

**The Standards  
of the  
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
EVANGELICAL SYNOD**

**VOLUME II**

*Form of Government*  
*Book of Discipline*  
*Directory of Worship*

(As revised by General Synods through 1979)

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# Form of Government



## Chapter I

### THE VISIBLE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THIS DENOMINATION AS A BRANCH THEREOF

1. The visible church throughout the world consists of all those who, in various forms of organizations, profess their faith in God through His Eternal Son, together with their children. Any organization for worship in which the Gospel is faithfully preached and faithfully shown forth in sacraments or ordinances, and in which denial of the basic principles of the Gospel, whether in word or in deed, is faithfully disciplined, may be regarded as a branch of the Universal Church.

The invisible church, which is also universal, consists of the whole number of those who have been chosen of God unto salvation and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Reformed Presbyterian Church is reformed in theology and presbyterian in government.

a. Reformed churches are those which adhere to the system of doctrine taught in the infallible Word of God, the Bible, as that system was clarified in the reformation of the sixteenth century, and set forth in great Calvinistic creeds, such as the *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, as well as the basic doctrinal standards of this Church, which are the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*.

b. Presbyterian churches are those which recognize Christ alone as the Supreme Head of the Church, accept no civil authority in ecclesiastical matters, and are governed by presbyters, that is, teaching and ruling elders. Presbyterian churches, through their presbyters, are organized in local, regional, and general courts; in which courts there is complete parity and total absence of prelacy among the clergy or "teaching elders," and complete parity of power and privilege, though not of all functions, as between the clergy and the lay, or "ruling elders."

3. The supreme and only infallible rule of faith and life, by which in every case this denomination, as a branch of the universal church, is to

exercise its ministry, is the written Word of God as defined in chapter one of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

The subordinate standards of this denomination are the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, in the form adhered to by this denomination on the date of the adoption of this Form of Government. We adhere to these subordinate standards as setting forth the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures.

4. We accept and are ruled by *presbyterian principles of church government* which we believe to be based upon and inferred from the New Testament.

a. The scriptural basis for the organization of the *local church* is abundantly clear. Christians are enjoined not to neglect local assembly but to counsel, comfort, and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24, 25. 1 Thess. 4:18). Paul directed that elders be ordained in every city (Titus 1:5. 2 Tim. 2:2). The first day of the week, "the Lord's day" is regularly the day for local Christian assembly (Acts 20:7. 1 Cor. 16:2).

b. The scriptural basis for assemblies of ministers and elders in *regional presbyteries* is set forth in the "Form of Presbyterial Church Government" adopted by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, February 10, 1645, adopted "as the results of the long and learned debates of the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster." Reasons are given therein for believing that there were numerous congregations in the apostolic church in Jerusalem, these all being led and governed by the elders and the apostles in a presbyterial manner. The church of Ephesus must have had more than one congregation. The church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla is mentioned as a local church (1 Cor. 16:19), a part of the church of Ephesus (Acts 20:17). That the New Testament church of Rome also included more than one local church is evident from Romans 16:5. The Christian groups "throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" are, in best attested text of Acts 9:31, referred to as one church—"... the church throughout. . . ."

c. The Scriptural basis for a *general synod* of presbyters from different regional presbyteries is found in the example of the apostolic church as recorded in Acts 15:1-35 and Acts 16:4 and 5.

5. The *powers of all church courts*, whether exercised by the body directly or through its representatives by delegated authority, are administrative and declarative, not legislative. The Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and life. All rules, constitutional, permanent

or temporary, adopted by any court of the church are of force only as based upon, or in accord with the Scriptures.

It is within the proper functions of the courts of the church to make such application of the revealed will of God to the persons and in the circumstances under their jurisdiction as may be necessary for the administration and execution by the church of its scriptural functions. The deliverances, resolutions, and administrative actions of the courts of the church are to be accorded the weight which is proper in view of the character of these courts, yet our *Confession of Faith* explicitly limits the power of the courts of the church and safeguards the individual Christian conscience as follows:

“All synods or councils since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both” (*Confession of Faith*, XXXI, iv).

“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 in matters of faith or worship” (*Confession of Faith*, XX, ii).

6. That the work of the church may be done in a decorous and orderly manner in accordance with the commands of Scripture, all deliberative meetings of the church and its courts shall observe recognized standards of procedure as set forth in such a work as Robert’s *Rules of Order*.

## Chapter II

### THE PARTICULAR CHURCH

1. *A particular church* of this denomination shall consist of a group of believers with their children, organized to worship God in accordance with the doctrinal, governmental, and disciplinary standards of this denomination.

#### *Membership*

2. *Communicant members* of a particular church shall be persons who have been baptized in obedience to Christ's command, who have made a credible profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who are believed to have been regenerated, whose Christian profession is not contradicted by flagrant sin or false doctrine, who are willing to submit themselves to the government of the particular church and the denomination, and who have presented themselves to the session of the particular church for a witness thereof.

Communicant members may be added by profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer from a church not deemed heretical in the judgment of the Session. For all received, regardless of age or how received, attendance at a church membership preparation class prior to reception is highly recommended.

3. *Non-communicant members* of the church are children of communicant members or children under the care of communicant members who stand to them as foster parents in the place of parents. One or both parents or foster parents of these children shall be under solemn obligation to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and to seek to induce them to accept Christ as their personal Saviour when they reach the age of discretion.

These children are not entitled to vote in any meeting of the church until they become communicant members, nor are they to partake of the communion until they are fully able to obey the command of self-examination as given in 1 Corinthians 11:28.

These children, though non-communicant and non-voting, are nev-

ertheless members of the church and included in the holy covenant which God has made with godly parents and with His people as a whole; for God has promised not only that He is our God, but that He is the God of our households and of our children (Gen. 17:7; 1 Cor. 7:14). In scriptural usage circumcision, by synecdoche, that is, taking a part for the whole, is used to represent the complex of initiatory rites given in Leviticus 12 and elsewhere. In the Epistle to the Colossians 2:11, 12, especially when studied in the correct Greek text, St. Paul specifically equates baptism with circumcision. As the children of godly parents in the Levitical dispensation were the subject of specified rites (Lev. 12) which indicated that they belonged to God's people, so the children of believing parents or foster parents (whether one or both) in this dispensation ought to be baptized.

4. *Associate members* are believers temporarily residing at too great a distance from their permanent homes to worship and serve regularly in that church of which they are communicant members. Such believers, without ceasing to be communicant members of their home churches, may be received as associate members in particular churches of this denomination, and as such may enjoy all the privileges of fellowship, worship, and service under the care of the pastor and session of the church of which they become associate members, except that associate members may not vote in congregational or corporation meetings, and may not be members of the session, the board of deacons, or the board of trustees, unless, being ordained elders, they be appointed by the presbytery to serve temporarily on the session under the provisions of Chapter II, Section 9, Paragraphs c and d of this Form of Government.

When associate members are received, it shall be the duty of the pastor or clerk of session of the particular church receiving them to communicate the fact of their reception to the pastor or clerk of session or corresponding officer of the church of which they are communicant members, so that those responsible for the shepherding of the Lord's flock may know of the spiritual care and fellowship of their absent members.

When children of associate members are baptized, a record of the baptism should be sent to the pastor or some other responsible officer of the church of which they are communicant members.

5. *Members of the corporation* of an incorporated particular church shall be communicant members who are twenty-one years of age and older unless the laws in particular States in which churches are located have corporate voting ages lower than twenty-one in which cases these churches may follow the corporate voting age requirements in such

states, and unless otherwise determined in accordance with Section 7, paragraph a of this chapter.

### *The Congregation and the Corporation*

6. *The congregation* of each particular church shall determine its own fiscal year if not determined by the constitution of the particular church, and shall hold stated meetings for the transaction of ecclesiastical business at least once each fiscal year. The constitution or governing rules of each particular church shall make reasonable provision for *pro re nata* meetings of the congregation when desired by any considerable number of communicant members, or when required by the presbytery.

All communicant members of a particular church shall be entitled to vote in meetings of the congregation, unless an age limit is specified in the rules governing the particular church.

The congregation shall have power to vote on the calling or removal of a pastor, to elect or remove the members of its session and its board of deacons. Before a vote is taken on the call of a pastor, or the election of elders or deacons, it is necessary that the people know whether the nominees are able to meet the requirements of the office, since a call or an election does not make a man a pastor, an elder, or a deacon unless and until he meets the qualifications and provisions given in Chapter V of this Form of Government and is ordained, and installed.

The pastor or a moderator appointed by the presbytery shall ordinarily preside at ecclesiastical meetings of the congregation. In case of the absence or inability of the pastor or the duly appointed moderator, the congregation may elect any elder or minister in good standing in this denomination as moderator of a particular meeting. The actions of said meeting shall not be legally binding until ratified by a later meeting presided over by the pastor or duly appointed moderator.

Whereas the chief responsibility for the spiritual affairs of the particular church rests with the session, and not with the congregation, and the authority of the ministers and duly elected elders, and of the courts of the church, is from Christ as His will is expressed in the Bible, and not from the congregation, yet the congregation chooses its ruling elders by orderly ballot, and ruling elders represent the communicant members of the congregation in the courts of the church. No duly elected elder may be removed from the session of a particular church by a higher judicatory except by judicial action in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

Pastors have their standing in the church courts by membership in, or appointment of their presbyteries, not as delegates or representatives

of their particular churches. Pastors of particular churches are installed or removed by the authority of the presbytery and not by the congregation. Yet the presbytery may not install a pastor in any particular church without the approval of the congregation expressed by orderly ballot. Nor may the presbytery refuse to remove a pastor if a majority of the congregation request his removal.

