Deut. 19:4; Matt. 5:28-30; 1 Cor. 7:1-17. A private offense would fail (the court would have no jurisdiction) if there were not an individual complainant. Whereas a public offense would not fail because the court would continue to have jurisdiction without a particular complainant.

¹¹⁵ Matt.5:9; 18:15-18; Gal.6:1.

¹¹⁶ “Subject to sanctions” references the fact that the court will officially seek a basis for censuring such party or parties who blithely forsook attempts to address the issue according to Matthew 18 because they wished to take advantage of the fact that the issue was of common knowledge. In other words, care was not taken to try to handle the offense prior to making charge in a court when it was possible to do so. *Very often, accusers and witnesses do not have the courage or incentive to face the accused, privately, as Matthew 18 commands. Lack of incentive on their part, may be due to the fact that, in forsaking humility like Jonah of old, they wish only the condemnation and ruin of the accused and not his redemption. Lack of courage often occurs as a function of one’s unwillingness and refusal to meet with the accused face to face in private unless the accuser gains boldness in having the support of a court to help him.*

¹¹⁷ Heb. 12:14-15.

¹¹⁸ See footnotes to Chapter 2, Section 1 concerning Matthew 18 and the conflict of David and Saul.

¹¹⁹ Matt. 18:15.

2) a person who is not the injured party (see Section 23 below); ¹²⁰

3) a court. ¹²¹

The offense alleged in the charge should be serious enough to require a trial. A charge against an elder or minister of the Word shall not be admitted unless accompanied by two or more witnesses able and willing to verify their first-hand knowledge of the subject offense. ¹²²

SECTION 8. If the person who has brought the charge requests the court to assume responsibility for prosecuting the case, the court may prosecute the charge if convinced that judicial process is warranted. However, the court should reluctantly assume such responsibility and only in cases of extreme incapacity on the part of the injured party. ¹²³

SECTION 9. In the case of a private offense, if the accuser is a member of the court, he must pursue the issue as Matthew 18 specifies and may not do so as a member of the court of judgment. The court must then proceed with its preliminary investigation. ¹²⁴

SECTION 10. All charges shall be submitted to the secretary (or clerk) of congregational presbytery and will then be considered filed if the congregational presbytery is the court of original jurisdiction. In cases where the congregational presbytery is not the court of original jurisdiction, the secretary shall forward the charges to the secretary of the appropriate broader court and upon receipt by the broader court's secretary the charge shall be considered filed.

SECTION 11. If the alleged offense was committed more than two (2) years before being filed, the court shall not admit the charge unless unavoidable reasons exist which prevented the charge's earlier submission. If no attempt has been made to follow the steps of Matthew 18 as specified in Chapter 2, then no unavoidable impediment exists. ¹²⁵

SECTION 12. Every charge of an alleged offense must conform to the following requirements, however the church is encouraged to assist members in forming a proper complaint as necessary:

1) submitted in written form, signed and sworn to under the pains and penalties of perjury; ¹²⁶

2) explain the alleged offense, providing specifications, which if proved true, support the charge; ¹²⁷

3) explain each ¹²⁸ alleged offense; ¹²⁹

4) support the charge with references to the Word of God; ¹³⁰ particularly the law of God. ¹³¹

5) support the charge, when appropriate, with references to the creeds and confessions of the church; ¹³²

6) explain, what damage the complainant suffered, ¹³³ and;

7) explain how the one(s) offended has followed the steps of Matthew 18 in order to redeem the situation, to include a list of witnesses who participated in the Matthew 18 procedures. ¹³⁴

¹²⁰ 1 Cor. 1:11.

¹²¹ 1 Tim. 1:20.

¹²² 1 Tim. 5:19.

¹²³ 1 Cor. 1:11

¹²⁴ 1 Cor.4:19; 14:40; 2 Cor. 12:16-13:3.

¹²⁵ 1 Cor. 14:40. 2 Sam. 21:19 establishes the basis for no statute of limitations in some cases.

¹²⁶ 1 Cor.1:11; 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹²⁷ Matt. 5: 23-24; 18:16.

¹²⁸ "only one" replaced with "each" 11-2008 Presbytery. See Minutes XV, D, (14).

¹²⁹ Matt.5:22.

¹³⁰ Matt. 5:19-20; 2 Thes.3:14-15.

¹³¹ Rom. 7:7; 3:20

¹³² Matt.16:19; Heb.13:17.

¹³³ 2 Cor. 2:5-6.

¹³⁴ Matt.5:9; Matt. 18:15-18; Gal.6:1.

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SECTION 13. If an alleged offense is deemed heresy, the charge must point to the violated Scripture.¹³⁵ The creedal standards may be used for supporting evidence.

SECTION 14. The charge of heresy, when applied to a minister of the Word, involves doctrine only when it took place as a function of public pronouncement and teaching, preaching, or publication. A charge of doctrinal heresy cannot be made for a privately spoken matter. Such private statements, not made as a function of public preaching, teaching, or publication, if charged, will be handled as violations of ethics.

SECTION 15. When there is a charge of doctrinal heresy against a minister of the Word, the secretary of the congregational presbytery unto whom the minister is accountable, shall file the charge with the regional presbytery, forwarding the charge and its specifications.

SECTION 16: Upon receipt of a charge, the secretary should immediately provide the complainant an official acknowledgment certifying that he has received the complaint on behalf of the congregational presbytery. However, in no case, should the secretary take longer than 10 days to provide the official acknowledgment. Prior to issuing this official acknowledgment the secretary shall notify the complainant of his responsibilities by reading to them DCD 2:5-12, 8:3, 4 & 6 and providing a written and signed verification thereof. No case will be received unless the complainants have signed this verification. The secretary will in no way look into the merits of the case.¹³⁶

SECTION 17. The court should be convinced that the charges and specifications, if proven true, constitute an offense serious enough to warrant sanctions in accordance with Section 14 of this chapter. The court shall not dismiss a case on technical grounds. Rather, the court will require the complainant to re-submit the charges in the proper form. If the injured party fails to re-submit the charges, then the court, in the case of private offenses, will not pursue the case.¹³⁷

SECTION 18. The following offenses warrant sanctions:

- 1) an offense in the area of conduct and practice which seriously disturbs the peace, purity, and/or unity of the church,¹³⁸ or;
- 2) an offense in the area of doctrine for a member who is not a church officer-bearer which would constitute a denial of a credible confession of faith contrary to his membership vows,¹³⁹ or;
- 3) an offense in the area of doctrine for a church officer-bearer which would be the denial of the system of doctrine contained in the Word of God and set forth in the Confession of Faith and creeds of the church,¹⁴⁰ or;
- 4) a private complaint which necessitates remedy by the court.

SECTION 19. When a member submits a charge concerning a private offense to a court, he shall be warned by the court that, if after conducting the preliminary investigation, they find that there is no need for judicial process relating to the charge, he may be sanctioned. Only the court of original jurisdiction may make such a determination, though any appellate court may overrule such a finding. A sanction must include a rebuke accompanied, perhaps, with restitution¹⁴¹ unless a trial establishes otherwise. Such restitution may be levied against any who frivolously or falsely accuse and will be given to the victim of such accusation.¹⁴² If there has been willful failure to abide by Matthew 18, as per DCD 2, the accuser shall be sanctioned and may be tried.¹⁴³

¹³⁵ James 3:1; See footnotes for Section 11, this Chapter.

¹³⁶ Ten day acknowledgement requirement added 11-2007. See minutes XIV. I for details and grounds.

¹³⁷ 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 14:40.

¹³⁸ Matt. 18:17-18; 3 John 9-11.

¹³⁹ 1 Tim. 1:18-20.

¹⁴⁰ Titus 1:7-13.

¹⁴¹ Restitution is to be determined within the standards of set boundaries of God's law and is to be administered with mutual reconciliation and restoration in view, and not just the letter of the law.

¹⁴² Lev. 6:4-5; Deut. 19:17-19.

¹⁴³ Lev. 6:1-4; Deut. 19:17-19; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Cor. 6.

SECTION 20. After a charge is submitted to the court of jurisdiction by the injured party, in the form required by this *Directory of Church Discipline*, the court shall conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if the judicial process shall be instituted. The court may form a committee or appoint an investigator to conduct the investigation for submission to the court.¹⁴⁴ In all cases, the court must review the preliminary investigation and rule on the merits of the case regarding warrant for judicial process.

SECTION 21. Due process¹⁴⁵ shall be enjoined in all matters.¹⁴⁶

SECTION 22. The accused and accuser shall be entitled to the assistance of counsel. No court may forbid the accused or accuser the right to represent himself. No person shall be eligible to act as counsel unless he is a member in good standing of the CRPC or approved, on a case by case basis, by the trial court. The litigant may not sit in judgment of his own case at any stage thereof, including the preliminary investigation. No person who is counsel in a judicial case may sit in judgment on the same case in any stage following the preliminary investigation.

SECTION 23. Representation may be made by the following person who is not a party to the action:

- 1) the spouse of the injured party;¹⁴⁷
- 2) the parent or guardian of the injured party if the injured party is a minor and resides in the home, being under the authority of the home or is mentally or physically incapable;¹⁴⁸
- 3) a relative of the injured party with approval of the court exercising jurisdiction;¹⁴⁹
- 4) any member recognized by the court of original jurisdiction.¹⁵⁰

In the event that a person does not have assistance or representation and is incapable of composing a proper complaint, the court may assist him according to DCD 8:7-8.

SECTION 24. The court, or the appointed committee or investigator, shall consider the following in their investigation:

- 1) the form of the charge;¹⁵¹
- 2) the form and relevance of the specifications of the charge;¹⁵²
- 3) the competency of the witnesses named in the case and a summary of their testimony;¹⁵³
- 4) the apparent authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings submitted to support the charge;¹⁵⁴
- 5) whether the specifications and evidence support the charge, and;¹⁵⁵
- 6) whether the charge, if found to be true, would be an offense serious enough to warrant church sanction.

¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁴ Acts 9:26-27; 1 Thes 3:1-7.

¹⁴⁵ Matt. 23:23 (esp. clear in NKJV); John 7:51.

¹⁴⁶ Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; 19:17-20; 21:3-7; 2 Sam.14:14; 2 Chron. 19: 6-7; Prov. 24:23-26; Mal. 2:9-10; Matt.7:1-4; John 7:24; Col.3:25; 1 Tim. 5:21; James 2:1-6.

¹⁴⁷ Num. 30:1-8.

¹⁴⁸ Num.1:3, 18, 20, 22, 24 ... etc.; Num. 30:1-5. A boy is reckoned as a man when he is twenty years of age. However, civil law recognizes boys as being able to determine their affairs at an earlier age (18 yrs. is current practice in the U. S.). Such practice the court may be forced to take into consideration.

¹⁴⁹ 2 Sam. 14: 2-17; In addition, the “go’el” laws in the Pentateuch set precedent here since they include uncles, brothers, spouses, etc.

¹⁵⁰ Num. 30:9-15; Here, in Numbers, as a function of *headship* laws, a widow or a divorced woman cannot have their oaths annulled by any other male. Only if they had taken such oaths while under their husband’s authority (for a divorced woman before the divorce or, for the widow, while her husband was still alive); 2 Sam. 14: 2, 18-21; Her arguments were not annulled by the court because she was an unrelated party or female (she did not have male headship); 1 Cor. 1:11.

¹⁵¹ Isa. 59:12-16.

¹⁵² Psa. 25:10; 119:36, 79.

¹⁵³ Psa. 18:26; Prov. 2:12; 4:24; 6:12-20; 8:8,13; 10:31-32; 16:28-32; 17:20; 21:8.

¹⁵⁴ Jer.32:10-16, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Isa. 26:7; 1 Cor.4:19; 2 Cor. 12:16-13:3.

Also, the court, or the appointed committee or investigator, should prepare a statement presenting the pertinent issues of the case in chronological order.¹⁵⁷

SECTION 25. The evidence or testimony of witnesses to support the charge shall conform to the following:¹⁵⁸

- 1) must be submitted in written form by the complainant;¹⁵⁹
- 2) must contain the time, place, and circumstances of the alleged offense;¹⁶⁰
- 3) must contain the names and address of the witnesses and description and location of any evidence to be submitted at the trial;¹⁶¹
- 4) must be limited to those that are specific to and essential to the case; and
- 5) must certify that the steps of Matthew 18 have been followed.,¹⁶²

Any list of witnesses and any requests for summons must be submitted to the secretary of the trial court not less than twenty (20) days prior to the beginning of the trial court.

SECTION 26. The secretary shall provide the following information, in writing, to the court:

- 1) the name of the member being charged and any office he may hold in the church;
- 2) the name of the accuser;
- 3) the charge and its nature, whether public or private;
- 4) the specifications of the charge;
- 5) the names of the witnesses involved;
- 6) a list of items which shall be presented as evidence;
- 7) the support material referenced in Section 25 above;
- 8) the nature of the evidence or testimony of witnesses as specified in Section 25 above;
- 9) certification of compliance with the steps of Matthew 18, where needed as noted in the procedures of the DCD 2:5-12, 8:3, 4 & 6. Any exception to Matthew 18 must be noted and explained for the court's examination and ruling.

The secretary will provide the accused with a copy of the complaint. The secretary shall provide the litigants with a summons form in which they may insert the required information on the witnesses whom they wish the trial court to summon.

