

Constitutional Documents
of
The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church

- **Form of Government**
- **Book of Discipline**
- **Suggested Forms**
- **Directory for Public Worship**

Including amendments through July 19, 2008

THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

P. O. Box 2383
Westminster, Maryland 21158
888-368-4351
www.erpchurch.org

**FORM OF GOVERNMENT
OF
THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Adopted June 25, 2005

As Amended through July 19, 2007

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CHAPTER 1
ARTICLES OF ALLIANCE

Preamble

The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church

- is an *Alliance*. We are an association of churches of like precious faith.¹
- is *Evangelical*. We associate for the purpose of evangelism, the proclamation of the one true Gospel of Jesus Christ.²
- is *Reformed*. We are an association of those who believe in the full authority of Scripture, and who hold to the historic Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms³ as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures.
- is *Presbyterian*. We are an association of churches who subscribe to the Presbyterian form of church government.

Affirmations

We unite based on the following affirmations:

- 1.) We are united in submission to the inspired and inerrant Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are the only authoritative rule of faith and practice given by Christ to His Church. We are united in the belief that the only infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.⁴
- 2.) We are united for the purpose of Christian fellowship in the communion of saints.⁵
- 3.) We are united in doctrine, each minister and elder of this church subscribing to grammatical-historical principles for the interpretation of Scripture, and subscribing, without reservation,

1. 2 Peter 1:1.

2. Romans 1:16-17.

3. The ERPC will use the American version of the Confession and Catechisms adopted by the first American Presbyterian Assembly of 1789.

4. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

5. Ephesians 2:8-9; 4:1-6.

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to the plain and normal meaning of the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.⁶

- 4.) We are united in carrying out the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel to all mankind.⁷
- 5.) We are united in our belief that the covenant of grace is the Gospel and that the sacraments are only symbols (that is, signs and seals) of the Gospel.⁸
- 6.) We are united in our belief that God justifies sinners at conversion by grace alone, through faith alone apart from works, in Christ alone, and that this faith itself is the gift of God;⁹ that believers' sins are imputed to Christ, and the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to them;¹⁰ that believers are acceptable to God not on account of the worthiness of their faith or any righteousness of their own, but because only the righteousness of Christ constitutes their righteousness before God, and it cannot be received or applied to them any other way than by believing on Christ.¹¹
- 7.) We are united in our conviction that the Gospel should be fervently proclaimed in preaching to the end that souls may be saved, congregations established, Christians built up in our most holy faith, backsliders reclaimed, and the careless warned.¹²
- 8.) We are united in our conviction that the Gospel is to be freely offered to all men.¹³ The free offer of the Gospel does not entail universal salvation, nor is it contrary to the doctrine of man's total inability to save himself, nor is it contrary to the doctrine of God's complete

6. Romans 12:6; 2 Corinthians 1:18-20; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

7. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Matthew 16:18.

8. Romans 6:3-5; Ephesians 1-2; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

9. Romans 3:10-4:12; Titus 3:5-6; Galatians 2:16.

10. 2 Corinthians 5:21.

11. Isaiah 61:10; John 3:18 and 3:36; Romans 3:22-28, 4:1-8, 5:1-20, & 8:28-39; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Galatians 3:1-13; Ephesians 1:13-2:10; Philippians 3:9; Titus 3:5-11; Hebrews 10:11-39; Revelation 19:5-8.

12. 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2.

13. Deuteronomy 5:29, 32:29; Psalm 81:13-16; Isaiah 45:22, 48:18; Ezekiel 18:23, 18:32, 33:9-11; Matthew 5:44-48, 11:28, 23:37; Luke 13:34; John 3:16, 6:37; 7:37; Acts 14:17, 17:30; Romans 10; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 22:17.