All ecclesiastical rights, privileges, and powers not expressly designated for the officers, boards, or courts of the church by the Word of God and by the doctrinal, governmental, or disciplinary standards of this denomination, are reserved to the congregations of the several particular churches.

7. *The corporation of a particular church.*

a. The provisions of this section, namely Section 7 of Chapter II, shall not be binding upon particular churches existing within the presbyteries of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church prior to the adoption of this Form of Government, or upon particular churches organized with other arrangements for the matters covered by this section prior to their application for admittance to a presbytery of this denomination. In the case of all particular churches the presbyteries may make exceptions to the provisions of this section to suit the wishes and needs of a particular church.

b. All particular churches holding, or expecting to hold real property should be incorporated under the laws of the civil government. The fiscal year for the congregation as well as the corporation should properly be determined in the articles of incorporation and should not be changed without substantial reason.

c. All communicant members of the congregation of a particular church twenty-one years of age and older shall be members of its corporation except as otherwise provided under paragraph a above. Only such members shall be entitled to vote in meetings of the corporation.

d. The corporation of each particular church shall hold stated meetings for the transaction of business at least once each fiscal year, and shall make reasonable provisions for *pro re nata* meetings of the corporation when desired by any considerable number of its members, or when required by the presbytery.

e. The chairman of the board of trustees shall ordinarily preside at meetings of the corporation, but in case of his absence or inability to serve, the corporation of a particular church may elect another one of

its trustees or any elder or minister in good standing in this denomination to preside at a particular meeting. In such case the pastor, or a moderator for the church appointed by the presbytery, may preside at a meeting of the corporation, until a moderator of the meeting is elected.

f. The corporation of a particular church, through its trustees, shall hold title to all real estate owned by the church. The corporation shall have authority over the acquisition, sale, improvement, and upkeep of all real estate owned by the church, but these powers may be delegated to its board of trustees.

g. The corporation shall elect all trustees of the church who are not trustees *ex officio* as elders as allowed under the provisions set forth in Chapter II, 7, a, provided that such trustees shall meet the requirements for such office as stated in Chapter V of this Form of Government.

h. Unless otherwise provided in the constitution or governing rules of the local church, the corporation shall elect a treasurer to serve for a term of one year and to be responsible for the corporate, current, and benevolent funds of the church. The treasurer shall make monthly reports to the session.

#### 8. *Rights of Particular Churches* in Relation to the Denomination and its Courts.

a. The corporation of a particular church, through its duly elected trustees, (or, if unincorporated, through those who are entitled to represent the particular church in matters related to real property) shall have sole title to its real property, and shall be sole owner of any equity it may have in any real estate. No superior court of this denomination shall, as such, have any claim whatever upon any real property or any equity in any real estate, or any funds or property of any kind held by or belonging to any particular church, or any board, society, committee, Sunday school, class or branch thereof. The superior courts of the church may receive monies or properties from a local church only by free and voluntary action of the latter.

b. Whereas this Church is the continuation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod, established in 1774;

And whereas the Reformed Presbyterian Church is identical and completely continuous with the Bible Presbyterian Church, which had its first Synod meeting in September 1938 in Collingswood, New Jersey, and which has since that date maintained continuous active

existence, and the synod of which is incorporated under the laws of Missouri;

And whereas the Bible Presbyterian Church changed its name to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church by formal amendment to its Constitution at its 1961 Synod;

And whereas the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, is a continuation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, General Synod, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which Churches united on April 6, 1965, to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod;

And whereas the original constitution of the Bible Presbyterian denomination, Form of Government, chapter 20, paragraph 4 and 5 of the same, read as follows:

“4. All particular churches shall be entitled to hold, own, and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of revision whatsoever to The Bible Presbyterian Church, its presbyteries, synods, or any other courts hereafter created, its trustees or other officers.

“5. The provisions of this chapter are to be construed as a solemn covenant whereby the Church as a whole undertakes never to attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation against its will, whether or not such congregation remains within or chooses to withdraw from his body. All officers and courts of the Church are hereby prohibited from making any such attempt. The provisions of section 4 and 5 of this chapter are unamendable and irrevocable.”

Therefore these two paragraphs as quoted in this section are, without alteration, incorporated into this constitution for the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the provisions thereof are declared to be applicable to all particular churches and courts of this denomination, and unamendable and irrevocable by this denomination.

Nothing in this Form of Government shall be construed as preventing the collection of lawful debts or loans by agencies of the presbyteries or the synod.

c. Particular churches need remain in association with this denomination only so long as they themselves so desire. The relationship is voluntary, based only upon mutual love and confidence, and is in no

sense to be maintained by the exercise of any kind of force or coercion whatsoever. A particular church may withdraw from this denomination at any time for reasons which seem to it sufficient, by orderly ballot at a legal meeting of its congregation or corporation. This portion of this Form of Government, namely Section 8, paragraphs a, b, and c, of Chapter II, shall be unamendable forever, and shall constitute a solemn covenant between this denomination and its courts, and the particular churches adhering thereto.

d. A presbytery may remove a particular church from its rolls for reasons which seem sufficient to the presbytery, but such action may be taken only after careful and deliberate study of the facts, and after representatives of the church have been given opportunity to appear before the presbytery and to be fully heard in the matter. This action can be taken only after a period of six months from the time the presbytery first officially notifies the church of its intended action.

The rights of representatives of the particular church in such a case to appeal or complain to the higher judicatory shall be fully safeguarded and shall in no way be jeopardized by any peremptory action. An appeal or complaint may be duly made in accordance with the Book of Discipline by any member or members of the particular church and shall stay the act of the presbytery in removing a particular church from the roll until the appeal or complaint is duly heard and finally decided by the higher court, whether or not the appeal or complaint is supported by the number of members of the presbytery requisite for a stay in other administrative cases.

e. In case a particular church ceases to function, the presbytery to which it belongs may declare it extinct and remove it from the rolls. The presbytery may request possession of the records or copies thereof, and shall have power to grant such letters of transfer as may be required. The disposition of the property of a church which has ceased to function shall be wholly governed by the constitution of the particular church and/or in accordance with the civil law under which it is incorporated or has existed. The provisions of section 7, paragraphs a, b, and c above, shall be strictly adhered to.

9. a. A particular church is admitted to this denomination through the presbytery within the bounds of which it is situated, or, if not within the existing bounds of a presbytery, through the presbytery which is geographically most convenient for fellowship and participation.

b. In case of a previously organized church the presbytery shall ascertain that its constitution and by-laws and/or other basic organizational documents and arrangements are in harmony with the doctrinal, governmental, and disciplinary standards of this denomination and that it is the sincere desire of the people to unite in the fellowship and discipline of this denomination.

c. In case of a mission church organized under the supervision of Presbytery, or a group of believers not previously organized as a particular church, but desiring to be so organized within this denomination, the presbytery shall give assistance. To this end, presbytery shall appoint for such a group one of its ministers as a temporary moderator and one or more of its elders, teaching or ruling, to serve with the moderator as a temporary session. The moderator and elders so appointed shall have power to receive members and to form a communicants' roll, which members shall be considered communicant members of the denomination. In addition the temporary session shall assist in the drafting of a constitution, the election of officers, the formation of a corporation, and a calling of a pastor or making arrangements for a stated supply and a permanent moderator and session. A minimum of ten adult believers shall be required in any group which is to be organized as a particular church.

d. If a particular church be temporarily without elders, the presbytery may appoint elders who are members of other particular churches in the presbytery to serve with the pastor or moderator as a temporary session for such church. If elders within the same presbytery are not available the presbytery may obtain the help of elders who are part of a nearby presbytery.

Elders serving temporarily in a session of a church of which they are not members may nevertheless represent such church in the presbytery. If representing also the church of which he is a member, no elder shall have more than one vote.

e. On all matters relating to the formation and/or reception of particular churches the presbytery may act through an agency of its own, or through an appropriate agency of the synod.

#### *Boards of the Particular Church*

10. a. *The session* of a particular church consists of its pastor, or if there be no pastor, a moderator appointed by the presbytery, together with the elders elected by the congregation or, in cases described in Section 9 above, appointed by presbytery, to serve on its session.

b. Ruling elders are the particular representatives of the people, chosen by them from their own number for the purpose of joining with the pastors in the government and discipline of the church. These ruling elders possess the same eligibility to office in the courts of the church as the ministers or teaching elders. They must be men of wisdom and discretion, sound in the faith, diligent students of the Bible, able to teach others, and committed to guarding the purity of the church. They should be an example to the flock in personal Christian living. It is their duty in conjunction with the minister to exercise government and discipline and to take the spiritual oversight of the particular congregation and also of the church generally when called so to do.

c. Ruling elders are ordained for life but may be elected for active service on the session for particular terms. Elders not in active service shall be entitled to represent their church in the higher courts of the church when appointed by the session or the presbytery. A particular church may elect elders to serve on its session for life, but it is also proper to arrange a system of rotation. In case there are a sufficient number of men competent for the eldership, a particular church may limit the number of successive terms in which the elders may serve.

d. The congregation shall have power, by amendment of its constitution, or otherwise if the matter is not covered in its constitution, to determine the number of elders which shall serve in its session and to fix the terms of service. By a two thirds ballot the congregation may, at a meeting legally called for the purpose, terminate the services of a particular elder for reasons not involving judicial process.