SECTION 27: After reviewing the preliminary investigation and determining warrant exists for judicial process, the court shall fix the time, date, and place for the trial and may enjoin (subpoena) any or all parties and their witnesses to the alleged offense to appear at that time.¹⁶³ The court shall establish a date and give notification to the parties by which they must submit any pre-trial discovery or written requirements. The judges may allow for extra-ordinary circumstances which result in late submissions. The court shall issue summons directing all persons whose presence it deems necessary to facilitate righteous judgment to appear before the court. At the time of the subpoena, the issue concerning payment of expenses must have already been resolved (if a private offense). The court will allow a maximum of ten (10) days from receiving notification (subpoena) for the individual to resolve any conflicts of scheduling for the trial.

¹⁵⁶ 2 Cor. 12:16-13:3.

¹⁵⁷ 2 Cor.3:1-3.

¹⁵⁸ Num.35:30; Deut.17:6-7; 19:15; Ruth 4:9-11; Job 10:15-17; Isa. 43:9-10; Matt.18:15-16; 1 Cor. 13:1; 1 Thes.2:10; 1 Tim.5:19; Heb.10:28.

¹⁵⁹ Isa. 8:1-2; 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁶⁰ Jer. 32: 8-16.

¹⁶¹ Isa. 8:1-2; Jer. 32: 8-16; 1 Cor. 1:11; 14:40.

¹⁶² Matt.18:16.

¹⁶³ 1 Cor.4:19; 2 Cor. 12:16-13:3.

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SECTION 28. Discovery for private offenses is a different process than those pertaining to public offenses and may include depositions and interrogatories.

SECTION 29. The following pertains to private offenses exclusively. If necessity compels the court to obtain testimony from a witness who is subject to the jurisdiction of another church within the CRPC, such testimony may be obtained by taking depositions or interrogatories where applicable. The trial court shall issue summons (subpoena) directing the witness to appear and testify before it. The trial court will send a copy to the congregational presbytery which has jurisdiction over the witness and will expect the cooperation of this congregational presbytery to use its power and influence to produce such compliance. The trial court may compel such testimony upon pain of disciplinary procedure against the witness on the charge of contumacy. In such a case of discipline, the court with jurisdiction over the witness shall be the court of original jurisdiction. In case of appeal, a court shall be constituted with participants from within the CRPC which were not part of the court bringing the charge nor of the court of original jurisdiction. Such a witness may be accused by the court making the request, or the accuser or accused, in the original case which gave rise to the need for such testimony.

SECTION 30. Testimony by deposition includes the right of the accused, the representatives of the accused, the accuser, and trial court to be present for direct examination and cross-examination of such witnesses, and the raising of objections. Objections may be made concerning the following:

- 1) the admissibility of any oral testimony;
- 2) the competency of the witness;
- 3) the authenticity, admissibility, and relevancy of any document, records, and recordings identified by the witness.

Depositions shall be made by either written, video and/or audio recordings and made available to the accused and the accuser (or their representatives) upon request. Any private recording, the recording of which was not previously agreed upon by both litigants prior to the trial is inadmissible.

SECTION 31. The following pertains to public offenses exclusively. The trial court shall issue summons (subpoena) directing the witness to appear and testify before it. The trial court will send a copy to the congregational presbytery which has jurisdiction over the witness and will expect the cooperation of this congregational presbytery to use its power and influence to produce such compliance. The trial court may compel such testimony upon pain of disciplinary procedure against the witness on the charge of contumacy. In such a case of discipline, the court with jurisdiction over the witness shall be the court of original jurisdiction. In case of appeal, a court shall be constituted with participants from within the CRPC which were not part of the court bringing the charge nor of the court of original jurisdiction. Such a witness may be accused by the court making the request, or the accuser or accused, in the original case which gave rise to the need for such testimony.

SECTION 32. The spirit of each of the sections of this chapter is that nothing in the formality of these procedures shall be allowed to deny justice to the diligent parties¹⁶⁴ and witnesses involved.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ 2 Thess. 3:10; Matthew 18:1-5; 25:14ff.

¹⁶⁵ Micah 6:8.

CHAPTER 9

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE TRIAL

SECTION 1. A session of the trial is defined as any new beginning of official hearings initiating a trial or following the adjournment of a previous session. Brief recesses are not adjournments of a particular session of a trial.¹⁶⁶ The moderator will announce all adjournments and recesses. A session shall terminate as soon as the moderator announces adjournment of the session.¹⁶⁷

SECTION 2. The secretary (or clerk) shall keep an accurate roll of the members attending each session of the trial court.

SECTION 3. Ordinarily, the judicatories of the church shall sit with open doors limited to the CRPC church or churches of each interested party and litigants and witnesses from any source. In addition, the court may invite any non-CRPC observers at its discretion. Only the court may speak as the official spokesman concerning the trial and its proceedings and it must fulfill its duty to enjoin the gallery to abstain from engaging in talebearing among the people.¹⁶⁸ The court may reference such parts of DCD 2:12 on humility as it deems fit. In every charge of heresy, the court shall be without power to sit with closed doors.¹⁶⁹ At any stage of its deliberations, the trial court may deem it necessary to sit with closed doors,¹⁷⁰ except in cases of heresy.¹⁷¹ A vote of two-thirds of the judges present shall be necessary to sit with closed doors.¹⁷²

SECTION 4. A person charged with an offense (the accused) has the absolute right to appear and be heard before the court of original jurisdiction¹⁷³ or any other broader court upon appeal trying a charge against him.¹⁷⁴ His name is his property and therefore no charge may violate his right to defend it against any attack or charge.¹⁷⁵

SECTION 5. The act of disobedience to the call of a body which shall compel a man to be at a meeting shall be considered contumacious. If he fails to attend and has no good reason then a second attempt may be made to hold such a meeting. If he is compelled to attend by order of the court, makes no timely objection, and fails to attend, he has forfeited any objection or recourse to the deliberations. In all cases, the court shall endeavor to make the meeting as convenient as is possible for any person having right to plead or vote in a matter pertaining to himself or his family. A willful failure to choose times and places convenient, or failure to notify in good order shall be ground for appeal. In all matters where pleading shall be rightfully enjoined, the congregational presbytery must notify by certified letter arriving at least 10 business days¹⁷⁶ before the trial, or by two or more witnesses testifying of times, places, and charges preferred, at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

SECTION 6. The court of original jurisdiction may require the appearance of the accused but any non-compliance on the part of the accused shall not limit in any way the trial court's right to proceed. If the accused fails to appear without satisfactory reason for his absence at the appointed time set for the trial of his case, the court may summon him again with a warning against or actual charge for contumacy.¹⁷⁷

SECTION 7. Broader courts may also require the appearance of the accused, but shall grant latitude in matters pertaining to expenses and time of travel, conflicts arising from scheduling court proceedings vis a vis "tentmaking"/employment considerations, sickness, and other extra-ordinary and emergency situations.¹⁷⁸

¹⁶⁶ 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁶⁷ 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁶⁸ Leviticus 19:16.

¹⁶⁹ Matt.18: 17; 3 John 9.

¹⁷⁰ Prov.11:13.

¹⁷¹ 1 Tim.5:17-20; Titus 3:10-11.

¹⁷² 1 Cor.14:40.

¹⁷³ Heb.13:17.

¹⁷⁴ Job 19:19-20; Prov. 31: 9; Isa. 1:17; Jer.12:1.

¹⁷⁵ Psa.35:11-12.

¹⁷⁶ Business days are defined as Monday through Friday, when the post office is working. No weekends.

¹⁷⁷ Heb.13:17.

¹⁷⁸ Psa. 94:20-21; Prov.1:11-12; John 7:24.

Should the accused exploit the latitude granted by the broader court, it may go forward and set a place, date, and a time for proceedings to commence or continue and notify the parties accordingly.¹⁷⁹

SECTION 8. A court may suspend an accused person's privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper until the case is adjudicated.¹⁸⁰

SECTION 9. When circumstances necessitate, a court may deny an accused person the right of performing the functions of his office in those areas where the court has original jurisdiction. (See section 16 below).¹⁸¹ If the accused holds office in the church, he may be suspended from the functions of office until his appeal has been heard and an appellate ruling rendered. Upon declaration of innocence of all charges, the accused officer-bearer shall immediately be restored to his office. Upon exhaustion of appeal and a final declaration of guilt, the accused officer-bearer may be divested from office

SECTION 10. Ordinarily, summons should be served in person, but when this is not possible, summons should be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested. If the member refuses to accept such summons or returns it unopened, then proper service shall be deemed made and such refusal shall be considered contumacious and may be charged accordingly. Proper service is an essential element of due process.

SECTION 11. The secretary shall keep an accurate record of the trial.¹⁸² The minutes of the record shall include:

1) the charge and any specifications accompanying the charge;¹⁸³

2) all objections made and any exceptions taken;¹⁸⁴

3) a list of witnesses and a summary of their testimony;¹⁸⁵

4) all rulings and decisions of the trial court;¹⁸⁶

5) the minutes of any closed door deliberations;¹⁸⁷

6) all original evidence submitted in the case.¹⁸⁸

SECTION 12. At the beginning of every trial session, the moderator shall state the following:

This court is convened for the express purpose of glorifying God, upholding truth and justice in the church, and maintaining the purity, peace, and good order of our covenanted people. I exhort each of you as judges to faithfully minister and declare the Word of God in all of your deliberations and judgments with fear and trembling so that you may subordinate all human insights to that inerrant and infallible Rule.¹⁸⁹

SECTION 13. In any court of the church, no person shall be divested of the right to present, plead, or offer as evidence the truths of the Word of God¹⁹⁰ or any of the subordinate standards, or hindered in any way from doing so.¹⁹¹

¹⁷⁹ Psa. 19:13-14.

¹⁸⁰ Matt. 18:17-18.

¹⁸¹ Acts 15: 37-40.

¹⁸² Acts 15: 23-31. The church of Antioch read a letter which was based upon the debates (vs. 7) and the resolution of the debates (vs. 22), all of which would have required minutes.

¹⁸³ Acts 15: 5.

¹⁸⁴ Acts 15: 24. The apostles and elders noted their objection in their letter to the churches that they had given no such commandment.

¹⁸⁵ Acts 15: 7-12.

¹⁸⁶ Acts 15: 13-29.

¹⁸⁷ Acts 15:38-39.

¹⁸⁸ Acts 15: 12, 14-15.

¹⁸⁹ 2 Sam. 23:3-4.

¹⁹⁰ This includes the right to appeal from the Greek and Hebrew. Normally, the Textus Receptus and its Majority textual support may be cited for the Greek of the New Testament. Normally, the Massoretic Hebrew textual support will be cited for the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The Septuagint may be used but, being a corrupted translation, it has no more authority in the church of God than any other translation and may not be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

¹⁹¹ 2 Tim.3:16.

1 SECTION 14. Any person may be a witness in a judicial case. However, no witness shall be allowed to
2 testify as to hearsay. Hearsay is defined as information received indirectly especially with respect to
3 something the witness has heard others say. Hearsay evidence depends upon the veracity and competency
4 of some person other than the witness.

5 SECTION 15. The moderator shall require each witness to make the following solemn oath before he testifies:

6 ***I solemnly swear that, in the presence of God and this court, I will speak the truth, the whole truth,***
7 ***and nothing but the truth by the grace of God concerning the matters on which I am called to testify,***
8 ***upon the pains and penalties of perjury.***

9 For any witness unwilling to make the above affirmation, the court will require the following solemn oath
10 before he testifies:

11 ***I solemnly swear that I will speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth concerning***
12 ***the matters of which I am called to testify, upon the pains and penalties of perjury.***

13 SECTION 16. The secretary shall provide the accused one copy of the minutes at the expense of the court and
14 additional copies may be obtained at cost to himself.¹⁹²

15 SECTION 17. Either the accused or the accuser may take exception to any and all rulings or decisions made
16 by the trial court, appealing to a broader court. The broader court shall determine if the merits of the case
17 warrant appellate review, thus reserving the right to hear or refuse to hear the appeal at their discretion.

¹⁹² 1 Cor. 14:40.
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CHAPTER 10

TRIAL PROCEEDINGS

SECTION 1. Each court will determine the time and number of sessions it may need to try a case. A trial court must reconvene at a later date if a quorum is not present, or delay the opening of the session until such time as a quorum is present. At the first session of the trial, the court must include the following actions:

- 1) The secretary shall read and formally present the charges and specifications to the accused along with the name(s) of the accuser(s) and any witnesses and copies of any documents which may be presented against him.
- 2) The trial court shall set the time, date, and place for any subsequent session of the trial court.

SECTION 2. The accused may raise objections concerning:

- 1) Any aspect of the conduct of the proceedings up to this point;
 - (a) the nature and form of the charge;
 - (b) the nature, form, and relevancy of the specifications;
 - (c) the list of witnesses and the nature of their testimony;
 - (d) the authenticity and relevancy of any documents, records, and recordings submitted in support of the charge and specifications.

The trial court shall evaluate the validity of any objections and announce its rulings. The trial court may, at its pleasure, convene privately to discuss such objections and exceptions. Such a private discussion may require adjournment or only a temporary recess. The request of one judge will be sufficient to call for such adjournment or recess.

SECTION 3. A trial court member absent from any subsequent sessions shall be disqualified from voting and shall not be counted as part of the quorum. He shall not be deprived of any other rights as a member of the trial court.

SECTION 4. Following their review of the charges and specifications, and as an outcome of the second or subsequent session, the trial court will determine if just cause for a case before the court exists. If the court affirms the need for a case, the moderator shall proceed to ask the accused how he pleads. The accused will then enter a plea. Acceptable pleas include only the following:

- 1) guilty, or
- 2) not guilty, or
- 3) no contest by reason of intent.

The secretary shall enter the plea in the record.