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sovereignty in salvation.¹⁴ The free offer of the Gospel is God's means of calling His people to repentance,¹⁵ and the rejection of the Gospel offer is also the condemnation of the lost.¹⁶

- 9.) We are united in maintaining reverence in the worship of the Lord, and a godly and dignified manner of worship, based upon the regulative principle, as taught in the Bible and affirmed in the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹⁷
- 10.) We are united in the conviction that the association of local congregations within the presbyterian Form of Government is a voluntary relationship, based upon love and mutual confidence under the authority of the Word of God and the headship of Jesus Christ, and is never to be maintained through force or coercion. We are further united in the belief that local congregations delegate limited powers to the wider assemblies (presbyteries and synods) of the church through its Constitution, and that all powers not specifically granted to those assemblies are reserved to the local congregations.¹⁸
- 11.) We are united in our belief that the Scriptures teach that the true Church of Jesus Christ bears these three marks: the faithful proclamation of the one true Gospel;¹⁹ the faithful administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper;²⁰ and the faithful administration of godly discipline.²¹
- 12.) We are united for the purpose of providing pastoral guidance and assistance to any congregation that requests such help.²²
- 13.) We affirm that the Scriptures teach that the heavens and the earth were created in six literal and contiguous twenty-four hour days, and that the Scriptures teach a recent origin for the entire creation.²⁴

14. John 6:44, 6:65; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:6-7, 9:6-18, 11:7-8; 2 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14-16, 4:3-4; Ephesians 1:3-14, 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29.

15. Matthew 24:14; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:46-47, Romans 1:16.

16. John 3:18-21; Romans 10:16.

17. Exodus 20:1& 2; Deuteronomy 4:2 & 12:32; 1 Samuel 15:19-23.

18. Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:15-19; Matthew 28:18; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

19. Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 1:6-9.

20. Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 6:3-4; Ephesians 4:4-6; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

21. Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 5:20, 6:3-5; Titus 2:15, 3:10-11; 2 John 10-11; Jude 22-23.

22. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3.

24. Genesis 1; Exodus 20:8-11; John 5:46-47.

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- 14.) We affirm that the Scriptures teach that charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and new prophetic revelations, ceased at the end of the apostolic period and are not operative in the church today.²⁶
- 15.) We affirm that the Scriptures teach that it is not permissible to ordain women to the office of minister, elder, or deacon.²⁷
- 16.) We affirm that the Scriptures teach that homosexuality is a sin and an abomination before God.²⁸ We also affirm the teaching of Scripture that homosexuals who come to repentance and faith in Christ by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit receive God's forgiveness, and that they will also be empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life and to obey God's command to forsake the lusts of the flesh.²⁹
- 17.) We affirm that the Scriptures teach that life begins at conception, and that while it is not un-Biblical to avoid conception it is sinful to destroy human life once conceived, and that all reasonable measures should be taken to both preserve and protect it.³⁰ Therefore, we oppose abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and medical research that involves the destruction of human life.

Denials

We are united in the denial of the following teachings, which we believe are not permitted by the Word of God:

- 1.) We deny interpretations of Biblical law which teach that
 - a.) the civil magistrate is to serve as the enforcer of man's duty toward God in the first four of the Ten Commandments, or to exercise any other ecclesiastical authority;³¹
 - b.) the ceremonial law given to Israel is in any way binding upon Christ's church today;³² or that

26. Ephesians 3:5; Colossians 1:25-26; 1 Corinthians 13:8; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18-19.

27. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:7; Titus 1:5-9.

28. Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:27.

29. Hebrews 7:25; Galatians 5:16-25.

30. Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17; Deuteronomy 27:25; Psalm 22:10, 139:13-16; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

31. Acts 5:26-29.

32. Hebrews 9:6-12.

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- c.) the judicial law given to the nation of Israel is in any way binding upon mankind today, except to the extent that “the general equity thereof may require” (WCF XIX:4).³³
- 2.) We deny the teaching and practice of paedocommunion, that is, the administration of the Lord’s Supper to children who are not yet of an age to be able to understand the significance of the sacrament, and have not yet made a public confession of faith in Christ.³⁴
- 3.) We deny interpretations of the doctrine of justification which teach that
 - a.) justification is anything other than a one-time judicial act of God by which the sinner is declared not guilty based on the merits of Christ’s righteousness alone,³⁵
 - b.) justification is not complete and final at the conversion of the sinner,³⁶ or that
 - c.) justification is in any manner dependent upon the believer’s good works.³⁷
- 4.) We deny the teaching that Scripture permits membership or involvement in any secret society.³⁸