e. The session shall hold stated meetings at regular intervals, at least monthly recommended. Unless the session shall rule otherwise, the pastor or moderator with two elders, or with one elder if there be fewer than four, shall constitute a quorum of the session. Unless the session shall rule otherwise, notice by telephone, in person, or by mail from the pastor or moderator, or a public announcement by the pastor or moderator at a public meeting of the church shall constitute due notice of a special meeting of the session. Each meeting of the session shall be opened and closed with prayer.

f. Because the elders are expected to be in regular attendance at all public meetings of the church and available for consultation on spiritual matters, the restrictions on the calling of *pro re nata* meetings of the congregation, the corporation, and the higher courts of the church do not apply to special meetings of the session; but the session may set its own quorum and make its own restrictions on the calling of special meetings, provided (1) that the quorum of a session shall not be

greater than two thirds of the members thereof, and (2) that one third of the members of the session shall have authority, in their own names or through the pastor or moderator, to call a special meeting of the session upon at least one week's notice, by telephone, in person, or by mail, to all the members thereof. The session shall also meet when required by the presbytery.

g. The pastor, or, if the church be without a pastor, the moderator appointed by the presbytery, shall normally preside at all meetings of the session; but the session, or the elders without a presiding minister, shall have power to elect any minister of this denomination as moderator of a particular meeting of the session.

h. No meeting of the elders without a minister of this denomination serving as moderator shall be in order, but if the securing of such moderator be impossible or extremely difficult, the elders may constitute themselves a committee of the whole for the transaction of such business as may be essential to the continuity of the spiritual life of the church. All actions taken in such capacity shall be reported to the next duly constituted meeting of the session, and shall not be legally binding until ratified by such meeting.

i. The session shall appoint the elders who represent the church in the presbytery and the synod.

j. The session shall elect as its clerk an elder as competent as possible in the keeping of records. Every session shall keep an accurate and clear record of its proceedings and an accurate and clear register or roll of the members of the particular church, including the names of communicant members, the names and dates of birth of their children, and the names of former communicant members transferred to other churches, or suspended, or otherwise removed from the rolls. The session records and rolls shall be open to the presbytery or its duly appointed agents at all times, and the minutes shall be submitted to the presbytery for review at a stated meeting at least once each year.

k. The session shall have authority to determine the purposes for which the buildings and grounds of the church may be used.

l. The session shall be responsible for the spiritual life, worship, and gospel ministry of the entire particular church and shall study and promote the best measures for the edification of the people and for the role played by the local church in the denomination and in spreading of the gospel at home and abroad.

m. The session shall be responsible for the administration of the sacraments, the regular and special worship and evangelistic services, the prayer meetings of the church, the ministry of music, and, subject to the presbytery (see Chapter II), for the supply of the pulpit in the absence of a pastor. It shall have supervision over the Sunday school, the church's activities for weekday Christian instruction and evangelism, the young people's societies, the missionary societies, and all other societies or organizations within the church. It shall seek to promote wholesome Christian fellowship and edifying social activities among the members and especially among the young people.

n. The session, subject to the higher courts of the church, shall have the sole power to receive communicant members into the church and to remove names from the communicants roll.

o. Covenant children may become communicant members upon confession of faith. Other members may be added to the church by confession of faith, or by reaffirmation of faith, or by letter of transfer and reaffirmation of faith from a church not deemed heretical.

p. The session may remove names from the roll of communicants in six ways only: (1) by record of decease, (2) by letter of transfer, (3) by record of the member's uniting with another church, (4) by record of ordination to the ministry, (5) by disciplinary action, or (6) when a church member not chargeable with an offence informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of the church, as in our Book of Discipline, ch. VII, 2. The first four of these ways of removal of names may be delegated to the clerk of session without particular action by the session in each individual case. The session or its agent shall not refuse a letter of transfer for a member in good standing to a church not deemed heretical and not in an unsound denomination.

q. Removal by disciplinary action is of two kinds: (a) erasure and (b) excommunication. In either case the provisions of the Book of Discipline shall be carefully adhered to, and the rights of the parties to appeal to the higher court shall be protected.

r. Protracted absence from the worship services of the church shall be sufficient grounds for erasure of a name from the roll of communicants, except that extended absence of a member from home, if he is known to be maintaining a good Christian testimony, shall not constitute such grounds. In no case shall a member whose whereabouts are known to be erased from the rolls without notification and an opportunity to appear before the session in person or by counsel.

s. The session is responsible for the spiritual government and discipline of the church. The elders shall assist the pastor in household visitation, inquiring into the spiritual knowledge and conduct of the people, and encouraging them in Christian living. The session shall deal with offenders in accordance with the Scriptures and the Book of Discipline, always observing especially the admonition of Galatians 6:1.

t. The session may delegate certain aspects of its powers and duties to its officers, to its committees, to the Sunday school organization, or to other boards or societies within the church, but the session may not delegate any of its powers or duties irrevocably, or in any such manner as to cease to be fully responsible for the spiritual life of the entire church.

11. a. *The Board of Deacons* shall be composed of the pastor together with the deacons elected by the congregation for active service as such.

b. Only men may be ordained to the office of deacon.

c. The pastor shall be the moderator of the board but one of the deacons shall be elected by the board to serve as vice-moderator.

d. The provisions for the number of members of the board, their terms of service, the matter of quorum, and provision for stated and special meetings shall be the same as the provisions for the session in these respects, as given in Section 10 of this chapter.

e. The board of deacons shall be responsible for assistance given to the poor of the congregation and of the community, and may perform such other administrative and charitable duties as may be assigned by the session or by the congregation.

f. The board of deacons shall be responsible to the session and shall report their activities, transactions, receipts and disbursements to the session at stated intervals. They shall also make annual report to the congregation.

12. The process for the election of elders and deacons in all groups of believers which are being assisted by presbytery in becoming particular churches (cf. Form of Government II, 9,c) shall be carried out in the following manner:

a. Every candidate for election shall be examined by presbytery or its commission before elections are conducted. Those qualified by presbytery shall be presented to the group for election. Then the presbytery shall conduct the election and proceed to ordain and install those elected.

b. Each election thereafter shall be conducted by the church and

the period between nominations and elections shall be sufficient for adequate training and examining of all nominees.

13. a. *The board of trustees* of a particular church, except as provided in Section 7 of this chapter, shall be composed of the ruling elders serving in the session.

b. If, in accordance with Section 6 of this chapter, there be trustees who are not ordained elders or deacons, they shall be men who give credible affirmative answer to the constitutional questions required of all ministers, elders, and deacons, as provided in Chapter V, Sections 1-3, of this Form of Government.

c. The board of trustees shall meet as a distinct body and shall elect its own chairman and secretary. Unless the constitution of the particular church shall provide otherwise, the treasurer elected by the corporation shall serve as treasurer for the board of trustees.

d. The trustees shall be the trustees of the corporation, and as such shall hold title to all real estate, or equities in real estate, owned by the church, and shall provide for the proper upkeep thereof. They shall perform such other duties as may be delegated to them by the corporation. If requested by the session, they shall prepare the general budget for the church, including not only property expenditures and upkeep, but current expenses and benevolences.

14. *Failure to hold elections.* In the event of failure by the congregation or by the corporation to hold elections at the regular time, all elders, deacons, and trustees and other officers whose terms expire shall hold office until their successors are elected (See Chapter III, Section 7, a, under Duties of Presbyteries).

## Chapter III

### THE PRESBYTERY

1. A presbytery consists of all the ministers, in number not less than three, and regularly elected ruling elders from each congregation, within a certain district.

Every congregation shall be represented by at least one elder. Ruling elder representation shall be based normally on the ratio of one elder for every three hundred communicant members, that is, congregations having up to three hundred members on the rolls shall be represented by one elder. Those with three hundred to six hundred communicant members by two elders; those with six hundred to nine hundred communicant members by three elders; those with nine hundred to twelve hundred communicant members by four elders, and larger congregations in the same ratio thereafter. If, however, the number of eligible ministers in the presbytery be greater than the number of churches in presbytery, an equal number of ruling elders shall be eligible to serve in presbytery. The presbytery shall determine how these additional elders shall be chosen.

2. *The boundaries and names of presbyteries* shall be set by the synod. Boundaries need not in all cases be strictly geographical, but such matters as convenience of transportation for the attendance of meetings, and providing fellowship for the attendance of meetings, and providing fellowship for churches in remote places, may be taken into consideration in assigning particular churches to their presbyteries. When the synod has set the boundaries of a presbytery or of contiguous presbyteries, these boundaries shall not be changed without the consent of the presbytery or presbyteries involved, except in the resolving of an administrative case appealed from a presbytery by a particular church which may complain of existing boundaries as creating a hardship.

3. *A quorum* for a meeting of a presbytery shall consist of at least three members thereof present at the time and place designated for the meeting, at least two of whom shall be ministers, and at least one shall be a ruling elder. Each session of presbytery shall be opened and closed with prayer and the singing of a metrical version of Psalm 133 to an appropriate tune is recommended at the close of each session.

4. The presbyteries shall adopt *standing rules or by-laws* which shall stipulate the time of *stated meetings* at regular intervals. These shall be held at least semiannually. One such stated meeting shall be held at the time and place of the meeting of the annual synod, until such time as the growth of the denomination limits the number of members of

presbytery who are members of synod.