SECTION 5. If the accused pleads “guilty”, the trial court will then determine what action to take, or sanction to impose, in conformity to the Law of God.

SECTION 6. If the accused pleads “not guilty” or refuses to plead, then the trial shall proceed. The trial shall continue for as many sessions as necessary to achieve a righteous judgment.

SECTION 7. If the accused pleads “no contest by reason of intent”¹⁹³, the court will understand him to be admitting to the guilt of the charge but claiming:

- 1) innocence of malice of forethought,¹⁹⁴ and/or
- 2) coercion of action,¹⁹⁵ and/or

¹⁹³ Although this plea may be entered in any judicial procedure, perhaps its most probable and more frequent use will be in cases where the offense is public and the private/semi-private procedures of Matt. 18: 15-16 have been compromised or made impossible by the public exposure of the issue.

¹⁹⁴ Lev. 4: 27-31.

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3) negligence of his responsibilities without an understanding of same, and

4) that he did not have intent to commit the wrongful act or acts.

In such cases, the trial court will proceed with the trial in order to evaluate and judge, if possible, the truthfulness of the accused with respect to intent. If the court finds evidence which implies or proves the accused was truthful in his pleading, it should be disposed to grant mercy with respect to the sanctions it may impose, i.e., it (possibly) ought not to impose maximum sanctions unless there is good cause for such action. However, if the court finds the accused was dishonest with respect to his intent, “there remaineth no sacrifice for sins but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.”¹⁹⁶ In other words, the court may access the maximum penalty without mercy. If the trial court cannot conclude as to the intent of the accused with reasonable certainty, it will inform him of this situation and warn him that any future actions which he may take or fail to take may shed light upon his current testimony of intent and could bring future action against him by the court on this charge(s).¹⁹⁷ The court may take such action directly without recourse to Matthew 18 procedures again and may impose maximum penalties as the case may demand.¹⁹⁸

SECTION 8. After presentation of all the plaintiff’s charges, witnesses, and evidence, the accused may petition the court to dismiss the charges for plaintiff’s failure to prove the case. If this motion is sustained, the court shall dismiss the charges. If this motion is denied, then the trial shall continue with the defendant’s presentation of evidence and witnesses in his defense.

SECTION 9. When all evidence has been presented, the accused may make a final argument with respect to the evidence and the Law of God. The trial court, after deliberation, shall vote on each charge and each specification separately.

SECTION 10: If the trial judicatory decides that the accused is guilty of any charge, it shall proceed to determine the censure.

SECTION 11. Upon completion of its deliberations, the moderator shall announce the court’s decision on each charge and specification. If the accused has been found guilty, the trial court shall state its determined sanction. The court will inform and thoroughly explain to the accused his right to appeal in accordance with DCD 19 and 20. In no case shall the determination of guilt be made known outside the court, or its determined sanction published or imposed, prior to the expiration of the period for notice of intent to file an appeal as prescribed in DCD 20:4. If the accused appeals the decision of the trial court by filing an intent to

¹⁹⁵ Lev. 4: 28; cf. 1 Sam. 15:21.

¹⁹⁶ Heb. 10:26-27.

¹⁹⁷ Deut.19: 4-6, 10, 11-13; 1 Kings 1:52; 2:13-25.

¹⁹⁸ Lev. 4: 28; cf. 1 Sam. 15: Note that Saul admitted his guilt when confronted by Samuel (v.24) but at first tried to argue (v.15) his weakness and the coercive power of the people in not putting away the spoil of the Amalekites and the putting to death of Agag. Saul was fearful of being removed from office and was pleading for Samuel to “worship” (which would have entailed making sacrifice as Lev. 4 demands for such culpability, Lev.4:22-26, cf. 1Sam.15:25) which guilt Samuel did declare (v.14-19). Samuel disallowed Saul’s claim to such a plea because Saul was not ignorant nor lacking the power to perform the Word of the Lord. Three distinct testimonies of this chapter (v.1-5, v.6, v. 13-15) as well as the knowledge of his call to destroy the Amalekites as the king of Israel which Moses foretold (Deut.25:17-19) and which every king would have personally recorded in his own copy of Deuteronomy (Deut.17:18-20) *demonstrate unequivocally* that Saul knew what his duty was in this issue (against any later claim he would make of ignorance/inability). Samuel rejects him as king (the prophet’s mantle was torn as public, judicial testimony to that effect) on the basis of such testimony (three “witnesses”) and God’s consistent command (v.10-11) with respect to His Law. Consequently, Saul had no sacrifice for his sin (1 Sam.15:22-23, cf. Heb. 10:26-29) which the Lord would accept. Though Samuel did worship with Saul ultimately, the mantle of Samuel remained torn for a public testimony of Saul’s “witchcraft” before the elders of Israel, meaning that the Lord refused Saul and it was for the elders of Israel to quite judicially remove him from office. They refused to do their duty since he remained in office, so they got a tyrant in Saul (thus fulfilling the judgment upon the people, 1 Sam.8), a man from whom the Holy Spirit departed and an evil spirit entered...in the very next chapter. Saul now showed his real (“occultically” rebellious) character. He was now “handed over to Satan for the torment of his flesh” (1 Sam.16:14-16), using St. Paul’s terms (1 Cor.5), because God, through the prophet had judicially (including ecclesiastically) condemned him. cf. 1 Kings 1-2 where Adonijah is given mercy through a plea of ignorance and proves later his intent was culpable. Note also Shimei’s plea for mercy (1 Kings 2:8) based upon his allegation in which his argument would be that he sought to uphold the true king against the “rebel” king David. His plea is later undone by his willful disregard of the conditions of his confinement to the city. In addition, Paul argues that he received mercy from the throne of God concerning his persecution of the church “...because he did it ignorantly in unbelief.” His zeal for the religion of the Jews as God’s true religion (he thought) blinded him to the truth about the church of Christ... thus arguing his ignorance for judicial relief and mercy (1 Tim. 1:13).

1 appeal within the time prescribed in DCD 20:4, the court will withhold publication of the court's judgment
2 (except as provided for in DCD 20:1 and 5) and it's imposition of sanction until the appeal is heard and the
3 broader court rules. If the accused is found not guilty, the trial court shall immediately restore any
4 suspended privileges or functions of office, and take steps, as appropriate, to restore the defendant's good
5 name and reputation, and attempt to heal any breach in fellowship as may exist between him and the
6 plaintiff.

7 SECTION 12. If the trial court proceeds with the trial in the absence of the accused, the court shall proceed as
8 if the accused had pleaded "not guilty". The decisions of the court shall be presented to the accused in
9 writing either in person or by certified mail.¹⁹⁹

10 SECTION 13. "Relevancy" is defined as something which logically tends to prove or disprove a material fact.

11 SECTION 14. "Material" is defined as something which proves or disproves a fact or circumstance which is a
12 matter at issue.

¹⁹⁹ Requirement of counsel in case of defendant absence removed 11-2007 Presbytery. See Minutes XIV. K for details and grounds.
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CHAPTER 11

EVIDENCE WITH RESPECT TO “INTENT”²⁰⁰

SECTION 1. Intent (or motive throughout this *Directory of Church Discipline*) is often discoverable by a court.²⁰¹ Judges must trust in the Lord who has promised the keys to His church.²⁰² The keys stand as symbols of promise to the churches that God will “open” or “close” the kingdom when His office bearers faithfully administer discipline. Certainly, judges must be keen observers to watch and seek for intention in all that transpires by way of testimony and charges.²⁰³

SECTION 2. The general rule concerning the intent which underlies an act is that such intent must be inferred, unless confession of intent is made. Such inference²⁰⁴ depends upon the nature of the act as well as the circumstances involved in its commission. The term “intent” involves a variety of potentially blameworthy issues.

SECTION 3. Considerable latitude should be given as to the admission of evidence which tends to show intent since proof of intent generally necessitates a well reasoned “chain of details”.

SECTION 4. Intent may be demonstrated by:

- 1) an individual's own words, behavior, or actions coupled with supporting, interpretative texts of Scripture where possible;
- 2) facts and circumstances which characterize any transaction in dispute, with supporting passages of Scripture where possible;
- 3) a pattern of conduct or activity, coupled with supporting interpretative texts of Scripture;
- 4) evidence which bears on a person's state of mind and which logically and fairly explains intent, purpose, or motive is admissible;
- 5) the consequences of an act, rather than the act itself, and care must be taken to properly link the motive to the consequences and not simply to hold the person(s) accountable because “things turned out poorly”;
- 6) the desire to bring about a result that will be invasive of the known interest of another;
- 7) the fact that a party intends the consequences of his voluntary actions in which he may or may not have intended to violate a statute of God's Word, Creed, or Catechism, or other covenanted agreement; such cases may or may not be sufficient to warrant a plea of “no contest by reason of intent”; the judges will decide;
- 8) the intention to establish a covenant, contract, oath, or arrangement;
- 9) some insidiously prejudiced opinions, beliefs, or expressions;

²⁰⁰ All footnotes which reference *Strategic Use of Circumstantial Evidence* by John F. Romano (Kluwer Law Book Publ., Inc. 1986) will be referenced in the footnotes as SUCE. All footnote references to the *Federal Civil Judicial Procedure and Rules* by West Publ. Company 1995 ed., will be referenced herein as FC and the *Wisconsin Court Rules and Procedure*, State 1993, by West Publ. Co., St. Paul, Minn. 1993 ed., will be referenced herein as WC. Such usage does not necessitate the position that biblical procedures must “learn” from the secular. Such few references as are cited herein are drawn from the multitudes of civil/criminal procedures and statutes which have not been chosen and those chosen are so due to: 1) their conformity to biblical precept and 2) their exceptional wording and usage. As a side note, our Lord *did* advise us that the “sons of this generation are wiser in their time than the sons of light”. As shameful as that observation toward us is, it remains true, nonetheless.

²⁰¹ Matt. 7:16-21; The secular philosophy which asserts that “intent” cannot ever be known “for certain” is thoroughly denied by Scripture. No doubt, “man looks on the outward appearance” is one testimony of Scripture and is designed as a condemnation of the futility of man/society to know “man” without Divine Revelation and God’s promise of His providential intervention in the affairs of man/society...and church.

²⁰² Matt. 16:19.

²⁰³ Acts 5:3.

²⁰⁴ “An inference is “a process of reasoning by which a fact or proposition sought to be established is deduced as logical consequence from other facts, or a state of facts already proved or admitted.” An inference is the probable or natural explanation of facts. It is a logical and reasonable conclusion of the existence of a fact which flows, not from direct evidence as to the existence of the fact itself, but from being “inferred” through the establishment of other facts. Inferences must be based on facts in evidence.” –SUCE, p. 23-24.

10) a belief that certain consequences are substantially certain to result for the act;

11) known outward manifestations of conduct or expressions in word or explicit gesture;

12) the past manifestations of general discord or arguments between individuals;²⁰⁵

13) instances of friction between or among individuals.

SECTION 5. Intent may *not* be demonstrated by any unexpressed desires.²⁰⁶

SECTION 6. Intent is a resolution of the human soul that can be determined by the kinds of deductions which a prudent and cautious man would draw from statements, actions or evidence presented during testimony and is rarely capable of direct demonstration.

SECTION 7. Demonstration of intent is achieved through circumstantial evidence in which the maxim "Actions speak louder than words" remains a guide for evaluation.²⁰⁷

SECTION 8. A court may examine a person's activities in detail and thereby find valuable information which substantiates that person's state of mind during the time(s) in question.²⁰⁸

SECTION 9. When establishing intent, it must be demonstrated that:

1) such intent is material to the case in point; and

2) such intent is demonstrated by inferences drawn from a chain of events, patterns of behavior or a system of facts which do point to the motive; and/or

3) such intent fits into place with other desires and patterns in that person's life.

SECTION 10. The court may find it instructive to clarify matters of intent by requesting the following:

1) *Who* can testify concerning the evidence which points to intent?

2) *What* is the content of the testimony or the nature of the evidence presented?

3) *Where* did the witness learn about the information obtained?

4) *Why* did this information become available to the witness?

5) *Why* is it important to the issue at hand or the case as a whole?

6) *When* did the witness become aware of the event, statement, issue, fact, document, or other evidence presented to the court?

SECTION 11. Judges should refer to Chapter 2:12 of this Directory of Church Discipline concerning "humility" in order to help identify intent.

²⁰⁵ Deut. 19:5-6.

²⁰⁶ Example of improper presumption of intent based upon silence: A group of people are standing around and speaking good things about Person A. Person B says nothing about Person A, therefore the court assumes that the Person B has an evil intent about Person A.

²⁰⁷ Mat. 7:16-20.

²⁰⁸ Secular courts testify that juries "know" that innocent people generally do not flee the scene of a crime and physicians with nothing to hide do not ordinarily alter medical records on critical points.

CHAPTER 12

DIRECT AND CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

SECTION 1. The legality or illegality of evidence as determined by the civil magistrate is not binding upon the deliberations of the church court. Evidence gathered by unlawful means may, none the less, be considered by the church court. However, it may condemn and reserve the right to sanction appropriately any under its jurisdiction who do engage in biblically unlawful activities.

SECTION 2. *Direct* evidence consists of testimony concerning a knowledge as to facts in issue.

SECTION 3. *Circumstantial* evidence consists of a demonstration of facts, background, governing factors²⁰⁹ and qualifying factors²¹⁰ from which inference may be used to connect other facts which logically follow. Circumstantial evidence is often the best evidence the nature of the particular case permits and may be adequate. If direct evidence is alleged to exist, circumstantial evidence should not be used without a sufficient display as to the absence or inaccessibility of direct evidence or the more compelling nature of the circumstantial evidence.