CHAPTER 2
THE CONSTITUTION DEFINED

- 1.) The Constitution of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church shall comprise the following:
 - a.) The Holy Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are the only authoritative rule of faith and practice given by Christ to His Church;
 - b.) The *Doctrinal Standards* of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, consisting of the American version of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism, subordinate to the Holy Scriptures, as adopted by the first American Presbyterian Assembly of 1789, including their proof texts;

33. Exodus 21:1-23:19; Gen. 49:10 with 1 Peter 2:13-14; I Corinthians 9:8-10.

34. 1 Corinthians 11:23-32.

35. Isaiah 53:11; Jeremiah 23:6, Romans 5:17-19; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

36. Acts 13:38-39; Romans 4:22-5:2, 8:31-35.

37. Ephesians 2:7-9; Philippians 3:9; Titus 3:5-7.

38. 1 Corinthians 7:23; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:22

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- c.) This *Form of Government* of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, subordinate to the Scriptures;
 - d.) The *Book of Discipline* of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, subordinate to the Scriptures; and
 - e.) The *Book of Worship* of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, subordinate to the Scriptures.
- 2.) In the Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Book of Worship, wherever the term “this church” or the abbreviation “ERPC” is used, it shall be understood to mean The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church. Whenever the word “Church” is capitalized, it shall be understood to mean the true Church of Jesus Christ consisting of all true believers in Him from the beginning of time to the end of the ages.

CHAPTER 3

JESUS CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

- 1.) Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Its government is upon the shoulders of the One whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. It is He who sits upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth, even for ever.
- 2.) It is He to whom all power has been given in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, far above all principalities and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. The Father has put all things under His feet, and has given Christ to be alone the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.
- 3.) Jesus Christ, being ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, gave gifts of men to His Church for her edification, and for the perfecting of His saints.³⁹

CHAPTER 4

OF THE CHURCH

- 1.) Jesus Christ, who is now exalted far above all principality and power has erected, in this world, a visible body which is His Church.

39. Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23, 4:8-11.

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- 2.) The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true faith, together with their children. The invisible Church consists of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning of time to the end of the ages.
- 3.) The visible Church has, in God's providence, become divided into bodies commonly termed denominations or churches. Such bodies whether local, national, or international, which in their belief and practice hold fast to the historic Christian faith, which require for admission into their communion what Christ requires for salvation, and which subordinate their authority to that of the Word of God, are true churches of Christ, despite differences in government or in matters not essential to the faith which may have caused their separation from others.
- 4.) The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church declares itself to be a branch of the visible Church of Christ and further declares its willingness to hold Christian fellowship with all other such branches of the Church.
- 5.) It is fitting and agreeable to the Word of God that members of Christ's body on earth should, as local circumstances require, be divided into particular congregations. A particular congregation consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, voluntarily associated together, for divine worship and godly living, in agreement with Holy Scripture; and submitting to a certain Form of Government.
- 6.) A communicant member of this church is a baptized individual who has made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and has been received into the membership of a particular congregation. Communicant members are entitled to all the rights and privileges conferred on them by the by-laws of the particular congregation, and to all of the rights conferred by the Constitution of this church guaranteeing individuals access to the courts of the church. The rights conferred to individuals under the Constitution of this church may not be abrogated by the by-laws or actions of any other body of this church.
- 7.) The children of believers, by right of being born into covenant relationship, are non-communicant members of this church. The covenant relationship is not an instrument of salvation. Non-communicant members are entitled to the sacrament of baptism and to the pastoral care, government and nurture of this church with a view to their making a personal and public profession of faith in Christ, and entering communicant membership.
- 8.) It is highly desirable and the teaching of the Word that particular congregations should be associated together with others of like precious faith for mutual fellowship, encouragement, advancement of the cause of Christ, and testimony to His truth.