5. *Pro re nata meetings* of the presbytery may be called by two ministers, two elders not from the same church, and the moderator or stated clerk. However, *pro re nata* meetings shall be called at the request of one third of the ministers laboring within the bounds of the presbytery and an equal number of elders therein, the elders not all being members of one particular church. The call for a *pro re nata* meeting shall ordinarily be issued by the moderator, or if more convenient, by the stated clerk; but one third of the ministers and an equal number of elders desiring the *pro re nata* meeting may issue the call for it in their own names. In any case the call for a *pro re nata* meeting shall be issued in writing and sent to every minister and clerk of session in the presbytery at least ten days in advance. The names of the ministers and elders requesting the meeting shall be given. The time and place of meeting and the particular business to be taken up shall be clearly stated, and no other business than that stated shall be taken up. It is desirable that the call be announced in the local churches on the Sunday preceding the date of the meeting.

6. *The officers of a presbytery* shall include a moderator and a stated clerk. Additional officers may be elected if the presbytery deems it necessary. The moderator shall serve for a term of one year. The stated clerk shall serve for a term of three years. It is desirable that there be continuity in the keeping of the records of a presbytery, and that when a presbytery has a competent clerk, he be retained in office for an extended period of years.

In the event of failure by a presbytery to hold an election at the regular time, all officers whose terms expire shall remain in office until their successors are elected (See Chapter IV, Section 8 under *Powers With Reference to Presbyteries*).

7. *The duties* of the presbytery shall be to "shepherd the church of God" as St. Paul enjoined the presbytery of Ephesus (Acts 20:17-38), and in general, to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care, always respecting the liberties guaranteed to individual congregations and persons under this Form of Government.

a. The presbytery shall be responsible for the faithful preaching of the Word and performance of pastoral duties in all the particular churches adhering to it. To this end the presbytery shall cause that the particular churches shall not neglect the regular elections of their elective officers. The presbytery solely has the power to install and

remove pastors. The provisions of Chapter II shall be so construed that the presbytery shall not under any circumstances install a pastor against a majority vote of the congregation as expressed by orderly ballot in a legally called meeting; and the presbytery shall not under any circumstances refuse to dissolve the pastoral relationship if requested to do so by a majority vote of the congregation expressed by an orderly ballot in a legally called meeting. But these provisions shall be construed as a minimum limitation. The presbytery shall deal with the Lord's flock in tenderness and consideration and shall not use peremptory measures. The presbytery shall not disregard the convictions of a determined and unwilling minority, but shall seek by its good offices to unify the congregation. Even if the objections to a pastor seem to be trivial, the presbytery shall consider that the vision of God's people in this life is, at best, obscure (1 Cor. 13:12), and that it is better for a pastor to move than for a particular church to be disrupted.

However, if in acceding to the request of the congregation for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the presbytery finds that the reasons are trivial, it shall instruct the session and the congregation concerning these matters, lest further congregational actions be taken for the same reasons.

If the cause of opposition to a pastor be serious heresy or sin on the part of the members opposing the pastor, the presbytery shall endeavor to cause the session to deal effectively with any offenders in a scriptural manner in accordance with the Book of Discipline. If the session persists in neglecting its duty, or is unable to perform its duty, or commits grave irregularities, the presbytery may take such cognizance thereof and take such action under this Form of Government and/or under the Book of Discipline as the presbytery deems necessary.

The presbytery is responsible for the preaching of the Word, not only through regular pastors, but also in the absence of a pastor. In the event of the decease of a pastor, or the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the presbytery shall enter in its records the date on which the pulpit became vacant and shall appoint one of its ministers as a moderator of the session and the congregation. The clerk of presbytery shall certify to the session of the vacant church in writing both the presbytery's record of the vacancy, and the appointment of the moderator for the church.

The presbytery may delegate the matter of filling vacant pulpits to an agency of its own, and/or may perform this service through an

agency of the synod. The presbytery, through such agency or directly, shall stand ready to counsel and assist the session of the vacant church, but, unless, in the judgment of the presbytery, the session is unable properly to perform the function, the filling of a vacant pulpit on a temporary basis shall be considered primarily a function of the session.

In case a particular church is not in a position to maintain a pastor, a stated supply shall not be engaged without the approval of the presbytery.

b. In accordance with Chapter II, the presbytery shall have power to receive new churches, and in accordance with Chapter II, Section 9, d, and e, the presbytery shall have power to remove churches from its roll. The presbytery may unite two or more churches at the request of the people but not without legal action of the corporation (or if un-incorporated, the congregation) of each particular church, by orderly ballot at a legal meeting thereof.

In the formation or reception of new churches, the presbytery shall act on the merits of the case, and shall not be deterred by unwillingness of existing churches in this denomination to give letters of transfer for members desiring to form or unite with a new church within the presbytery. The presbytery shall protect the rights of members in good standing to letters of transfer in accordance with Chapter II, and, if the proposed new church be sufficiently distant from any existing church in the presbytery, and if the presbytery judges the motive of the people to be a sincere desire to serve the Lord, the presbytery shall proceed in the usual manner.

c. The presbytery shall have power to examine the rolls and records of the particular church sessions at all times, and shall examine their minutes annually, directing what, if any, corrections should be made in procedure or in records, and approving, or not approving, in whole or in part.

d. The presbytery has original jurisdiction over the official ecclesiastical care, the licensing, and the ordination of candidates for the ministry. In these matters presbytery shall proceed in accordance with Chapter V.

e. The presbytery shall have power to resolve questions of doctrine and procedure brought before it by its members or by the sessions of the particular churches, to condemn opinions or practices which are injurious to the spiritual life of the church and its members, and to declare the great doctrines and principles of the Scriptures and of our

standards.

f. The presbytery is the court of original jurisdiction over the ministers who are members thereof. The presbytery is the next higher court above the church session in jurisdiction over all communicant members not ordained ministers. The presbytery shall hear and resolve all administrative and judicial cases properly brought before it, in accordance with the Scriptures and the Book of Discipline.

8. It shall be the duty of the presbytery to keep accurate and clear rolls of its churches, ministers, elders, candidates for the ministry, under care, and licensed, and of its ordinations, with accurate record of actions by which additions to, or removals from the rolls are made, and an accurate and clear record of all its proceedings. These rolls and records shall be open to the synod of this denomination or its authorized agents at all times and the minutes shall be examined for approval at least once every year.

9. Ministers in good standing in other presbyteries of this denomination, or in other denominations of like faith, and ordained elders from churches of this denomination or of like faith, who may be present, may be invited to sit with the presbytery, as corresponding members. Such members shall be entitled to deliberate and advise, but not to vote in any decisions of the presbytery. Other Christian friends may be welcomed as visiting brethren, and may be given the floor by special action of presbytery.

## Chapter IV

### THE SYNOD

1. a. *Members.* All ministers and elders in this denomination shall be eligible for appointment to membership in the synod.

b. Until such time as there are three hundred ministers in this denomination, all ministers able to attend a meeting of the synod shall be enrolled as members thereof, their names being certified by the clerks of their respective presbyteries to the stated clerk of synod.

c. Until such time as the number of ministers in this denomination equals three hundred, the elders who are entitled to represent their presbyteries and their churches as members of a meeting of the synod, with their alternates, if any, shall be selected by the sessions of the churches in the same number and in the same manner in which elder members of presbyteries are selected. It is desirable, but not mandatory, that the elders who are members of presbyteries shall be members of the synod. The clerks of sessions shall certify the names of their delegates, and alternates, if any, to the clerks of their respective presbyteries. The clerks of presbyteries shall certify to the clerk of the synod the names of elders and alternates appointed by the sessions of the particular churches and shall state accurately the number of elders which may be members of their respective presbyteries, which is the same as the number of elders from each presbytery eligible for membership in the synod.

d. It is imperative that the synod shall always be a genuinely deliberative body, which would be impossible if it were so large as to be cumbersome. If the number of possible commissioners is kept below six hundred, the actual attendance at any one meeting is expected to be of reasonably working size.

e. When there are as many as three hundred ministers in the denomination the stated clerk of the synod shall make announcement of this fact at the next stated meeting of the synod, and shall so inform the stated clerks of all presbyteries in writing. Such announcement shall be mandatory and not discretionary, and, if true, shall be equally valid,

whether made by the stated clerk, or any other member of the synod.

f. At the next stated meeting of the synod following such announcement, and thereafter, the commissioners to the synod be only ninety percent of the ministers of the several presbyteries or the next whole number below ninety percent, with an equal number of elders from each presbytery, such ministers and elders being elected as commissioners to the synod by their several presbyteries. The presbyteries shall be free to select their ministerial delegates and their ruling elder delegates on such principles as shall seem suitable to the presbyteries, but care should be exercised to give the particular churches as fair representation as is practicable.

g. When the number of ministers who may be commissioners to a meeting of synod shall again reach the number of three hundred, notice shall again be given as provided above, and the number of minister and elder commissioners shall be further reduced by ten percent to the nearest whole number below ninety percent of the previous number.

h. The process of ten percent reductions herein provided for shall be continued so that the total number of ministers to be commissioners shall be kept below three hundred, with a corresponding number of elders, provided that every presbytery shall always be entitled to elect at least one minister and one elder as commissioners.

i. If after the announcement and action contemplated in e and f above, through adverse circumstances, the number of ministers in the denomination should be reduced, the process of ten percent reductions shall be reversed, provided that the total number of ministers and elders to be elected as commissioners to a meeting of a synod shall not be greater than six hundred.

j. Subsequent to such announcement and action as contemplated in e and f above, the presbyteries shall elect commissioners for each stated and *pro re nata* meeting of the synod. All ministers in the presbytery and all elders in any of the congregations are eligible for election as commissioners to synod. Yet it is desirable, but not mandatory, that the presbyteries shall fill their quotas of elder commissioners with elders designated by the sessions to represent their congregations in their presbyteries insofar as possible. If a presbytery fails to meet to elect commissioners to a *pro re nata* meeting of synod, those commissioners elected for the previous stated meeting shall serve for the *pro re nata* meeting.