SECTION 4. Circumstantial evidence can be accepted but only with caution. The mere fact that any evidence submitted to the court is circumstantial in nature is sometimes sufficient to prevent its admission.

SECTION 5. Circumstantial evidence must do more than raise a suspicion; it must move toward proof, invariably strengthened by Scriptural precept.²¹¹

SECTION 6. It is a presumption that certain basic facts are *prima facie*²¹² evidence of other facts.²¹³

SECTION 7. Judges must be aware not to allow any exaggeration or overstatement of the strength or absoluteness of inferences during the hearings.

SECTION 8. Judges must carefully scrutinize any “gaps” left in the chain of circumstantial evidence.

SECTION 9. Judges must be careful that litigants do not leave potential opposing inferences unanswered and/or unchallenged.

SECTION 10. Evidence demonstrating that an event did not occur is admissible. This is “negative evidence” and sometimes may involve the concept of “indirect proof”. Negative evidence is evidence that a fact did not exist or that a thing was not done, did not take place, or that a witness did not hear, see, feel, etc. Negative evidence must be relevant. If evidence is offered to prove or disprove a fact or circumstance which is not a matter in issue, it is said to be immaterial.

SECTION 11. Judges must note the absence of “real evidence” and evaluate why it may be missing.²¹⁴

SECTION 12. In handling reports, judges must note the absence of vital details and expected procedures.

SECTION 13. Negative evidence from a witness should include the following considerations:

²⁰⁹ That which forces or authoritatively compels an event.

²¹⁰ That which clarifies or characteristically identifies as part of some category.

²¹¹ A well connected chain of circumstantial evidence can be as conclusive of the existence of a fact as the greatest array of “positive evidence”. Circumstantial evidence is sufficient if it produces in the mind of the trier of facts a reason to believe a probability of the existence of the material fact at issue. The important consideration in this regard is not whether the finding is consistent or inconsistent with any other hypothesis which may be offered, but whether it could have been fairly and reasonably drawn from the circumstantial proof without conjecture. Judges must keep in mind the distinction between mere conjecture and reasonable inference. The rule as to circumstantial evidence is that a party will prevail when the evidence is sufficient in his favor. Strengthening the trustworthiness of a particular witness or undermining the testimony of a witness serves as one of the most devastating forms of demonstrating a fact (or demolishing it) by circumstantial evidence.

²¹² On its face, *i.e.* what is apparent is real.

²¹³ WLC 121. When this is asserted, it imposes upon the party relying upon the presumption the burden of proving the basic facts. But once the basic facts are found to exist, the presumption imposes on the party against whom it is directed the burden of proving that the nonexistence of the presumed fact is more probable than its existence.

²¹⁴ In civil/criminal courts such “real evidence” issues are continually raised, *i.e.*, no debris at automobile collision site; no evidence of violence at murder scene; lack of pediatrician's availability or presence in operating room at time of Cesarean section delivery; no fingerprints when it would be expected that they be present; no reported odor of alcohol in DWI case.

- 1) The witness must demonstrate having had a reasonable opportunity to observe or hear the thing or event.
- 2) The attention of the witness must be shown to have been directed toward the thing or event happening.
- 3) Consideration must be given to whether the facts or happening was common or unusual.
- 4) The witness must demonstrate adequate powers of sight, smell, hearing, and the like.
- 5) Determine whether the witness was indifferent to relevant details.
- 6) Consideration must be given to whether the witness was specifically looking for or was listening for the thing or event.

SECTION 14. Since causation means showing that an individual's action(s) played a role in bringing about a certain effect or result, the following questions may be helpful:

- 1) Did the defendant's conduct really make a difference insofar as it relates to the injury or damage alleged by the accuser?
- 2) How much difference did it make? In the case of heresy, is the damage alleged a public misrepresentation of the truth?
- 3) What else may have caused the result?
- 4) Is this the sole cause?
- 5) Can I rule out all other causes?
- 6) Could it be a coincidence?
- 7) Possibility versus probability versus absolute?
- 8) Are there any gaps in the testimony?

SECTION 15. "Character" embodies the attributes which belong to an individual. The word "character" may reference either real character or reputed character. In one sense, character is what a person really is. In another sense, character is measured and determined from reputation and is what a person is supposed to be.

SECTION 16. When evaluating character, it may be helpful to ask:

- 1) *Who?* Is the character of a character witness unimpeachable?
- 2) *What?* Is the description of character sufficient to establish reputation or to give testimony concerning particular character trait(s)?
- 3) *Where?* Where was such character demonstrated?
- 4) *When?* Was there such character testimony given prior to court, formally or informally, by a witness?
- 5) *Why?* If testimony has been given on other occasions (formally or informally), and is demonstrably different now, why has the testimony changed?

SECTION 17. "Authentication" is the process of establishing that an item of evidence is what it purports to be. As such, when evidence is introduced, it must be sufficient to support an inquiry that it is the writing/document or thing that the supporter of the evidence claims it is or that it can be established by such facts as are acceptable to the court.²¹⁵

SECTION 18. A "presumption" is a kind of evidence which is sufficient proof of the existence of another fact to which it relates. Presumptions are applied to reasoning/argumentation which assumes the truth of particular matters. Such may be warranted by Scripture, creedal expression, general experience, probability, or merely on established procedure, expedience, policy or habit. Such presumption functions in advance of argument/evidence and exists irrespective of such argument/evidence by "taking something for granted". Such presumption, excepting Scripture (and its creedal expression) alone, may dictate decision only where there is a lack of competent evidence to the contrary. When substantial countervailing evidence appears

²¹⁵ 1 Sam. 24. David cut Saul's robe in such a way that it was capable of being used as evidence.
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from any source, the presumption, excepting Scripture (and its creedal expression) alone, ceases to have any function. In all cases whatsoever, Scripture prevails over all (apparent)²¹⁶ countervailing argument/evidence.²¹⁷

SECTION 19. The doctrine of "judicial notice" is that which states that a court may take judicial notice of facts that are common knowledge (capable of certainty in their verification) or such facts as are not reasonably subjected to disputation. Scripture (and its creedal expression) is always presumed to be under judicial notice without the need to state such at any time during the proceedings.

SECTION 20. The fact that a telephone conversation or any other form of communication (electronic or otherwise) did or did not take place is often an important element of the evidence. The following may be used to establish the truthfulness concerning telephone calls:

- 1) date;
- 2) time;
- 3) location from which a telephone call was placed;
- 4) the specific telephone number that was called;
- 5) testimony regarding how a witness became familiar with or knowledgeable of a particular telephone number;
- 6) manner in which the call was placed (i.e. direct dialing, operator assisted, person to person, collect calls, etc.);
- 7) Type of phone used (i.e. pay telephone, home telephone, speaker phone, etc.);
- 8) bill for phone call;
- 9) name of place or location called;
- 10) person called;
- 11) verification of telephone number from telephone book, address book, or similar source;
- 12) recognition of other voice at time of call;
- 13) recognition of voice presently before the court, even though the voice may not have been recognized at time of the call;
- 14) testimony regarding records kept regarding the phone call;
- 15) records regarding other conversations between or among the parties involved;
- 16) identification of person as where party identifies himself during the conversation;
- 17) subsequent records regarding the conversation as kept by the party called;
- 18) proof of circumstances after a phone call that tends to corroborate the fact that other parties carried out plans in accordance with what was said during phone conversation.

SECTION 21. The demonstration of a similar occurrence or condition may be an admissible piece of evidence in that it may reveal intent, patterns of belief or behavior.²¹⁸

SECTION 22. Questions which point to the relevancy of similar conditions or occurrences include the following:

²¹⁶ The word "apparent" is used to indicate that the Scripture cannot be contradicted nor found to be errant. However, judges must be sure that such evidence, as is alleged, is not being misinterpreted so as to point to other Scripture truths instead of the mistakenly alleged contradiction of a Scripture truth.

²¹⁷ Where there is evidence which demonstrates that a letter has been mailed, there is a presumption of the receipt of the letter by the party to whom it is addressed.

²¹⁸ The following are examples of similar acts, or occurrences used in civil courts: defendant physician's prior conduct of continuously failing to arrive for delivery of an infant on a timely basis, habit evidence, prior accidents or injuries (or lack thereof), subsequent accidents or injuries (or lack thereof), customs and practices.

- 1) To what extent was the conduct or condition really similar or comparable?
- 2) Is the conduct or condition connected in some special way indicating a relevancy beyond mere similarity as to some particulars?²¹⁹
- 3) Will proof of similar conduct tend to show or explain the purpose and character of that particular occurrence under scrutiny?
- 4) Was there similarity of the mechanisms by which the conduct took place or the condition was permitted to exist?
- 5) Are the similarities so related in character, time, and location as to support the conclusion that they were part of a plan or system or which tend to show the existence of a plan, system, custom, or practice?
- 6) What is the extent of dissimilarity?

SECTION 23. Testimony given by a witness may be strengthened or weakened by the following:

- 1) character evidence;
- 2) prior inconsistent statements (such as depositions, statements, confessions, conversations, written materials and much more);
- 3) a bias or partiality;
- 4) a conflict of interest;
- 5) a motive;
- 6) a prior conviction of a sin or crime;
- 7) a contradiction by other witnesses;
- 8) an impeachment of another witness;
- 9) an exaggeration or carelessness with respect to truth-telling on the part of a witness;
- 10) a demonstration that the testimony of a witness has been rehearsed;
- 11) a holding to an absolutely absurd position or testimony;
- 12) a showing that a witness has disreputable people among his associates;
- 13) an heretical doctrine or affiliation;
- 14) a prosecuting witness has a history of making unfounded charges; and/or
- 15) an unregenerate world-view or sinful presuppositions.

SECTION 24. The court may allow witnesses to testify as to their "personal opinion" depending upon the credibility of the witness and his familiarity/expertise with the doctrine, subject, entity, or person(s) involved.

SECTION 25. A court may weigh the following factors in order to determine the strength of the testimony concerning a witness who provides character evidence:

- 1) the nature of acquaintance with the person in question;
- 2) the duration of acquaintance with the person in question;
- 3) a relationship or proximity of residences;
- 4) a relationship or proximity of working places;
- 5) a relationship through recreational activities;
- 6) discussion with others about the individual(s) in question regarding character or doctrine;

²¹⁹ For example, in civil court, "modus operandi" in, say, a series of burglaries, is often established by such similarities.
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- 1 7) knowledge (direct or hearsay) regarding details which he used to form a basis for his opinion;
- 2 8) relationship through church and/or other ministries and activities;
- 3 9) frequency of contacts; and/or
- 4 10) personal incentive

CHAPTER 13

DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER

SECTION 1. Slander and libel are both forms of defamation. Slander is an accusation maliciously uttered to a third party, with the purpose or effect of damaging the reputation of another. As a rule it is a false charge; but it may be a truth circulated insidiously and with a hostile purpose. Libel consists of knowingly publishing written matters that are untrue which tend to prejudice others concerning another person's character, reputation, calling, office, business, or means of living.²²⁰

SECTION 2. A person who has been allegedly hurt by the lies that another has uttered or published must be allowed to testify, if the testimony is relevant to the charge or evidence, despite the strong inclination to judge the testimony as partial or vindictive.

SECTION 3. When the evidence in a slander charge is such that the actual name of the one allegedly slandered was not mentioned, then the judges must determine if:

- 1) it really was the plaintiff or another who was defamed,
- 2) whether the plaintiff was mistakenly identified or defamed by a witness, or
- 3) whether a defendant sought to implicate the plaintiff in an indirect way.

SECTION 4. The following may assist judges in the identification of the individual allegedly defamed:

- 1) discussion of names of individuals closely associated with the one defamed;
- 2) discussion in statement of activities closely associated with the individual;
- 3) testimony from individuals that a significant number of people understood that the statement referred to the individual;
- 4) reference to another individual who has a name identical to that of the individual in question;
- 5) reference to an individual who has a name very similar to that of the individual in question;
- 6) reference to a nickname or a fictitious name or substitute name that obviously refers to the individual in question and is understood by a significant number of persons to refer to him;
- 7) reference to the individual's business, family, activities, home, address, location, profession, calling or occupation, physical characteristics;
- 8) mimicking or imitating him;
- 9) use of his photograph or a cartoon or caricature of the individual;
- 10) holding him in effigy;
- 11) reference to another individual or organization identified with the individual;
- 12) the fact that a statement could possibly refer only to the individual in question, as opposed to someone else;
- 13) the fact that the individual understood words to refer to him;
- 14) previous ill will and friction between the individual and the alleged defamer; and/or
- 15) other publications or statements made by the alleged defamer which specifically made reference to the individual in question.

SECTION 5. There are items which tend to show that the statement at issue was false:

- 1) testimony from the alleged defamed that the statement was false;
- 2) testimony from the witnesses (with knowledge) that the statement was false;

²²⁰ Pro. 11:9; Psa 52:2; Pro. 10:18; 16:27-30; Matthew 5:11. Lev.19: 14, 16, 18, 33; 1 Tim. 5: 13-15; 1 Peter 3: 9. See WLC 143-145 for guidance.

- 3) present admission from the alleged defamer that he now knows the statement is false;
- 4) admission from the alleged defamer that he knew the statement was false at the time of the statement;
- 5) testimony that he made the statement as an opinion without verification that the facts were truthful or false;
- 6) impossibility that the statement is true;
- 7) statements by the alleged defamer showing ill will toward the individual who was allegedly slandered; and/or
- 8) improbability of the truthfulness of the statement due to its absurdity.

SECTION 6. A statement which is defamatory may be considered in process of being retracted when:

- 1) there is a demonstration of a lack of ill will or a “healing of the wound” between the parties, or a lack of vindictiveness on the part of the alleged defamer;
- 2) the alleged slanderer’s attempt to do more than just simply retract, but to go on and heal the harm that has been done to the defamed reputation by additional means, such as writing letters, making telephone calls, and following of the requests of the defamed;
- 3) showing that publication was made erroneously or inadvertently;
- 4) showing that publication was an honest mistake;
- 5) publishing information about plaintiff that would tend to make “readers” or “listeners” praise him, like him and sympathize with him;
- 6) defendant working with plaintiff and/or his representative regarding the retraction;
- 7) distributing the retraction to an equal or greater number of individuals than received the initial publication;
- 8) speedy circulation of the retraction;
- 9) placing the retraction in a presenting manner of prominence or authority or high repute;
- 10) a sincere delivery of the retraction in a straightforward manner without facetious and sarcastic comments or implications;
- 11) a genuine apology or the seeking of forgiveness;
- 12) a lack of self-justification or a lack of inflammatory manner, which would otherwise have made the original publication worse;
- 13) accepting full responsibility and blame for the initial publication or statement;
- 14) putting into effect a policy or procedure to guard against similar incidents in the future; and/or
- 15) follow-up contacts with plaintiff or plaintiff’s representative inquiring as to their satisfaction with the retraction.

SECTION 7. In all cases whatsoever, retraction is to be deemed complete when restorative measures are undertaken which rights the wrong by:

- 1) doing any of the above listings, Section 6, (1-15);
- 2) correcting all the known false facts, statements, or improper comments; and
- 3) doing what is biblically responsible to restore the loss to the one defamed in ways specified by the defamed individual; and
- 4) in any sanctionable issue the judges must be careful that the remedies remain within the limits prescribed by Scripture.

CHAPTER 14

CENSURE AND RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINED INDIVIDUALS²²¹

SECTION 1. In any event, the injured party retains the right to waive or request biblically prescribed sanctions and/or restitution irrespective of whether such injured party made the charge. However, in public offenses the church retains the power to reprove or excommunicate without consulting the injured party's desire in the matter.

SECTION 2. A court may withhold the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper of a person charged with a heinous sin²²² without censure until the case is adjudicated. Without an intent to insinuate or impune guilt, the court in such instances, merely seeks to guard the purity of the sacrament and protect the peace and unity of the church.

SECTION 3. The censures of the church are appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing, and healing of offenses in the church, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for the deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and of His church, and the holy profession of the Gospel, for preventing the wrath of God that may justly fall upon the church if it should allow His covenant and the seals thereof, to be profaned by habitual and obstinate offenders.

SECTION 4. If an offense be private, all effort should be taken to keep such matters private so as not to scandalize, discourage nor unduly involve other individuals. The censure is reproof and restoration in such cases, if repentance is secured at this point. If the sin remain unrepented, then the steps of Matthew 18 as already specified, gradually increase the public knowledge thereof and are a censure in addition to any which may later be inflicted. If the sin publicly assaults righteousness and is generally and publicly known throughout the community (either church or society), then the congregational presbytery may choose to address the issue first, waiving the first 2 steps of Matthew 18 as our Lord did publicly with the Pharisees.

SECTION 5. If the church discern the offender to be willing to hear yet not fully convinced of his offense, as in a case of heresy, they are to dispense to him a public admonition which declares him to be under the public offense of the church and thereby withholds or suspends him from the holy fellowship of the Lord's Supper until his offense be removed by repentance and public confession, restoration and restitution, as demanded by the victim and congregational presbytery in accordance with the law of God.

SECTION 6. If he still continue obstinate, then the congregational presbytery is to cast him out by excommunication. Such is declared to the congregation to be "excommunicated".

SECTION 7. Repentance must come verbally from the mouth of the actual offender and restitution must be made through him or another of his choosing.

SECTION 8. When a covenant head (including officer-bearers), in matters pertaining to charges, places or supports the placement of charges against any person over which he has covenantal authority, the offender, even if excommunicated, is still deemed to be "in subjection to the covenant head" who has placed or has so supported the placement of charges. Thus, if the covenant head be supportive of the charges, procedures and sanctions of the broadest court to which the case has been appealed, his home is still deemed to be "in subjection to him".

SECTION 9. In dealing with the victim, neither the congregational presbytery nor any presbyterian adjudicators may waive his right to restitution or penalty, according to the law of the Lord.

SECTION 10. In dealing with an obstinate brother, great care is to be taken that we be neither over strict nor rigorous nor too indulgent or remiss, having a spirit of meekness coupled with steadfastness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted. On some have compassion, others save with fear.

SECTION 11. While the offender remains excommunicated, the church is to refrain from all member-like communion with him in spiritual things, and from all familiar communion with him in civil things, farther

²²¹ Sections 19-21, 25-26 updated at 6-2007 American Presbytery. See minutes for grounds and details.

²²² Mat. 18:17-18; Outrageous evil of a scandalous and publicly known nature.

than the necessity of natural or domestic or civil relations do require. The church is to forbear eating and drinking with such a person.

SECTION 12. Once excommunicated, the offender may not be relieved of his condemnation unless he be made right with the church which has condemned him or the broader court which has oversight of the church in such cases.

SECTION 13. Excommunication, being an ecclesiastical punishment, does not prejudice the offender in, nor deprive him of his civil rights, as defined by God's law. Since even publicans may come to hear the Word preached, so also the offender may avail himself of hearing the Word. In addition, such a one is not to be accounted an enemy but rather admonished as would a brother because he is not without hope of recovery.

SECTION 14. If the Lord sanctify the censure to the offender and he repent before the congregational presbytery, judging himself, giving glory to God and he make such restitution and restore such as is demanded of him by the victim and congregational presbytery in accordance with the Law of God, then the church is to forgive him and comfort him and to restore him to the communion of the church and all rights as he held previously as a member. However, he may not be restored to office in the church, unless the congregational presbytery approves in matters which pertain to ethics. Doctrinal charges which secure repentance before the broader presbytery, move to the individual congregational presbyterial authority for restoration. If the congregational presbytery refuses to restore him to his office in light of his repentance, then he may appeal to the broader presbytery for restoration.

SECTION 15. Allowing profane or scandalous individuals to continue in fellowship and partake in the sacraments is doubtless a great sin in those who have power in their hands to redress it and do it not. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the faithful in the church of Corinth, in which there were many such scandalous persons and practices, are never commanded to separate themselves from the sacraments, so the godly, in like cases, are not to separate themselves but to go privately to the offensive party(s) in order to reprove and call for repentance.

SECTION 16. If a member is convinced of his local church's sin in apostasy or grievous heresy, before he leaves the church, he must avail himself of the opportunity to go to the congregational presbytery for a hearing. If he gains no satisfaction, then he may appeal to the broader presbytery for a hearing. If presbytery hears his request, then it shall convene a meeting of the member and the congregational presbytery to determine the issue. If the congregational presbytery be found guilty, the member may leave the church in good standing (if no other charges or sanctions are pending against him) receiving, either a letter of transfer to another CRPC church, or a certificate of good standing to another church, the broader presbytery having care of his departure in place of the congregational presbytery. If he refuses to depart, then he may at any subsequent time, transfer from the church. If he transfers at a subsequent time and he is under discipline, he may request the broader presbytery to hear the case, if he alleges that the discipline is vindictive in nature.

SECTION 17. There are several degrees of censure in ecclesiastical/judicial discipline: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and excommunication. These may be accompanied with restitution or other restorative measures, as the victim and court agree. Censures shall be announced in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are declared as an act of the church with the moderator speaking on behalf of the trial court.

SECTION 18. If a person, who has been judged guilty by the church, refuses to present himself for censure, then another time shall be set and he again shall be summoned. If he does not appear after this summons, the censure will be pronounced without him.

SECTION 19. This is the lightest degree of censure and is commonly used by the court in cases of neglect of duty. Judicial admonition is administered when the offender is confronted with his sin, warned of his peril, and exhorted to repent so that he may be faithful in the future in his walk with Christ. This may be accompanied with restitution or other restorative measures, as the victim and court agree in accordance with the Law of God. The court may also make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the admonition, though this is not required and is left to the discretion of the court, though it may be requested by the sinner.

SECTION 20. This is a censure for a more aggravated sin and is commonly used by the court in cases of

active transgression or of continued neglect of duty in spite of counsel. It is a setting forth the serious nature of the offense, reproving him of his offense, and exhorting him to repentance and faithfulness in his walk with Christ. This may be accompanied with restitution or other restorative measures, as the victim and court agree in accordance with the Law of God. The court may also make the people under its oversight publicly aware of the fact of and reason for the rebuke at its discretion or at the request of the sinner.

SECTION 21. This is the temporary exclusion from the privileges of church membership, including participation in the sacraments or from the exercise of ordained office or from both. (The matter of exclusion of an ordained officer-bearer who is a member of presbytery may only be in such cases as fall under the jurisdiction of the local congregational presbytery and will require notice being served to the next broader presbytery. An officer-bearer who is denied the privileges of membership in his church must be suspended from office. However, he may be suspended from office without being denied the privileges of membership.) This becomes necessary when members are guilty of gross sin or of persistent neglect. This censure shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court, and in the name of Jesus Christ. At the discretion of the court, this discipline shall either be “silent censure” (i.e. not made public, but because of the nature of the offense kept silent) or otherwise make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the suspension. The lifting of suspension depends on evidence of repentance.

SECTION 22. An officer-bearer or member, while under suspension, shall be treated with peaceable and earnest entreaty with the intent that he might repent and be restored. When the trial court has pronounced the censure satisfied, the censure shall be removed and the offender restored. A solemn admonition shall follow such announcement of the removal and restoration of the suspended party. Such a party may be restored to the privileges of membership of the church without being restored to office in it.

SECTION 23. When a minister of the Word is suspended, the court shall immediately notify all presbyteries of the church through the communication clerk of each presbytery, and he shall cease from preaching or teaching duties or the exercise of other privileges of his office anywhere.

SECTION 24. In the case of a suspension of a pastor for an indefinite period of time, the presbytery, after having heard the case on appeal in ethical matters, shall decide if the pastoral relationship is dissolved.

SECTION 25. Deposition is the declaration by the trial court to the congregation or ministry in which the office-bearer lately presided, that the offender is no longer an office-bearer of the church. In the case of a minister of the Word, the trial court shall declare the pulpit vacant, the pastoral ties dissolved and the sentence shall be read before the congregation. Such shall be announced to all presbyteries of the CRPC, and read in all the churches and the individual shall cease from preaching or teaching duties or the exercise of other privileges of his office anywhere. Such deposition from office shall cause the presbytery to erase his name from the roll of ministerial members. It may also be accompanied by suspension from church privileges. This censure shall be imposed for serious offenses in doctrine or in conduct that obviously disqualify the person for exercising office. The sentence shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court, and in the name of Jesus Christ. The court shall also make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the suspension.

SECTION 26. Excommunication is the disciplinary exclusion of a member from the visible church. It should be imposed only for such malignant errors or persistent violations of God’s law as are grossly inconsistent with the Christian profession of faith or subversive to the doctrine and order of Christ’s Church. All possible efforts should first be made to bring the sinner to repentance. Excommunication shall be pronounced by the moderator in constituted court and in the name of Jesus Christ. Prayer shall be offered to God for mercy and repentance. In the case of a minister of the Word, if an announcement has not previously been made, the trial court shall declare the pulpit vacant, the pastoral ties dissolved and the sentence shall be read before the congregation. Such shall be announced to all presbyteries of the CRPC, and read in all the churches and the individual shall cease from preaching or teaching duties or the exercise of other privileges of his office anywhere. The court shall make the people under its oversight aware publicly of the fact of and reason for the excommunication. Members should then relate to the person as one who is outside the visible church and in need of repentance and salvation.

SECTION 27. All suspensions, depositions, and excommunications shall always be accompanied by prayer to God in the church and courts which shall hear the case, to the effect that the Lord would use the discipline to restore the offender, edify the church, cause others to fear, and glorify Himself. All trial courts are exhorted

1 to exercise continual pastoral care and concern for the convicted parties encouraging reconciliation and
2 restoration. Where an appeal is concluded by a broader court, a committee shall be appointed to minister to
3 all parties (including original courts), providing counsel and seeking restoration and reconciliation.

4 SECTION 28. If, after a year, a person indefinitely suspended has not repented, the court shall review the case
5 and determine whether to continue the suspension or inflict a more severe censure. It may proceed to
6 deposition or excommunication without further trial.

7 SECTION 29. A deposed or excommunicated officer-bearer cannot resume office without being ordained
8 again.

9 SECTION 30. All restorations shall be accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving and praise in the church and
10 judicatories which have handled the charges and sanctions.

11 SECTION 31. In all cases of offense which involve a specific person who has sustained real financial loss due
12 to the offense itself and its consequences²²³, when sentence is declared the victim shall declare only up to
13 the maximum allowable amount of the sanction according to the law of God. In matters requiring
14 restitution, twofold restitution shall be deemed sufficient in all common matters. Fourfold restitution shall
15 be required in all matters where the damage inflicted a financial loss involving great hardship upon the
16 victim. In matters of jeopardy (including financial jeopardy) inflicted upon the victim, fivefold restitution
17 shall be the maximum allowed by the court.

18 SECTION 32. Once the court shall announce the sentence and the maximum allowable amount, the victim
19 shall determine how much, if any, of the maximum allowable amount shall be paid.