2. *Quorum*. Any thirty commissioners, at least one half, but not all

being ministers, met at the time and place designated for a meeting of the Synod, shall constitute a quorum.

3. *Powers and Agencies.* The synod shall be the highest court of the denomination. It shall have power to organize and conduct its business in an orderly and scriptural manner. The synod may exercise any of its powers by its officers, or by temporary or permanent committees, boards, or commissions, and may, at its own discretion, subject to the Scriptures, the Form of Government, and the Book of Discipline of this denomination, assign to its officers, committees, boards, or commissions power to conclude particular matters; but the synod shall not delegate any of its general powers beyond its own recall so as to cease to be fully responsible for the spiritual life of the entire denomination.

The synod may from time to time commend to the particular churches and the people for their support, Christian enterprises or agencies independent of the synod's control. The synod shall have no power to coerce or in any way compel the particular churches or the people to support its own or other enterprises or agencies. Nor shall the liberty of the people to support such sound Christian agencies as their consciences may lead them to support be in any way constricted.

4. The synod shall be *incorporated* under the laws of the civil government as "Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod," and shall be a continuous and perpetual entity in matters ecclesiastical and in matters temporal, but in the latter only insofar as this branch of the visible Church, in accordance with the Scriptures, may hold property or have temporal interests or connections subordinate to its spiritual functions. The method and terms of the election of the trustees of the corporation shall conform to the laws of the state and shall be prescribed in the by-laws or standing rules of the synod.

5. *Powers of Successive Meetings.* Except in the Doctrinal Standards, Form of Government, and Book of Discipline, which may be amended only as prescribed in Chapter VI, and except in the by-laws or standing rules which may be suspended or amended only as prescribed therein, and except in matters of liabilities or obligations legally and properly incurred, no meeting of synod shall bind the actions of any subsequent meeting.

6. a. *The regular officers* of the synod shall include a moderator, who shall serve from the time of his election in a regular meeting of the synod until his successor is elected, at the next regular meeting. A *pro re nata* meeting of the synod may elect its own moderator, or may, by

vote, ask the moderator of the previous regular meeting to serve. If a *pro re nata* meeting elects a moderator other than the moderator of the previous regular meeting, the moderator of the *pro re nata* meeting shall serve for that meeting only, shall have no *ad interim* duties as moderator, and shall not ex officio serve to open the next regular meeting. A vice-moderator shall be appointed or elected to serve the same term as the moderator.

b. The synod shall have a stated clerk who shall serve for a term of three years, or until his successor is elected, and a treasurer who shall serve for a term of three years or until his successor is elected. In order that there may be continuity of record, it is desirable that a competent stated clerk shall be elected to succeed himself for as many terms as he may be able, in the judgment of the synod, to serve effectively.

#### 7. Meetings.

a. The synod shall meet upon its own adjournment. The term "meeting" shall, in this Form of Government, designate an assembly of commissioners met at a time and place previously designated for such assembly. A meeting may extend over several days and may include any number of sessions or sederunts. All sessions of the synod shall be opened and closed with prayer.

b. A *regular meeting* of the synod is a meeting the time and place of which have been designated by the previous meeting or by a duly authorized agent or committee thereof. Regular meetings shall be held at intervals of approximately one year, or more frequently if the synod so decides.

c. At the *first session* of a regular meeting of the synod the moderator of the previous regular meeting, or, in his absence, another minister, chosen by him, shall deliver a sermon or an address and shall lead or, if a layman, appoint some minister to lead, in celebrating the Lord's Supper. The moderator or his substitute shall then call the synod to order and preside until his successor is elected. If the retiring moderator is absent and fails to appoint a substitute, then the oldest minister of the synod present at the time for opening the meeting shall serve or appoint someone to serve.

d. The *formula* by which a regular meeting is adjourned shall have reference to the next regular meeting as follows: The vote having been taken for the adjournment of the meeting, the moderator shall say from the chair, "**By virtue of the authority delegated to me, by the Church, let this synod be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require**

another synod the members of which shall be chosen as provided in our Form of Government, to meet at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. \_\_\_\_\_." A metrical version of Psalm 133 shall be sung by the commissioners to an appropriate tune, and the moderator shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce on those present the apostolic benediction, or, if a layman, call upon some minister to do so.

e. If the synod shall have *designated an agent* or a committee to set the time and place for the next regular meeting, the blanks in the formula for adjournment may be filled as follows: ". . . to meet at a time and place to be designated at least three months in advance by the committee (or other agent) duly authorized by the synod on the designated day of the designated month of A.D. (year)."

f. A *pro re nata* meeting of the synod shall not ordinarily be opened with a sermon and the Lord's Supper, and shall not use the above formula of adjournment, but after the vote for adjournment of the *pro re nata* meeting, the moderator shall close the meeting with prayer and the benediction.

g. A *pro re nata* meeting of the synod shall be called by the moderator of the previous regular meeting or by the stated clerk, or may be called by any fifteen ministers, with an equal number of elders, in their own names, neither all these ministers nor all these elders being from the same presbytery, if the said moderator or clerk or the said fifteen ministers and fifteen elders be requested in writing by not less than one third of the ministers of the denomination and an equal number of elders. The name(s) of the person(s) issuing the call of such meeting shall be given therein, together with the number of ministers and the number of elders who shall have made written request for the meeting at the time the call is issued. The call shall be sent in writing to all ministers and stated clerks of presbyteries, at least thirty days in advance. It shall clearly state the time and place of the meeting and the business to be taken up, and no other business shall be transacted at the *pro re nata* meeting.

#### 8. Powers with Reference to Presbyteries.

a. The synod shall have power to form new presbyteries and to fix their boundaries and names, subject to Chapter III, Section 2.

b. The synod shall have power to dissolve a presbytery for reasons which seem sufficient to the synod, but only by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a legally called meeting, and only if notice of intention to propose the dissolution has been sent to the stated clerk of

the presbytery, all ministers, and all sessions of all churches within the presbytery at least two months prior to the meeting of synod in which the vote is taken.

c. The dissolution of a presbytery shall not be construed as dissolving any of its particular churches nor as deposing any of its ministers. Immediately after an act dissolving a presbytery the clerk of synod shall notify the stated clerk of the presbytery, all ministers, and all sessions of all churches in the presbytery of the said action, and shall inform them of steps whereby ministers and churches may remain within the denomination by uniting with existing presbyteries or with a new presbytery. The act of dissolution shall not take effect until two months after the action is taken, nor shall it take effect until the synod has made provision, by special commission, or otherwise, for retaining within this denomination those ministers and churches which are loyal to our standards, by the formation of a new presbytery or presbyteries, or by the assigning of them to an existing presbytery or presbyteries.

d. The synod shall constitute the bond of union, and fellowship among the presbyteries, and shall promote peace and mutual confidence among the presbyteries and their constituent churches.

e. The synod shall hear, directly, or by commission, all administrative and judicial cases properly brought before it, and shall decide the same in accordance with the scriptures and the Book of Discipline. It shall have powers of general review over the records and proceedings of the presbyteries, and shall examine the records for approval every year. By its powers of general review the synod shall take cognizance, through all honorable channels of knowledge and evidence, of situations within the presbyteries requiring correction, and shall cause such administrative or judicial cases as may be necessary for correction to be initiated and resolved in the proper judicatories. The synod shall cause that the presbyteries shall not neglect the regular elections of their elective officers, nor neglect other proper duties.

f. The synod shall advise concerning, or shall resolve, all questions of doctrine or practice properly brought before it. It shall have power to admonish, reprove, warn, and bear testimony concerning error in doctrine or immorality in practice within the whole earthly horizon of the church.

g. The synod shall promote and sustain the scriptural functions of the church in every locality and throughout the world.

9. a. Although the right of any individual or group to communicate

with any other individual or group is recognized, provided the communication be honest, not slanderous, and not of a nature to incite to evil, yet for any communication to be seriously considered as the business of any court of this denomination, the communication must be conveyed through orderly channels and with due regard for our presbyterian system of graded courts, of which the synod is the highest.

b. Communicant members confer directly with their individual elders and their pastor or with their sessions, in any and all matters of Christian doctrine or practice about which they are concerned; but communicant members or groups of members convey all of their overtures, petitions, complaints, appeals, and other communications to the presbytery, only through the sessions of their particular churches. All communications from or through sessions of particular churches, or from individual ministers or groups of ministers, addressed to the synod, shall be conveyed through their presbyteries. The sessions communicate directly with their presbyteries and the presbyteries with the synod.

c. The lower judicatories shall be obliged to transmit all communications properly addressed through them to the next higher judicatory, but the lower judicatories shall have power to attach to such communications, when transmitted, their own recommendations, comments, or record of relevant action.

d. The higher judicatories shall not be obliged to take cognizance of communications brought before them through other than regular channels, unless it be alleged that the lower judicatory through which the communication should properly have been conveyed, has been delinquent in the transmission thereof.

e. The synod shall be the sole agency in this denomination for communication and transaction of business with other denominations or branches of the church, and with interdenominational agencies in which other branches of the church function as denominations. Particular churches shall not be prevented from participation in such activities as local Bible conferences, evangelistic programs, or interdenominational associations of particular churches free from apostasy; but for particular churches of this denomination to associate themselves so as to assume, singly or together, any of the functions peculiar to a denomination or branch of the church among other denominations or branches, shall be regarded as divisive and censurable.

## Chapter V

### MINISTERS, ELDERS, DEACONS, AND TRUSTEES GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The scriptures indicate that God has given to the church men of *differing gifts* and functions. See especially Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 7:7, 12:1-31, Eph. 4:7-16. These are sometimes of the nature of specialized offices. We believe that the special office of the prophets of the Old Testament and of the apostles of the New Testament according to which they were empowered to write scripture and to rule authoritatively in the church, ceased with the completion of the New Testament. We believe that the special gifts of demonstrative miracles, sometimes called "signs" or "wonders," including the gift of speaking intelligibly in foreign "languages" not previously learned and the gift of spectacular healing without the use of ordinary therapeutic means, are not given to the church in all ages, but are given in special times and circumstances according to the sovereign purposes of God, and are not to be regarded as criteria of spiritual faithfulness in this age.

2. We believe that the office of ministers, elders, and deacons are given in the Scriptures as perpetual offices in the church throughout this age.

3. It being the duty of presbyteries to make certain of the preparation of candidates for the ministry, and it being the duty of pastors or moderators of particular churches to make certain that elders, deacons, and trustees, before their ordination or induction into office, are adequately prepared to reply to the required questions and to perform the duties of their respective offices, all ministers, licentiates, elders, deacons, and trustees of this denomination shall be men of established Christian character and shall give credible affirmative answer to the following questions:

**(1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, inerrant in the original writings, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**

(Answer: "I do.")

(2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the doctrinal standards of this church, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and *Catechisms, Larger and Shorter*, as embodying the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, to the maintenance of which this church is bound before God by solemn obligation?

(Answer: "I do.")

(3) Do you acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer and Head of His church, and do you accept the Presbyterian form of Church Government as derived from the Holy Scriptures?

(Answer: "I do.")

(4) Do you promise such subjection to your brethren as is taught in the Word of God?

(Answer: "I do.")

(5) Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry [or of an elder, or of a deacon] from love to God, and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son?

(Answer: "I have.")

(6) Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church; whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

(Answer: "I do.")

(7) Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in your personal and family life, as well as in the public duties of your office; endeavoring to adorn the profession of the Gospel by your life; and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer? [or (in the case of licentiates, deacons or trustees), in which God shall call you to serve?"]

(Answer: "I do.")

(8) Are you now willing to take the responsibilities of a pastor for this congregation, agreeably to your declaration when you accepted their call, and do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them, as God shall give you strength?

(Answer: "I am willing, and I do so promise.")

[In case the candidate is to be engaged in some work other than that of being pastor of a congregation the following may be substituted for Number 8:]

(9) Are you now willing to undertake the work of the Christian ministry [or an elder, or a deacon, or a trustee], and do you promise to discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you in this character as God may give you strength?

(Answer: "I am willing, and I do so promise.")

### *Ministers*

#### 4. *Qualifications and general functions.*

a. Ministers are presbyters whose qualifications are enjoined in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9, etc.) and are differentiated from ruling elders by their ordination to their special vocation, that they shall "labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17, 18). They are said to be especially "worthy of his reward."

b. The office of the minister is first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills the office has, in Scripture, obtained different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God, and in humility he is the servant of Christ, separated unto the Gospel of God.

c. Although laymen may teach the Word of God, deliver religious addresses from the pulpit, lead in public prayer and worship, and in many ways exercise responsible leadership in the church, yet the functions of a pastor installed by a presbytery, the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and the blessing of the people by the divine benediction are, in orderly procedure, reserved to ordained ministers, and the preaching of the Word of God in regular sermons is reserved to ordained ministers and candidates for the ministry who are licensed to preach.

#### 5. *Ecclesiastical steps to the ministry.\**

The formal steps by which a young man becomes an ordained

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\*As in the "Form of Presbyterial Church Government" adopted by the Assembly

minister in this denomination are three: Being taken under care, licensure, and ordination.

a. Being officially *taken under the care* of his presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. The candidate shall be a member of a church in this denomination, or of a church whose testimony is not inconsistent with our standards. He shall be recommended by his pastor and session, or by equally competent spiritual leaders. The recommendations shall certify his evident Christian faith and character, and shall give an estimation of his aptitude for the ministry, stating such experience as he may have had in Christian work.

b. When the recommendations are before the presbytery or a committee appointed for that purpose, the candidate being present, the presbytery or committee shall examine him as to (1) his personal experience of salvation, and (2) his evident calling of God to the gospel ministry. (3) The presbytery or committee may well also inquire as to the candidate's reasons for applying to a presbytery of this denomination.

Judging that there is no obvious impediment to prevent his progress to licensure, and that the candidate is committed to develop the Biblical qualifications for the eldership and to live a life of piety and service, and that the candidate apparently is blessed with at least some of the gifts and talents necessary for serving as a teaching elder, the presbytery may cause the candidate's name to be enrolled as under its care, and then by committee or otherwise, shall diligently seek to guide him in his further education and preparation, which may include opportunities for the public ministry of the Word under the supervision of presbytery.

c. It is important that the presbytery shall encourage the spiritual growth of candidates during such times of military service, or of educational or other experiences as Satan may endeavor to use to turn them from their sacred calling, and that they may be counseled to attend a presbyterian seminary known to be loyal to the system of doctrine taught in the scriptures.

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at Edinburgh in 1645 it was stated, concerning the ordination of ministers, that "In extraordinary cases, something extraordinary may be done, until a settled order may be had, yet keeping as near as possibly may be to the rule," so we recognize that in times of public calamity and disorder our constitutional rules may, of necessity, be modified and adapted. All departures from the rules ought to be re-examined at a time of more settled order, and any errors injurious to the church corrected.

d. The candidate shall report to the presbytery at least annually, and shall be invited to attend when feasible the public stated meetings of the presbytery. If a candidate fails to reply to communications and fails to report to the presbytery for a period of two years, and if the presbytery cannot be assured that the candidate is pursuing his course of preparation with due diligence, the presbytery shall drop his name from the roll of candidates under its care.

e. When a candidate under the care of a presbytery is to be removed to the care of another presbytery, whether the reason be change of residence, or intention to apply for licensure in the presbytery of his intended field of labor, or any other reason deemed sufficient, the presbytery of original jurisdiction shall certify to the presbytery to which the candidate is to be removed all relevant facts concerning his status under its care. That there shall be no neglect of details in the care of candidates, it is desirable that blank forms for the transfer of candidates from one presbytery to another be prepared by the synod, and used uniformly by all the presbyteries. The candidate shall remain under the care of the presbytery of original jurisdiction until notice is received that he has been taken under the care of the presbytery to which he is removed.

f. *Licensure.* A candidate for licensure shall have finished his four year college course and at least two years of his seminary course, or the full equivalent thereof. He shall have maintained due progress in his status as a candidate for the ministry, such as candidates under the care of a presbytery are expected to do, for a sufficient time that the presbytery shall be assured of his progress in the Christian life and his divine vocation to the ministry.

g. The Holy Scriptures require that some trial be previously had of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Gospel, 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 talents of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose presbyteries shall license probationers to preach the Gospel, that, after a competent trial of their talents for a period of time not less than 6 months which shall begin at the time of licensure, unless the presbytery on a three-fourths vote indicates that the candidate has had sufficient experience prior to the time

of licensure. The trial of the individual candidate's talents shall be preferably under the tutelage of an experienced minister appointed by the presbytery, and receiving from the churches a good report, they may, in due time ordain them to the sacred office.

h. The candidate for licensure shall be examined by the presbytery or by a committee appointed for that purpose in English Bible, the inspiration of the Scriptures, systematic theology, church history, and in the original languages of the Scriptures, except that the examination in the languages of Scripture may be waived upon the presentation of a transcript showing that creditable work has been done in these subjects. Every candidate at the time of his examination shall read a brief, written statement of his belief before the presbytery and file the same with the stated clerk. The presbytery shall take account, in its examination of the fact that the candidate is being licensed for a probationary period and may not have completed his seminary training. If one-fourth of the presbyters are dissatisfied with the examination, the candidate, before his licensure, shall be required to undergo an examination again at a future meeting of the presbytery. If one-fourth of the presbyters are still dissatisfied, the candidate may be licensed, but the dissenting presbyters may demand that a written record of the parts of the examination excepted be filed with the clerk of presbytery for consideration at the ordination examination.

i. In order to make trial of his talents to explain and vindicate, and practically to enforce the doctrines of the Gospel, the presbytery shall further require that the candidate for licensure prepare (1) a sermon, which the presbytery may ask to be delivered in its presence, (2) an essay on a theological theme, and (3) an exegesis of the original Hebrew or Greek text of a passage of Scripture. The candidate shall also prepare and submit (4) a written history of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod as one of the parts of trial.

j. If the presbytery be satisfied with the trials of a candidate for licensure, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner:

The candidate having sustained a satisfactory examination and the moderator having offered up a prayer suitable to the occasion, he shall require the candidate to answer the questions appointed in Chapter V, Section 3, Numbers 1-7. He then shall address himself to the candidate in the following purpose: **"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He hath given to the Church for its edification, we having approved of your qualifications by the required examination do license you for a period of two years to preach the Gospel, 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**"; and record shall be made of the licensure in the following or like form; viz.:

At \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. the presbytery of \_\_\_\_\_ having received testimonials in favor of \_\_\_\_\_ of his having gone through a regular course of literature; of his good moral character; and of his being in the fellowship of the Church; proceeded to take the usual parts of trial for his licensure; and he having given satisfaction as to his accomplishments in literature; as to his experimental acquaintance with the gospel; and as to his proficiency in theology and other studies; the presbytery did, and hereby does, express its approbation of all these parts of trial; and he having adopted the Confession of Faith of this Church, and satisfactorily answered the questions appointed to be put to candidates to be licensed; the presbytery did, and hereby does, license, for a period of two years, the said \_\_\_\_\_ to preach the Gospel of Christ as a probationer for the holy ministry, within the bounds of this presbytery, or wherever else he shall be orderly called.

k. When any candidate for licensure shall have occasion, while his trials are going on, to remove from the bounds of his own presbytery into those of another, it shall be considered as regular for the latter presbytery, on his producing proper testimonials from the former, to take up his trials at the point at which they were left, and conduct them to a conclusion, in the same manner as if they had been commenced by itself.