20 SECTION 33. If the offender refuses to pay the specified amount at all, and gives no sign of cooperation to
21 the victim and court concerning payment, he may be excommunicated for failure to repent.

22 SECTION 34. If the offender cannot pay the specified amount, he shall make arrangements to pay the amount
23 over time as the parties shall mutually agree.

24 SECTION 35. If the offender cannot pay the specified amount, he shall so swear before the church of this
25 issue and, if he later shows ability to pay and he refuses, he shall be excommunicated for impenitence and
26 fraud.

27 SECTION 36. Any transfer or sending to another church authority shall be accompanied with a full
28 explanation of what is owed to the victim, and the charges which brought the sentence. If then the victim is
29 defrauded of the amount owed, by a refusal to pay, and he is a member of a non-CRPC church, the sending
30 church will understand him to be an heathen²²⁴ as any other who breaks his oath (Psa. 15: 4, Lev. 5:4²²⁵)
31 and stands in contempt of governments (2Pe 2). If so, then the victim shall count him as an heathen and
32 may sue him at law. But if the church is a CRPC church, he shall be charged to the presbytery of the victim
33 before any such action and presbytery shall investigate and handle the payment, intercede with the
34 presbytery of the accused if needed and inflict a judgment even unto excommunication upon him, working
35 in conjunction with the other presbytery.

36 SECTION 37. When a noncommunicant member neglects the ongoing exhortation of the congregational
37 presbytery and rejects his covenantal responsibilities, the congregational presbytery will proceed with
38 disciplinary action.

²²³ “The fruit of the poisoned tree vitiates all that it touches”, is the phrase which states the consequences are the responsibility of the offender as reasonably as possible.

²²⁴ Obviously, the court cannot “excommunicate” a person who is not its member. However, since the member was not excommunicated for having sworn agreement to the sentence when under the authority of the church, now that he is gone from its jurisdiction, the court can understand his real state of soul and so advise the victim.

²²⁵ Lev. Reference added 11-2008 Presbytery. See Minutes XV, D, (10).

CHAPTER 15

CASES WITHOUT FULL PROCESS

SECTION 1. If any member should come before the court of original jurisdiction over him and confesses an offense, such a court shall first determine the nature of both sin and sanction and then go on to judgment without full process. Any member who voluntarily refuses the Lord's Table once shall be noticed by the congregational presbytery and, if the same should occur a second time, he shall be approached in order that congregational presbytery may inquire as to the nature of the refusal, and offer its help to the individual as may be needed.

SECTION 2. Erasure is an act of discipline without full process. A member of a church may be removed from the roll of the church by erasure under the following circumstances:

- 1) When a member desires to be dismissed to a church of which the congregational presbytery cannot approve as a church of like faith and practice and the spiritual interests of the member will not be served by uniting with such a church, and the congregational presbytery cannot dissuade the member, it shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the congregational presbytery institutes disciplinary action against him. On being informed that the member has joined such a church, the secretary will erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes.
- 2) When a member of a church, whether or not he be charged with an offense, informs the congregational presbytery that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the CRPC, and the congregational presbytery cannot dissuade the member, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes, unless the congregational presbytery institutes or continues disciplinary action against him.
- 3) When a member unites himself to a church of another denomination without a certificate of dismissal, the congregational presbytery may erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes or proceed with disciplinary action against him.
- 4) When a member cannot be found, the congregational presbytery may, after two years, erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes, unless it has cause to believe he has willfully abandoned family and/or church, in which case, it may proceed with disciplinary action against him.
- 5) When a member, without an adequate reason, continues to attend a church of another denomination, or persistently over an extended period of time is absent from the stated services of the church, the court will determine what penalty is appropriate. His name may be erased according to the following procedure: He shall be earnestly dealt with by the congregational presbytery of the church. That failing, he shall be notified that the congregational presbytery will be meeting at a time not less than three months later to review his standing in the church. The congregational presbytery will inform him of the time, date and location of the meeting and will invite him to attend in order to demonstrate a reason as to why a penalty should not be imposed.

SECTION 3. The names of ministers of the Word can be removed from the roll of the presbytery by erasure under the following circumstances:

- 1) When a minister, whether or not he is charged with an offense, tells the presbytery that he desires to be released from the jurisdiction of the CRPC by abandoning his ministry and/or membership, or when he declares himself to be independent, or joins another body without a regular dismissal, the presbytery should seek to dissuade him from his course, and, if such efforts fail, it shall erase his name from the roll and record the circumstances in the minutes unless the presbytery decides to institute disciplinary action against him.
- 2) When a minister has been absent from all presbytery meetings for two years and cannot be found by presbytery, his name shall be erased from the roll, unless it has cause to believe he has willfully abandoned family and/or church, in which case, it may proceed with disciplinary action against him, first weighing the discipline of the congregational presbytery which has original jurisdiction over the man. In such a case, the congregational presbytery shall first proceed with any disciplinary action against him. The regional presbytery alone, however, shall have power to erase his name from the roll of ministerial members and may call the case before it, after the congregational presbytery has judged.

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The congregational presbytery shall have two years to make its charge(s).

CHAPTER 16

PROCEDURES CONCERNING EVENTS PRIOR TO INCLUSION IN PRESBYTERY

SECTION 1. Any charges made against a church or its officer-bearer(s) concerning events occurring prior to inclusion of the church as a member in the presbytery (either upon formation of presbytery or simple desire of a congregation to become a member of an already existing presbytery), such charges will be immediately referred to the original congregational presbytery for a hearing. If the congregational presbytery has determined the case already or has already made a binding decision in the matter, then it shall state its decision without further hearing, shall write its report to presbytery, and if appealable, then presbytery may hear the case if it can establish jurisdiction in the matter. However, if the party(s) making the charge(s) have previously refused²²⁶ to meet with the individual or congregational presbytery on previous occasions for adjudication then the case, *prima facie*²²⁷, shows bad faith and shall be adjudged on the basis of one who, having not raised a objection, then has no objection.

SECTION 2. Presbytery has no jurisdiction in such cases where one or more of the following apply:

- 1) the individual is determined to be guiltless or the matter was held to be without foundation by a previous court broader than the congregational court of an individual church (*Res Judicata*);²²⁸
- 2) statute of limitations²²⁹ for such a charge has expired, as determined by CRPC *Directory of Church Discipline*;
- 3) matters pertaining to the sequence and procedures of Matthew 18:15-17 (DCD, Chapter 2) were grossly neglected or miscarried by the accuser;
- 4) there exist no known unsecured injured parties who made accusation as per Matthew 18 and were left with their case untried by virtue of being powerless to compel the accused though they sought such an hearing;
- 5) where the accuser has had opportunity previously to charge the individual in his own church or to his own congregational presbytery and has not availed himself of the opportunity.

SECTION 3. The same procedure shall apply to any charge against an officer-bearer. If an issue shall be referred to the congregational presbytery of the officer-bearer's church, and if the congregational presbytery finds that a complaint was never raised before it as a chargeable offense then they shall adjudge the case on the basis of one who does not raise an objection, then having no objection. If there had been a request made in times previous to the congregational presbytery and charges preferred and the accusing parties did seek a hearing, then the congregational presbytery shall try the case and make its decision. If the case be appealable, then the broader presbytery shall hear it.

SECTION 4. Non-members of the CRPC may not charge any officer-bearer without the concurrence of his congregational presbytery, and, if concurrence, then such charges must go to trial, except in cases referenced in Sections 1 and 2 above. If concurrence is refused, then the issue may be appealed to the broader presbytery, and received by such a body if and only if a definite and sanctionable issue documented in the law of the Lord is proved by the parties making the charge (except in the cases referenced in Sections 1-2 above). Concurrence of the congregational presbytery means that:

- 1) the congregational presbytery shall consider the charge and its evidence to see if a breach of the law of the Lord is involved, otherwise the issue stops immediately, and
- 2) the parties will contract to be sanctionable for perjury (publicly sanctioned by the broader presbytery, chargeable by the broader presbytery unto their own church courts for the maximum sanction they seek from the CRPC).

²²⁶ Refusal to meet with a congregational presbytery of a man includes the decision not to at least send notice to that congregational presbytery after attempting Matt. 18, of a desire to meet with it and make accusation. Obviously, if he cannot try to approach the accused or the congregational presbytery, he has consciously refused to make accusation. If one does not raise an objection, one does not have an objection.

²²⁷ On its face, *i.e.*, what is apparent is real.

²²⁸ "It has already been judged."

²²⁹ Two years, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

SECTION 5. Concerning Section 4, perjury may be applied by the congregational presbytery to the non-member accuser if it deems it appropriate, on the following terms:

- 1) if the charges or testimony are found to have been falsified;
- 2) if the charges or testimony are found to have been misrepresented by the accuser through the omission by the accuser of pertinent information which could have justly ended the issue before process or shed further light upon it; and/or
- 3) if the charges or testimony are found to have been sufficiently mismanaged by the accuser to deny the cause of justice being served.

SECTION 6. If a minister or church refuses to submit to an inquiry concerning a charge or issue occurring prior to his/its inclusion and reception into the CRPC, the broader presbytery may reject the application.

SECTION 7. Those individuals and churches which constitute the original founding churches of the CRPC, may enter the CRPC only with a mandate to form presbytery from their churches. They may withdraw with honor within a year of the signing of the *Book of Church Government*.

CHAPTER 17

DIVESTING FROM OFFICE

SECTION 1. An officer-bearer may be divested from office or deposed by judicial discipline in doctrine or life, according to the *Directory of Church Discipline*.

SECTION 2. An officer-bearer may be divested from office without censure for the following reasons other than sin in doctrine or life:

- 1) mental or physical incapacitation, as determined by his congregational presbytery, though automatically appealable to the broader presbytery by the minister, at his discretion and within two years of the divestiture;
- 2) personal crisis/trauma causing him such grief as to be unable to fulfill his calling, as determined by his congregational presbytery, though automatically appealable to the broader presbytery by the minister, at his discretion and within two years of the divestiture;
- 3) an honest matter of conscience with respect to doctrine in which he may be unable to further subscribe to the standards of the CRPC. In such a case, he may be divested from office by his congregational presbytery or the broader presbytery without doctrinal trial only if the doctrine be such as still enables him to be a Christian, unless he contests such a decision.
- 4.) if he fails to perform his duties through lack of the requisite gifts and his congregational presbytery so appeals to the broader presbytery for his removal.

SECTION 3. If there is an attempt of divesting an officer-bearer from office without censure, he shall have opportunity to appeal to the broader presbytery.

SECTION 4. A motion to divest without censure requires 3/4 votes of the court assembled.

SECTION 5. A broader presbytery may divest a minister from office if he fails to seek a pastoral charge actively for three years, unless he shows good cause.

SECTION 6. If a ruling elder or deacon shall be divested of office without his agreement and trial, then the congregational presbytery shall call a congregational meeting and if there is a 3/4 vote of the congregation to divest, the issue shall then go to the broader presbytery which shall divest him upon the vote of a majority of votes of those assembled. In all cases, the officer-bearer shall have a right to plead his case before the congregational presbytery so votes, before the congregation so votes, and before the broader presbytery so votes.

SECTION 7. An officer-bearer other than the pastor who desires to resign or refuses to serve in office shall be counseled by the congregational presbytery and, if he still maintains his position, he shall demit his office and the congregational presbytery shall record the issue in its minutes and notify the broader presbytery.

SECTION 8. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to imply that when an office-bearer retires or is retired because of advanced age or a health condition that he is considered divested of office or prevented from seeking to attend to office again and leave his retirement.

SECTION 9. Removal Of Ministerial Credentials For the Unauthorized Departure of a minister from the CRPC.²³⁰

- 1.) Should a minister, holding credentials in the CRPC, leave his local church or the CRPC, or seeks to remove or transfer his credentials in any way not set forth in DCO 23:20, this shall be considered to be a lawless, vow-breaking of their covenant with the CRPC. Such action(s) are to be construed by the regional presbytery as a demitting of the Gospel ministry as far as the CRPC is concerned. His ministerial credentials shall thereby be considered demitted and he shall be given a dishonorable dismissal from the presbytery as far as his ministerial credentials are concerned. Until such action is confessed and repented of, this action is not reversible irrespective of reception into any other ecclesiastical body. Any charges pending against a minister leaving under these circumstances

²³⁰ Section 9 added at 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. P. for details and grounds.
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1 continue to stand and shall be handled according to the DCD as would be anyone remaining a minister
2 in the CRPC.

- 3 2.) Should the CRPC become aware that in such cases as set forth in DCD 17:9 1) above, that a minister
4 has joined with another ecclesiastical body without such reconciliation, that body should be notified of
5 the action of the CRPC. Furthermore, even should reconciliation be effected with the CRPC, then he
6 would need to be examined and ordained by such group as one having no ministerial credentials. A
7 minister removing or transferring his ministerial credentials without the approval of the regional
8 presbytery shall be likewise considered the same as renouncing jurisdiction of the CRPC as covered
9 above. No minister may leave the CRPC in this fashion without his credentials being thus
10 demitted/surrendered. In such cases, the minister shall be notified of the above action by the regional
11 presbytery at which the action is taken. This letter shall be made public in all the churches and set forth
12 as part of the public record in the short report for publication on the CRPC website. Should
13 reconciliation be later concluded, public notice of that will likewise be made, and notice of such action
14 shall be noted in the past short report record so as to thereby update the records lest the more recent
15 developments not be known.

CHAPTER 18
COMPLAINTS

SECTION 1. A complaint is a written representation which charges a court with delinquency or error. It is not an appeal or a protest. It may be brought by an officer-bearer or member of a CRPC church or any CRPC presbytery. A complaint may be brought against any presbytery.

SECTION 2. The complaint should first be brought to the presbytery which is alleged to have been delinquent or in error asking for correction and/or remedy. The claim should be made in a timely manner and in no case later than 24 months after the alleged event, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

SECTION 3. Once a complaint has been filed, and an official acknowledgement given (or mailed) to the complainant, the presbytery must respond to the complaint within 60 days from the meeting at which the complaint was received or when filed with the clerk of the presbytery whichever occurs first. Notice of intent to appeal must be filed within 30 days from the date of any denial. An appeal to the next broader court must be filed within 90 days of such denial.²³¹

SECTION 4. After the complaint has been brought to the broader court, the secretary of the presbytery against which the complaint was made shall submit to the secretary of the broader court all the papers, facts of the cases, certified copies of minutes or other documents related to the case.

SECTION 5. Any appellate court answer to a complaint shall be sent to all prior courts and the complainant.

²³¹ “and an official acknowledgement given (or mailed) to the complainant, the” added 11-2007 Presbytery. See minutes XIV. L. for details and grounds.

CHAPTER 19

DISSENTS AND PROTESTS

SECTION 1. Any member of a court who is allowed to vote and who votes against the action being taken may request that his dissenting vote and his reasons for such dissent be recorded in the minutes of the court.

SECTION 2. Any member of a court may file a written protest which states the reasons for objecting to an action or judgment of the court. It must be filed with the secretary of the court within 10 days of the action. The protest shall be read to the court and shall be recorded in the minutes of the court to which the protest pertains.

SECTION 3. If desired, the court may place a response to the protest in the minutes.

CHAPTER 20

APPEALS

SECTION 1. The secretary shall transmit all records from the trial to a broader court in cases of appeal including the chronology.²³² The minutes are owned by the court of original jurisdiction. Copies may be provided to each of the interested parties and witnesses (limited to a court validated copy of their testimony and cross-examination).

SECTION 2. An appeal is the removal of the case from the jurisdiction of a court which heard and judged in the matter by the filing of a petition requesting that the judgment of the court be overturned or modified. An appeal may be made by the accused or a court whose judgment was reversed or modified by the appellate court.

SECTION 3. The grounds for appeal, in most cases, will include one or more of the following:

- 1) gross injustice;
- 2) potential sanctions disproportionate to the alleged sin (and the court proceeds to inflict such penalties) or contrary to the Word of God;
- 3) violation of the standards of the church and/or CRPC;
- 4) violation of Matthew 18:15-17 allowed to go uncontested;
- 5) violation concerning evidence, witnesses, and/or procedures, any of which affected the outcome of the trial;
- 6) litigants unduly muzzled by the court;
- 7) doctrinal violations resulting in miscarriage of justice;
- 8) if the accused plead “no contest by reason of intent” and the trial court impose the maximum sanction;
- 9) if, in slander cases, the party retract according to this Directory and the trial court impose further sanctions beyond that agreed upon by the litigants;
- 10) there is flagrant failure to use the procedures of this Directory.

SECTION 4. Notice of intent to file an appeal must be made within 10 days of the time of the receipt of the decision. Delivery of notice shall be either direct or by certified mail postmarked no later than 10 days from the date that the individual receives notice of the decision of the announcement of the decision. The notice shall be filed with the secretary or clerk of the court from which the appeal is being made.

SECTION 5. The secretary (or clerk) of the court shall submit the record of all of the proceedings to the secretary (or clerk) of the appellate court.

SECTION 6. Decisions and rulings of the trial court shall not be appealable but may become grounds for appeal from the judgment of the trial court.

SECTION 7. The appellant has 120 days after the date of the filing of the notice of appeal to perfect the appeal. To do so, he must file the appeal with the specifications of error with the secretary (or clerk) of the appellate court. The secretary (or clerk) of the appellate court shall give the appellant and the court (from which appeal has been made) notice of the date, time and location for the hearing of the appellate court, if it hear the case. The appellate court shall give both parties reasonable time so as to make preparations for their attendance at such a hearing.

SECTION 8. When the appellate court does not sustain any of the specifications of error (recognizing no grounds for appeal hearing), the judgment of the trial court is thereby affirmed and such shall be announced to the church or other court involved. However, appeal to the next appellate court can be made alleging that the appellate court erred in not hearing the appeal and asking to have the appeal reinstated. A decision in the last appellate court will either affirm the decision of the prior courts or compel the prior appellate court to hear the appeal.

²³² Acts 15: 2.

- 1 SECTION 9. If the appellate court sustains at least one specification of error and finds the specification of
- 2 error to be of sufficient importance as noted in Section 7 of this chapter (or elsewhere in this Directory),
- 3 thus establishing its jurisdiction, it shall set the time of the hearing. Each litigant shall have opportunity to
- 4 present its case in full.
- 5 SECTION 10. In heresy trials, all judgments against the accused shall be grounds for appeal.

CHAPTER 21

DISPUTES BETWEEN AND DISFELLOWSHIPPING OF CHURCHES

SECTION 1. No church shall ever be excommunicated as a whole entity. In every excommunication, each person must be dealt with and has all the rights and immunities given by Scripture and the standards of the CRPC.

SECTION 2. When a charge is preferred by a church of the CRPC against another church in the CRPC, then the presbytery of each church shall choose and shall issue credentials to those selected to represent the position of that church in court. Only members of the CRPC may represent CRPC churches in a court of the CRPC.

SECTION 3. Churches must attempt to settle their disputes with the accused church. If the case is of such public notoriety that the issue must be handled with some urgency, then the accusing church must ask the final appellate court to handle the trial.

SECTION 4. Churches may be admonished, reprovved, and/or exhorted as to what changes are desired, suspended from broader presbyterial representation and voting (though never from mere attendance at presbytery), or disfellowshipped from the CRPC.

SECTION 5. The judgments have all been defined earlier, except as they now apply to churches, with the exception of a church disfellowshipped from the CRPC.

SECTION 6. A church may be disfellowshipped from the CRPC when its doctrine and practice are clearly violating the Scriptures or creedal standards of the CRPC and are inconsistent with the reformed/covenant faith. However, such action may not occur until the following take place, in order:

- 1) The accusing church files a formal charge against the accused church and specifies the nature of the charge. The accusing church must meet with the accused church to reconcile differences.
- 2) If the accused church refuses to meet or differences are not reconciled then the accusing church may bring the charges to the accused church's broader presbytery.
- 3) A normal appellate process would apply thereafter.

SECTION 7. The broadest court alone may determine, as a result of trial that the accused church is irreconcilably lost as a body of Christ within the CRPC and thus, may be disfellowshipped from the CRPC on one or both of two counts:

- 1) such a church is no longer a church of Christ, but is cast out for it has become a "synagogue of Satan"; and/or
- 2) the differences between the accused church and the CRPC are of such a serious nature as to constitute a standing breach of covenant, thus demanding a "parting of the ways" and fellowship.

SECTION 8. The CRPC will recognize any individuals or entities previously subordinate to the disfellowshipped church which leave the church and seek to remain in good standing with the CRPC (as long as they repudiate the charged offense and accept the judgment of the CRPC). All ministers of the disfellowshipped church who do not accept the decision of the CRPC, will be dropped from the rolls of the CRPC and will no longer retain office or membership in the CRPC.

SECTION 9. Any individuals from the disfellowshipped church who cannot affirm their agreement with the decision of the CRPC may appeal to remain in the CRPC by notifying (in writing within 60 days of the decision of the appellate court) the broader presbytery from which the church was disfellowshipped. These appeals will be evaluated on a case by case basis. All appeals must be received within 60 days of the announcement of the decision of the final court in the CRPC. Thereafter, all remaining members of the disfellowshipped church who have not appealed for remaining in the CRPC, will no longer be considered members of the CRPC.

The
DIRECTORY of
CHURCH WORSHIP

FOR THE

Covenant Reformed

Presbyterian Church

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PREFACE

The Directory of Church Worship (DCW) represents an application of the doctrine of worship set forth in Scripture, and explicated in the Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church. Although no church may add to nor neglect nor deviate from any of the elements or practices of worship which are ordained in the Word of God, nevertheless, the precise words and orders of service are, of necessity, matters of circumstance which may vary from time to time and from place to place.

Presbyterianism recognizes both the nature of circumstances and the importance of maintaining unity even with respect to many circumstantial details. Accordingly, synods and councils may “set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, . . . which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 31:3).

In accordance with this teaching of the Westminster Standards, the forms of this Directory are to be followed, as an expression of the unity which we enjoy with one another. Further direction for the public worship of the church may be found in the Constitution, including Westminster Confession of Faith 21.

The Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER 1
THE BAPTISM OF COVENANT CHILDREN

The administration of baptism is to be performed in accordance with the Constitution (see III. Public Worship, B. The Elements of Worship, section 4).

The following vows are to be administered.

The minister shall address the parent(s) and shall ask:

Do you acknowledge that, although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to condemnation, they are holy in Christ, and as members of his Church ought to be baptized?

Answer. We do.

Do you promise to instruct your child in the principles of our holy religion as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as summarized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism?

Do you promise to pray with and for your child, to set an example of piety and godliness before (him/her/them) and to endeavor by all the means of God's appointment to bring (him/her/them) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Answer: We do.

The minister shall then address the congregation, asking the members to rise and to answer in the affirmative either of the following questions:

Do you, the members of this congregation, promise, in the presence of God, to safeguard this covenant by setting an example of godliness before (this child/these children), and at all times testifying of God's glory and grace so that (he/she/they) may behold to (his/her/their) comfort, your faithfulness as an encouragement in (his/her/their) walk with the Lord?

OR

Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive (this child/these children) in love, pray for (him/her/them), help care for (his/her/their) instruction in the faith and encourage and sustain (him/her/them) in the fellowship of believers; and as a congregation do you bind yourselves to assist in the instruction of (this child/these children)?

If so, answer, "We do so promise".

The congregation answers: We do so promise.

Thereupon the minister shall baptize the child, saying:

(Name), I baptize thee into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

It is appropriate both immediately prior to the administration of baptism and after it, that prayer be offered to God, asking for His blessing upon the ordinance, upon the one(s) being baptized, upon the parent(s), and upon the church as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

THE ADMISSION OF PERSONS TO COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP

When a person presents himself for communicant membership, and is approved by the governing authority of the congregation to be admitted to said membership, the following vows are to be administered in a service of public worship.

Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments to be the infallible Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

Answer. I do.

Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

Answer. I do.

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord; and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life according to the Word of God and the covenant of our church?

Answer. I do.

Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?

Answer. I do.

The minister should then ask that the congregation please rise, for the administration of the following vow.

Do you, the members of this congregation, promise, in the presence of God, to safeguard this covenant by receiving your dear (brother/sister/brethren) in the Lord into the fellowship of this covenant body for the edification of (his/her/their) faith and the strengthening of this church; and at all times setting an example of godliness before (him/her/their) so that (he/she/they) may behold, for (his/her/their) comfort, your faithfulness as an encouragement in his (his/her/their) walk with the Lord?

Answer. We do so promise.

If the person confessing his faith has not been baptized in a church that maintains Word and sacrament in their fundamental integrity, that person should now be baptized. The administration of baptism is to be performed in accordance with the Constitution (see III. Public Worship, B. The Elements of Worship, section 4).

It is appropriate, both immediately prior to the administration of baptism and immediately after it, for prayer to be offered to God, asking for His blessing upon the ordinance, upon the one(s) being baptized, and upon the church as a whole.

If the particular congregation has a church covenant, the person(s) admitted to communicant membership should now sign a copy of that covenant, after which the minister should countersign it.

It is appropriate for the minister to conclude this part of the service by giving an exhortation, in these or

similar words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participate in the sacrament of the Holy Supper. I charge you that by the faithful use of the means of grace, the Word of God, the sacraments and prayer, and in humble reliance upon the grace of God, you continue steadfastly in the confession which you have made. Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven. May the God of all grace, who called you into His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Whenever a person is received by transfer from another manifestation of the visible church, or upon reaffirmation of faith, it is appropriate to use the same questions for membership as found above.

If a minister of the gospel is not available, then a ruling elder may administer the vows of membership. However, only a minister may administer the sacrament of baptism.

CHAPTER 3
ORDINATION OF PASTORS (TEACHING ELDERS)

After the sermon the presiding minister shall begin thus:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dearly beloved in Christ Jesus: We are gathered here to ordain this brother according to apostolic order by prayer and the laying on of hands to the office of the ministry of the Word of God. But since we can do nothing without the Lord, let us therefore together call upon Him.

Thereupon prayer is to be offered, asking that the one to be ordained would be a man after God's own heart, and that through his ministry, many would be won to Christ.

The presiding minister shall then address the candidate for ordination:

*Dearly beloved brother in the Lord: You stand here in the presence of God to be publicly and solemnly ordained to the office of the holy ministry. It is proper for you, therefore, earnestly to consider the dignity and responsibility of the office that you may enter upon it with a lively consciousness of your own sins and inadequacies and an ardent longing for divine help. The Lord Himself ordained this office when he said: **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world.** The apostle Paul also testifies: **This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop [i.e., overseer], he desireth a good work.** Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The Lord, who has promised to be with us even unto the end of the world, has upheld this office among us to the present time; and since we are about to ordain you to this office, hear further the apostle Paul to Timothy: **Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.** The apostle Peter admonishes likewise: **Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.***

Dear Brother, you are therefore as a servant of Christ to feed the flock of God; to preach the Word in season and out of season; to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all longsuffering and humility; to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to strengthen the weak, to seek the lost; to continue in prayer and supplication, to administer the holy sacraments, and to maintain good discipline and order in the church of God. Be watchful in all things; be a good soldier of Jesus Christ; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry;

fight the good fight of faith: then the God of peace will be with you; and the LORD, the righteous Judge, shall give you a crown of righteousness at that day.