In like manner, when any candidate, after licensure, shall, by the permission of his presbytery, remove without its limits, an extract of the record of his licensure, accompanied with a presbyterial recommendation, signed by the clerk; shall be his testimonials to the presbytery under whose care he shall come.

A person **thus** to be transferred shall be under the supervision of the presbytery of original jurisdiction until notice has been received that he has been accepted in his proper status by the presbytery to which he is transferred.

That there shall be no neglect of details in the supervision of candidates for licensure and of licentiates, it is desirable that blank forms for the transfer of these persons from one presbytery to another be prepared by the synod and used uniformly by all the presbyteries.

l. When the two years to which licensure is limited have expired, if the candidate has not been ordained, the presbytery may extend the

licensure for a period of not more than one year at a time, but if the services of the licentiate do not appear to the presbytery to be edifying to the church or effective in the winning of the lost, the licensure shall not be extended.

m. *Ordination.* A candidate for ordination shall have completed his college and seminary training and shall have received the usual degrees thereupon. The presbytery may, by a three-fourths vote of the members present, make an exception to these academic qualifications, but only if it is the judgment of the presbytery that the candidate has the equivalent of such training.

n. In cases in which it is known that consideration of a candidate not fully qualified is intended, it shall be the duty of the candidates and credentials committee, or of whatever agency of presbytery has duties corresponding to those of such committee, to cause that notice of such intention accompany or be included in the call of the meeting, stated or *pro re nata*, at which such consideration is contemplated.

The candidate for ordination shall have been previously licensed to preach, and shall have satisfied the presbytery not only of his spiritual and academic qualifications, but also of his special gifts of preaching, teaching, shepherding, and soul winning.

o. The examination for ordination shall include any or all of the matters covered in the examination of a candidate for licensure, at the discretion of the presbytery, or the previous examination for licensure, in whole or in part, may be accepted by the presbytery as covering the corresponding portions of the examination for ordination.

In any case the examination for ordination shall include examinations in systematic theology, church sacraments, apologetics, and the history and constitution of this denomination. The presbytery shall make certain that the candidate shall begin his service in the ministry with due appreciation for the importance of the system of doctrine taught in Scriptures as set forth in the subordinate standards of this church.

p. The presbytery, having concluded its examination, a vote shall be taken on a motion to sustain the validity of the examination and authorize the ordination of the candidate at an appropriate time and place. The vote may be taken by roll call and each member of the presbytery may have an opportunity, as his name is called, to give the candidate a word of encouragement and exhortation.

Ordination may be by the presbytery as a whole or by a committee authorized by the presbytery. If the candidate is expected to serve as a

pastor of a particular church his examination shall be concluded and sustained by the presbytery on a day prior to the day on which he is to be installed. It is desirable that his ordination shall be postponed until his call to the said pastorate has been duly processed by the church and by the presbytery or presbyteries involved, and that he be ordained and, at the same meeting, installed as pastor, in the church which he is to serve.

q. The ordination service shall include (1) A sermon or address appropriate to the occasion, (2) Explanation of the nature and importance of ordination to the ministry, (3) Affirmative answers by the candidate to the required questions given in Section A of this chapter, (4) The laying on of the hands of the presbytery with the ordination prayer, and (5) The charge to the newly ordained minister. If the candidate is to be installed as pastor at the same meeting, there shall be included (6) Affirmative replies by the congregation, to the required questions as provided in Section 4 (below) of this chapter, and (7) A charge to the people of the congregation.

The several features of the service shall be assigned to members of the presbytery or to elders or ministers of churches of like faith. The constitutionally required questions shall be propounded by the moderator of the presbytery, if present, or by a duly appointed minister of the presbytery.

r. During the laying on of the hands of the presbytery the candidate shall kneel in an appropriate place and it is desirable that a chair or table be so placed that he may rest his hands upon it. The hands of the presbytery shall be placed upon him during the prayer of ordination. It is appropriate (but not mandatory) that ministers of other presbyteries and of other denominations of like faith be invited to take part in the solemn act of ordination by the laying on of hands. If the number of those participating be large, care should be exercised to avoid unseemly crowding, and those in the outer circle should lay their hands upon the candidate. The sanctity of this act of ordination must be carefully maintained.

At the close of the ordination prayer, the newly ordained minister shall rise, and the ministers participating shall give him the right hand of fellowship, saying words of this purpose, **"We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us."** If it be the custom of the presbytery that the elders who are members participate in the laying on of hands, they shall use words to this purpose, **"As elders we welcome you as a minister to the fellowship of this presbytery."**

At the conclusion of the entire service it is appropriate that the newly ordained minister shall perform the first official act of his ministry, blessing the people in pronouncing the divine benediction.

s. There are cases in which the ordination of a minister is not accompanied by installation in a pastoral charge, as when the candidate expects to serve as a pastor in some remote region, as a foreign missionary, as a missionary in national missions, as a chaplain, as an evangelist, or those whom Presbytery deems of overriding value to the ministry of the Church (as theological teachers, as principal administrators of agencies of the Church or men who serve in some other capacity within the proper scope of the functions of the ministry). In such cases, as provided in Section 3, question (8) of this chapter, the required questions omit reference to installation in the pastorate of particular church, and the ordination service does not include questions to be answered by, or a charge to, the people of a particular congregation. The presbyteries should avoid ordaining men who have no definite prospect of service in any particular field appropriate to the ministry.

6. *Status of the ministry.*

a. At the conclusion of an ordination service the newly ordained minister, without further action by the presbytery, becomes a member thereof, and ceases to be a member of any particular church in this denomination. The clerk of the presbytery shall enroll him among the ministers of the presbytery, and the clerk of session of the particular church of which he was a member shall make the appropriate entry in the records of the church.

b. An ordained minister is at liberty to preach the gospel in any community, but with due respect to the legally constituted authorities responsible for the premises in which he may preach. No minister shall preach or lecture in any church contrary to the orders of the session thereof. All ministers shall carefully avoid stirring up dissension in the flocks of other ministers, nor shall a minister receive secret accusations, which are explicitly forbidden in the scripture. 1 Tim. 5:19. If a minister has reason to fear that a fellow minister is in error, he shall proceed in obedience to the scripture, Gal. 6:1, and shall carefully avoid the sin of the talebearer or the busy-body.

c. A minister shall regularly be a member of the presbytery within whose boundaries he resides. Exceptions shall be subject to the approval of the presbytery. In case of such exceptions, the clerk of the presbytery to which the minister belongs shall notify the clerk of the

presbytery, if any, within whose bounds the minister resides, giving reasons for the exception. Every minister shall be as faithful as possible in attendance at the stated meetings of his presbytery, and those who, with the approval of the presbytery, reside outside of its bounds, shall report to the presbytery at least annually.

d. No ordained minister shall be deposed from the ministry nor shall the name of any minister be removed from the rolls of a presbytery except by his removal to another presbytery or to another ecclesiastical body, by his voluntary demission of the ministry or renouncing the jurisdiction of his presbytery or declaring himself independent, by judicial process in accordance with the book of discipline, or by death.

e. When a minister shall ask to be relieved of the office of the holy minister, the presbytery shall require him to wait one year, and meanwhile shall labor with him diligently to ascertain whether his proposed action is necessary and proper. If at the end of a year his desire is unchanged and the presbytery is satisfied as to the sufficiency of his reasons, the presbytery shall record the facts in its minutes and erase his name from the roll.

f. The example of the apostle Paul in making tents to pay expenses indicates that some degree of secular employment, in cases of necessity, is not inconsistent with the work of the ministry. Moreover, there are instances in which, by reason of age or infirmity, a minister in good standing is unable to perform the duties of the ministry.

If a minister in good standing is not exercising a recognized ministerial function, his presbytery at its discretion may place him on a roll of inactive status of the ministry. While in this status his exercise of the privileges and responsibilities of the teaching elder (sacraments, weddings, voting in presbytery and Synod) is rendered inactive. He may become a member of a local congregation and at its discretion may be elected to and installed in the position of ruling elder. If appointed a delegate from the session to presbytery or Synod he may vote on issues before those courts. If such a man desires to return to the active status of the ministry, he may do so on the basis of an appropriate call and be reinstated after examination by presbytery without the necessity of reordination.