And now we request you in the name of God to answer the following questions.

Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore infallible and inerrant and are the only and perfect rule of our Christian faith and life?"

Answer. I do.

Do you honestly and without reservation embrace the Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church with the conviction that the same is a summary of the system of truth of Holy Scripture, and do you promise to teach and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith?

Answer. I do.

Do you approve of and agree to uphold the government, discipline and worship of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church as contained in the By-Laws?

Answer. I do.

Do you believe with your whole heart that you are called of God to this office, and do you rely in the performing of its duties upon the grace and help of the Holy Spirit?

Answer. I do; this is my belief.

Do you acknowledge the rightful authority of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, and do you promise to perform your office faithfully in the same and to show all proper regard for its laws and ordinances and all suitable obedience to its government in the Lord?

Answer. I do acknowledge and promise it; may the Lord help me.

Then the candidate shall be directed to kneel, and the ministers and elders shall lay their hands severally on his head, and prayer is to be offered. It is appropriate during this prayer to pray that the Lord would consecrate the ordinand through the Holy Spirit; that he would be granted grace and strength in order rightly to divide the Word of truth, to be an example in all things, and to win many souls for the kingdom of Christ.

After the prayer of ordination, the ordinand shall rise, and the presiding minister shall say:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and in reliance upon His help, we have ordained you to the holy ministry: to proclaim the gospel, to administer the sacraments, to maintain Christian discipline and order in the church, and to be an instrument of the Lord in saving immortal souls. The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be and abide with you now and for ever. Amen.

We offer you the right hand of fellowship to partake with us in this ministry.

Each minister and elder present shall offer the right hand of fellowship.

When the new minister is to be installed at the same time as pastor of the congregation (or charge) in which

- 1 he has been ordained, the Installation Service shall now proceed according to the form provided for that
- 2 purpose (Chapter 4).
- 3 It is customary for the newly-ordained man to pronounce the benediction at the conclusion of the worship
- 4 service.
- 5

CHAPTER 4 INSTALLATION OF PASTORS

Immediately after the ordination of a new minister, if this is to take place on the same occasion, or in any other case after the sermon, the presiding minister shall address the congregation as follows:

Dearly beloved in the Lord Jesus: You have called (Name), now present, to become your pastor. He has accepted your call. After full inquiry and deliberation, the Congregational Presbytery of _____ and the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, Presbytery of _____ [or _____ Presbytery] under whose care you stand, have resolved that the proposed pastoral relationship shall be established; and being here accordingly, by its appointment and order, at the present time, for that purpose, we now proceed to install him, in the name of the Lord, as pastor of this charge.

Here the pastor-elect shall present himself, and the presiding minister shall address him thus:

*Dearly beloved brother in the Lord: Since the office which you have accepted was solemnly and divinely instituted by the Lord and Head of the Church, therefore it is your solemn and important duty faithfully to exercise the same by looking to the Lord that you may with joy give an account of your stewardship. The tasks and duties imposed upon you in this office are clearly evident in the meaning of the names applied to those who minister in the Word and doctrine—shepherd, overseer, teacher, steward. The Lord Himself says: **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world.** The apostle Paul, deeply conscious of the importance and sacredness of this high calling, addressed such as are occupied in this work thus: **I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. Holding fast the faithful word as thou hast been taught, that you may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.***

In agreement with this divine instruction, it is now your duty, dear brother, to give yourself wholly to the ministry of the Word and prayer, to administer the sacraments; and in conjunction with the elders and deacons, to lead the church over which the Holy Ghost has set you, to watch over this flock, to preserve discipline, order and peace in the same for the comfort of the saints and the edification of the church. And now, if you shall perform this holy task in the mind of Christ, then the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon you and this flock, and you shall dwell together in peace and harmony.

Directing the members of the congregation in which the minister is being installed to rise, the presiding minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, officers and members of this congregation: you have just heard what important duty was laid upon him whom ye have called as your pastor and teacher; hear ye

1 now also what the Word of God says to you, how you are to receive him and what your mind
2 shall be toward him: **We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you,**
3 **and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for**
4 **their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Remember them which have the rule**
5 **over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God whose faith follow, considering the**
6 **end of their conversation. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves:**
7 **for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy,**
8 **and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Even so hath the Lord ordained that**
9 **they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. If we have sown unto you spiritual**
10 **things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?**

11 *From these divine instructions you see that you are to love, honor and obey in the Lord this*
12 *servant of Christ, and to submit to his doctrine, admonitions and corrections; and for his*
13 *service in spiritual things you owe him his bodily necessities, that he may give himself wholly*
14 *to the ministry of the Word without any cares about his sustenance. Receive him, therefore,*
15 *in the Lord; and assist him with counsel and supplication, so that by your common labor the*
16 *church might be edified and the kingdom of Christ extended.*

17 The presiding minister shall address this question to the pastor elect:

18 *And now, dear brother, I ask you in the presence of God and this congregation, do you now*
19 *accept the oversight and care of this congregation to perform faithfully and conscientiously*
20 *the duties which rest upon you as pastor and teacher, and to foster this fold in the grace and*
21 *knowledge of Jesus Christ in accordance with your ordination vow?*

22 **Answer. I do promise this by the grace and help of God.**

23 Then the presiding minister shall address this question to the congregation:

24 *Beloved in the Lord: You have heard this solemn vow. I ask you as officers and members of*
25 *this congregation in the presence of God: Do you receive this minister as your pastor and*
26 *teacher, and do you promise to love and honor him, and to be obedient unto him in the Lord?*

27 **Answer. We do.**

28 Here the presiding minister shall install the pastor-elect with these words:

29 *On the ground of the mutual promises, and by the authority of the Covenant Reformed*
30 *Presbyterian Church, we install you, (Name), as pastor and teacher of this congregation,*
31 *and herewith we give the same to your care and oversight in the name of the Father, and of*
32 *the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

33 Prayer then should be offered, thanking God for the establishment of His church, and the provision of all
34 spiritual gifts and heavenly benefits, and beseeching Him that the minister may be faithful in the
35 proclamation of the gospel and that the congregation may be gracious hearers of the message.

36 It is customary that the newly-installed minister offer the benediction at the close of the installation service.

CHAPTER 5

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

Such parts of the following form are to be used as they relate to the particular circumstances in each congregation as to the number to be ordained or installed, or both.

After the sermon, the presiding minister shall call the present congregational presbytery (Session) forward first, and then call the candidate(s) second. The minister shall then say:

Dearly beloved in the Lord: (This man/These men) (has/have) been solemnly chosen and called by you, as a Christian congregation, to take part as elder(s) and deacon(s) in the care and service of this church. (He/They) has (have) accepted your call. No one has come forward to urge any just objection to (his/their) being set in office. We therefore proceed, in the name of the Lord, to ordain (him/those) who has (have) not been previously ordained, and to set each apart to his own office, to the work of the ministry among you.

Prayer should then be offered, asking the Lord's blessing upon each of the ones being ordained and/or installed.

Then, addressing the candidates, the presiding minister shall say:

(Beloved brother/Beloved brethren): as it is a great honor to bear office in the Lord's house, so it is also a solemn trust, which no one should take upon himself rashly or lightly. For although your election has been by the free choice of your fellow members, yet the office(s) to which you have been called is (are) not of human origin or authority, but was (were) instituted by Christ himself, who preserved it (them) in the Church to the present time. You are, therefore, to regard yourself (yourselves) not the mere servant(s) of men, but as the servant(s) of Christ, appointed in His name and by His authority to the work entrusted to your care. From this you may see how much is comprehended in your present induction into office, and how needful it is that you should magnify your office, and make high account of its duties as a service to be rendered unto God, and not simply to men.

Elders are appointed to assist and support the ministers of the Word in the general government of the church. They form, with the minister, in each particular congregation, a congregational presbytery in common for the spiritual supervision of the flock which is committed to their care. They are bound to take part, accordingly, in the work of the ministry, so far as it has to do with this pastoral oversight and care. They are to be the advisors and counselors of the minister in the discharge of his holy office; they are to be to him as hands and eyes, acting with him and for him throughout the congregation. It is their duty to go before the flock in the way of Christian example, to watch over it in the Lord, to take an active interest in its spiritual welfare, to feel a responsibility for its condition, to be at hand in all circumstances with spiritual aid for its necessities and wants. It belongs to them, in virtue of their office, to visit the sick and afflicted, to instruct the ignorant, to admonish such as are out of the way, to warn the unruly, to command and rebuke with authority in Christ's name. To them, moreover, in conjunction with the pastor, belongs the whole discipline of the church, its power of the keys, as exercised both in the form of censure and in the form of restoration.

Deacons are appointed to assist and support the elders in those ministrations which pertain to the more outward needs of the general household of faith. On them falls the honorable charge of caring for the poor and needy and of seeing that the charities of the church are properly dispensed. They are to aid in securing the funds necessary for the support of the church in its various activities. They are to labor among the people in making known to them

the needs of the church, fostering the principle of stewardship, and thereby cultivating the spirit of liberal and cheerful giving. In discharging these duties, however, they must not lose sight of the true spiritual character of their office, which, although it may be thus occupied with outward and temporal things, yet remains always a proper branch of the Christian ministry, the purpose of which in all things can only be eternal salvation. Hence it is that so much stress is laid, in the New Testament, on the character and life of those who are called to take part in this work. They must be men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who may be able, both by word and example, to help forward the great purpose of the gospel, making their ministrations to the bodily necessities of the poor the occasion and means of a still better benefit to their souls. The apostle Paul, writing on this subject, expressly requires of them virtues of like sort with those which are needful for the office of the ministry in its most exalted character.

The minister shall now address these questions to the candidates:

And now, brother (brethren), having well considered the nature and design of this (these) office(s) to the use of which you have been called by the voice of this congregation, do you accept the call as coming to you from God, and are you willing to undertake the work and service it sets before you, in the name and for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer. I do.

Vows for Elders

Do you believe that the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, are the Word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore infallible and inerrant and are the only and perfect rule of our Christian faith and life?

Answer. I do.

Do you honestly and without reservation embrace the Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church with the conviction that the same is a summary of the system of truth of Holy Scripture, and do you promise to teach and defend the same in good faith and reject all doctrines conflicting therewith?

Answer. I do.

Do you approve of and agree to uphold the government, discipline and worship of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church as contained in the By-Laws?

Answer. I do.

Do you believe with your whole heart that you are called of God to this office, and do you rely in the performing of its duties upon the grace and help of the Holy Spirit?

Answer. I do; this is my belief.

Do you acknowledge the rightful authority of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, and do you promise to perform your office faithfully in the same and to show all proper regard for its laws and ordinances and all suitable obedience to its government in the Lord?

Answer. I do acknowledge and promise it; may the Lord help me.

Vows for Deacons

Do you receive the Holy Scriptures as being the inspired Word of God, and do you accept the Constitution of the Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church as being in harmony with the Scriptures?

Answer. We do.

Do you promise to exercise your ministry, deacon(s), among this people, with faithful diligence, according to that which you have now declared to be the rule and measure of your faith, showing all proper regard for the lawful authority of the church, and taking heed to your own lives, that you may adorn the gospel of God our Saviour by a walk and conversation answerable to the place you occupy in Christ's house?

Answer. We do.

The minister shall now ask the one(s) being ordained and/or installed to turn and face the congregation, shall ask the congregation to rise, and shall direct the following question to the congregation.

Do you the members of this congregation solemnly covenant in the presence of God to give honor to these officers, submitting yourselves to their rightful authority, heeding the admonition of discipline, and encouraging them in their office?

Answer: We do so promise.

Here those who have not been previously ordained to the office in which they are now called to serve shall be ordained. They shall be directed to kneel, and the minister and elders shall lay their right hand upon each one in succession, while prayer is offered over each ordinand.

The minister shall say to each officer being ordained and/or installed:

(Name), take the authority now committed to your trust to execute the office of (elder/deacon) in the church, which office is now solemnly committed unto you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The other church council members may now be called upon to give the right hand of fellowship to the newly-installed officers.

It is appropriate to close this portion of the service with prayer, asking that God would make these officers wise and faithful, humble, tender, modest, yet bold, constant, patient, and persevering in their appointed work; and that they would hold the testimony of a good conscience, and prove themselves a good example unto all the flock, and all for the glory of God's holy name

CHAPTER 6

WORSHIP UNDER EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN EXISTING CHURCHES¹

SECTION 1: In cases where no Minister of the Word (Teaching Elder) is able to be present, it is understood that God's people gather in official worship providing Christ rules through the supervision of two or more Elders (Ruling or Teaching). In such circumstances, opening and closing prayer shall replace the salutation and benediction; the sacraments may not be administered; and licensed exhortation, sermon reading or a pre-recorded sermon shall replace the official preaching from Scripture.

SECTION 2: In the event that two Ruling Elders are unable to be present, the congregational presbytery may call God's people to gather together for mutual edification under the leadership of one Ruling Elder, Deacon or an appointee of the congregational presbytery which shall set the order of service.

SECTION 3: There may be other emergency or exceptional circumstances that may arise not covered herein, and yet when the congregation gathers together, prays, reads the Scriptures, sings praise to God and hears a message that faithfully expounds the gospel and applies it to their hearts, there is no reason that such may not be considered worship.

¹ This chapter added at 07-2009 American Presbytery. See Minutes 13, B on DCW 6..