If a minister for a period of two years fails to exercise the functions of the ministry for reasons other than disability, and pursues secular employment without apparent effort to serve as a pastor or in some capacity as a minister, it shall be the duty of the presbytery to take up with him the question whether he should demit the ministry. If he

persists in neglect of the ministry and refuses to demit, the presbytery shall deal with him as provided in the Book of Discipline.

g. When a minister removes from one presbytery to another, he shall apply to the presbytery of which he is a member for formal transfer to the presbytery of his future residence. He shall remain under the jurisdiction of the former presbytery until notice is given of his formal acceptance as a member of the latter, and he shall not be accepted by the presbytery to which he is transferring until he has passed the doctrinal examination.

h. When an ordained minister of another denomination seeks admission to this denomination, the presbytery to which he applies shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications, in regard to piety, faith, and learning, which are demanded of candidates for Section 3 of this chapter.

i. Ministers who are not pastors shall be careful not to neglect attendance at regular services for worship and prayer (Hebrews 10:25) and should be mindful of their example in this regard. They may not vote or hold office in any particular church, except as they may be called upon to serve as moderators. They may advise and assist and serve unofficially in any manner which may seem helpful. Above all they should exercise great care not to undermine the installed pastor, or to be party to any dissaffection.

j. Ministers who are neither pastors nor evangelists/missionaries, but who are biennially recognized by their Presbytery as being engaged in the work of the ministry have exactly the same rank as the pastors in the courts of the Church. There shall be no prelacy, but complete parity of the clergy.

#### 7. *Pastorate.*

a. When a particular church is without a pastor and when the congregation is persuaded of the suitability of a certain licentiate or minister for their pastorate, and when they have reasonable assurance that he would be available if called, then a proper and legal meeting of the congregation shall be called, in accordance with Chapter II for the purpose of issuing a formal call.

b. When the votes are taken, if it appear that a large minority of the people are averse from the candidate who has a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the presiding officer shall endeavor to dissuade the congregation from prosecuting it further. But if the people be nearly, or entirely, unanimous; or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a pastor, the presiding officer, in that case,

shall proceed to draw a call, in due form, and to have it subscribed by the electors or their duly authorized representatives; all which proceedings shall be laid before the presbytery, together with the call. In their voting on a call to a pastor, congregations should consider the wisdom of voting on one candidate at a time.

c. The call shall be in the following or like form:

The congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, \_\_\_\_\_, and having good hopes that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation; promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly care and avocations, we promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ in regular \_\_\_\_\_ payments during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church, with \_\_\_\_\_ vacation each year, and provision for your housing and utilities as follows:

d. If any congregation shall choose to subscribe their call by their elders and deacons, or by a select committee, they shall be at liberty to do so. But it shall, in each case, be fully certified to the presbytery, by the minister who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the congregation; and that the call has been, in all other respects, prepared as above directed.

e. The call shall be executed in duplicate, or, if the minister or licentiate called be in another presbytery, in triplicate. The first copy shall be presented to the presbytery in which the church is situated. The second copy shall be forwarded to the clerk of the presbytery of which the minister or licentiate called is a member, if it be not the same presbytery. The last copy shall be forwarded to the minister or licentiate called.

f. The call is not effective in the securing of a pastor for the church until (1) The presbytery of which the pastor elect is a member has ascertained officially that he wishes to accept the call, (2) has dissolved his existing pastoral relationship, if any, and, if this presbytery be not the presbytery in which the church is situated, (3) it has formally dismissed him to the latter presbytery, and until (4) the pastor elect has been received as a member, or as a licentiate, by the presbytery in which the church is situated and, if not ordained, until (5) he has been examined and (6) ordained, and until (7) he has been officially installed by the presbytery. Ideally, these steps should be taken in the order of (1) to (7).

g. No church should consider a minister of another denomination as a candidate for its pulpit until the presbytery or a committee thereof has determined that his qualifications, convictions, and practices are in harmony with our standards. No church shall call such a pastor from another denomination until the presbytery has approved him and ascertained that he is prepared, if called, to sever his former ecclesiastical connections and apply for membership in the presbytery in which the church is situated. The presbytery has no jurisdiction over the severance of the former connections, except to make sure that orderly procedure is followed and that no scandal or reproach attaches thereto. The direct jurisdiction of the presbytery with reference to the candidate begins when the candidate applies for membership in the presbytery.

h. In the installation of a pastor ordained on a previous occasion, after a sermon by a minister appointed for the purpose, the candidate, in addition to ordination vows previously taken, shall make affirmative reply to the following questions:

(1) Are you now willing to take the responsibilities of a pastor for this congregation, agreeably to your declaration when you accepted its call, and do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them, as God gives you strength?

(Answer: "I am willing, and I do so promise.")

(2) Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and the good of his Church?

(Answer: "I do so believe and declare.")

(3) Do you solemnly promise, that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeably to your ordination engagements?

(Answer: "I do so promise.")

i. The people of the congregation shall, by voice or by the uplifted hand, make affirmative reply to the following questions:

(1) Do you the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive \_\_\_\_\_ whom you have called to be your minister?

(Answer if by voice: "We do.")

(2) Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth, with meekness and love; and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God, and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?

(Answer if by voice: "We do.")

(3) Do you promise to encourage him in his labor, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?

(Answer if by voice: "We do.")

(4) And do you engage to continue with him, while he is your pastor, that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised; and whatever else you may see needful for the honor of religion, and his comfort among you?

(Answer if by voice: "We do.")

The required questions being satisfactorily answered, a representative of the presbytery shall declare, in the name of the presbytery, that the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ is now duly installed as pastor of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

It is desirable that this declaration be followed by a charge to the pastor, and a charge to the people, delivered by persons appointed for the purpose.

It is highly becoming, that, after the installation, the heads of families of that congregation who are then present, or at least the elders and deacons, should come forward to their pastor, and give him their right hand in token of cordial reception and affectionate regard.

When any minister shall desire leave to resign his pastoral charge, the presbytery shall cite the congregation to appear, by its commissioners, at its next meeting, to show cause why the presbytery should not accept the resignation. If the congregation fail to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed by the presbytery insufficient, he shall have leave granted to resign his pastoral charge, of which due record shall be made; and that church shall be held to be vacant, till supplied again, in an orderly manner, with another minister; and if any congregation shall desire to be released from its pastor, a similar process, *mutatis mutandis*, shall be observed.

### *Ruling Elders and Deacons*

8. The *qualifications* of both teaching elders and ruling elders are outlined in the scriptures, especially in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The designation "ruling elders" as distinguishing elders who are not ministers from "teaching elders" (1 Tim. 5:17, 18) or ministers, is based on the word *kuberneseis*, translated "governments," in 1 Cor. 12:28. It is appropriate that laymen, ordained to the eldership, should have a certain "ruling" or "governing" authority in the particular church, since they are chosen from the people indigenous to the parish, to represent the people in the session and in the higher judicatories.

The official authority of the elders is exercised in the session, and not individually, except as authorized by the session; but an elder not currently serving on the session is still an elder, and may serve as an elder as provided in Chapter II of this Form of Government. No elder may be divested of his standing as an elder except by judicial process in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

9. *The office of deacon.*

The office of deacon was instituted in the early church, as recorded in Acts 6:1-6, and the qualifications for the office are outlined in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. The functions of a deacon are performed through the board of deacons and not individually except as authorized by the board. A deacon not currently serving on the board of deacons does not cease to be a deacon, and one cannot be deprived of the office except by judicial process in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

10. *Ordination.* When elected to serve as an elder or deacon as provided in Chapter II of this Form of Government, if not ordained, the elder or deacon elect shall be ordained in the following manner:

a. At an appropriate time in the public service of worship the minister shall call the elder or deacon elect to the front of the sanctuary and, in the presence of the other elders or deacons in the congregation, if any, shall briefly explain the nature and the scriptural basis of the office of elder or deacon. The minister shall then propound to the elder or deacon elect the following questions:

(See Section 3 of this chapter.)

b. The elder or deacon elect having replied in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following questions:

Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God, and the constitution of this Church, entitles him?

c. These questions being answered by the people in the affirmative by voice or by the uplifted hand, the minister shall set apart the candidate to the office of elder or deacon by a prayer of ordination. It is appropriate, but not mandatory, that the candidate shall kneel and that the minister and elders shall lay their hands upon the candidate during the ordination prayer.

d. At the close of the ordination prayer the minister shall give to the newly ordained elder or deacon and to the congregation a word of exhortation appropriate to the occasion, and the other elders or deacons in the congregation, if any, shall take the newly ordained elder or deacon by the hand, saying words to this purpose, "**We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part of this office with us.**"

#### 11. *Trustees.*

If, as provided in Chapter II a particular church has trustees who are not elders or deacons, it is requisite that such trustees be communicant members of the congregation, men of established Christian character, and that they shall give public credible affirmative answer to the required questions given in Division A of this chapter.

## Chapter VI

### AMENDMENTS

1. Amendments or alterations to the Form of Government (except as provided in Section 2 of this chapter), Book of Discipline, and Directory for Worship may be made only in the following manner: the synod, after due discussion, may propose changes to the presbyteries, but they shall not be regarded as having constitutional validity until they have been approved in writing by a majority of presbyteries before the next ensuing synod: and it shall be the duty of the next ensuing synod to declare that such changes have been adopted and are in effect. This does not apply to Chapter II, Section 8, paragraphs a, b, and c of this Form of Government, which are unamendable. Presbyteries may overture the Synod to send down suggested amendments to the Constitution.

2. Amendments or alterations of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and of the forms of subscription required of ministers, licentiates ruling elders, and deacons, as these forms are found in the Form of Government, shall not be regarded as having constitutional validity unless sent down to the presbyteries by a two-thirds vote of the synod, approved by two thirds vote of the presbyteries in writing, and finally adopted by a two-thirds vote of the synod next ensuing. Before any of the changes described in this section are proposed to the presbyteries, the synod shall appoint a committee to consider the proposed changes and to report to the next synod.

3. No judicatory has the right to set aside any part of the FOG unless and until the majority of the presbyteries has voted to set aside that particular provision in question and the next ensuing Synod has declared such changes to have been adopted and are in effect.