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CHAPTER 5
CONCERNING PARTICULAR CONGREGATIONS

- 1.) Particular congregations of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church shall be such bodies as are defined in Chapter 4 which desire to enter the fellowship of this branch of Christ's body. Entrance into the ERPC is by means of the presbytery. See Chapter 6, *Concerning Joining and Withdrawing of Congregations*.
- 2.) Particular congregations need remain in association with The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church only so long as they themselves 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 congregation may withdraw at any time for reasons which seem sufficient to itself. See Chapter 6, *Concerning Joining and Withdrawing of Congregations*.
- 3.) The ordinances established in the Bible by Christ, the Head, for use by a particular congregation are: prayer; singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God; evangelism; administering baptism and the Lord's Supper; public solemn thanksgiving; catechizing; making collections for the poor and other pious purposes; exercising discipline; and blessing the people.⁴⁰
- 4.) A particular congregation may establish, in accordance with its by-laws and in addition to its session and board of deacons, standing committees to accomplish its work and ministry.

CHAPTER 6
**CONCERNING JOINING AND WITHDRAWING
OF CONGREGATIONS**

- 1.) The organization of a new particular congregation is a local matter. It is the express desire of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church under this Form of Government that, as the Lord shall raise up a company of believers in a particular locale and provide the means to do so, the sessions of existing congregations should both spiritually and materially aid the organization of new congregations that will affiliate with the ERPC.
- 2.) A new or existing congregation desiring to affiliate with the ERPC shall make written application to a presbytery through the session of an existing congregation, or directly to the clerk of the nearest presbytery.

40. Psalm 50:14; Matthew 18:15-18; 28:19; Luke 22:19; Acts 1:14, 2:38, 2:42, 10:47, 11:29, 13:49, 18:11; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:23-26, 16:1; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:20, 5:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; Hebrews 13:20-21.

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- 3.) It is the responsibility of the sponsoring session (or the clerk receiving an application) to inform the presbytery of the application.
- 4.) The presbytery shall appoint an *ad hoc* committee or a congregational session to examine the petitioning congregation. Such examination will entail the following points:
 - a.) Is it the will of the local session and congregation to affiliate with the ERPC?
 - b.) Do all of the officers of the congregation fully subscribe to the Constitution of the ERPC, including its Doctrinal Standards, Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Book of Worship?
 - c.) Are the members of the congregation willing to be governed by the Constitution of the ERPC?
 - d.) Are the members of the congregation, both corporately and individually, conducting themselves and the ministries of the church in submission to the Scriptures?
- 5.) The examining session or *ad hoc* committee shall present its findings in writing to the presbytery before the presbytery votes on whether or not to receive the congregation.
- 6.) The presbytery shall examine the minister (or ministers) for ordination within, or transfer of his ministerial credentials to, the ERPC.
- 7.) After the presbytery has received the report of the examining session or *ad hoc* committee, and has examined the minister(s) of the applying congregation, the presbytery may vote on the congregation's application for affiliation. A three-fourths majority vote is required to approve the receiving of a new congregation. The presbytery shall inform the congregation of the results of its vote in writing within seven (7) days.
- 8.) When the presbytery has approved the application of a particular congregation, it shall appoint an *ad hoc* committee to make arrangements jointly with the session of the congregation, for a public meeting for the purpose of formally receiving the congregation into the ERPC. The chairman of the committee, who shall be an ordained minister, shall preside at that meeting.
- 9.) At the time agreed upon, a service of public worship shall be conducted, during which it is appropriate that a sermon be preached concerning the doctrine of the Church and the duties of its members.
 - a.) After public worship, the presiding minister appointed by the presbytery shall determine that a quorum of at least half of the communicant members of the congregation who are eligible to vote under its bylaws, are present. He shall then call upon the congregation to enter into affiliation with the ERPC by answering affirmatively the following question, either by voice, by uplifted hand, or by standing:

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"Do you, in reliance on God's grace, solemnly promise that you will walk together as a particular congregation, under the authority of the only Head of the Church, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, according to Word of God, and according to the Constitution of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church?"

b.) Upon the affirmative answer of the congregation, the presiding minister shall then say:

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the Presbytery, I now declare that you are constituted a particular congregation of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church."

c.) The presiding minister, and the minister of the congregation, shall both lead the people in prayer. The minister of the congregation shall pronounce the apostolic benediction.

10.) Any congregation may withdraw from affiliation with the ERPC at any time for reasons sufficient to itself. The session of the congregation desiring to withdraw shall notify the clerk of the presbytery and the sessions of all congregations in the presbytery of its intention no less than forty-five (45) days before the specified date of withdrawal. This notification shall specify the date on which the withdrawal is to take place, and shall state the reason(s) for withdrawal. Other members of the presbytery may seek to dissuade the congregation intending to withdraw, but this is not to be done by means of force or coercion, but only by loving entreaty. It is suggested that this entreaty be made through a meeting with the congregation, session, or both. If a congregation remains determined to withdraw, after the date of its withdrawal the congregation may no longer use the name Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER 7
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF
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- 1.) As its name indicates, the government of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church is presbyterian in form. The name presbyterian comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning "elder." In the context of the New Testament this term entails the Scriptural qualifications and duties of the officers of Christ's Church, and the distinction of governing bodies, also termed the courts of the church. The presbyterian form provides for church government by elders, who are set apart for their office under the authority of Christ the Head of the Church. The presbyterian form emphasizes representative rule by the elders who are elected by the people of a particular congregation.
- 2.) The courts of the church are the session, presbytery, and synod. The session, which is made up of elected teaching elders (ministers) and ruling elders, governs the particular congregation. Having the wider jurisdiction over several particular congregations is the

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presbytery, which includes all ordained ministers or teaching elders, as well as representative ruling elders, from each congregation in a district. Having wider jurisdiction over the presbyteries is the synod, consisting of representative ministers and ruling elders from each of the presbyteries.

- 3.) The presbyterian form of church government has its basis in the Scriptures of the New Testament. There were elders in Jerusalem,⁴¹ in Ephesus,⁴² and in Philippi.⁴³ Elders are also referred to as overseers, from the Greek *episkopos*, meaning bishop or overseer.⁴⁴ The Scriptures state the qualifications of elders.⁴⁵ Elders were appointed in every church.⁴⁶ Elders were responsible to feed and care for the flock.⁴⁷ The elders of the Judean church received the gift sent to them by the hands of Barnabas and Paul.⁴⁸ Scripture distinguishes the offices of elder (overseer) and deacon.⁴⁹ Scripture also distinguishes teaching elders (that is, pastors or ministers of the Gospel) within the general classification of ruling elders.⁵⁰ A presbytery (Greek *presbuterion*, or body of elders) ordained Timothy to the ministry.⁵¹ The elders of the church met as a church-wide body or synod, to consider matters of concern to the church at large.⁵²
- 4.) After centuries of neglect, the presbyterian form of church government was re-instituted by John Calvin in Geneva in 1542. Churchmen from other countries who studied in Geneva during that time, including Scotland's John Knox, developed a strong attachment to the principles of presbyterian government. Knox, upon his return to Scotland in 1560, adapted presbyterian church government for Scottish purposes in the first Book of Discipline, which became the basis for the government of the subsequent Church of Scotland, and for the government of all those denominations having their roots in the Reformation Church of that country. Andrew Melville's second Book of Discipline, ratified in 1581, brought presbyterian government closer to its present form. The Westminster Assembly, which met in London in

41. Acts 11:30; Acts 15:2-4.

42. Acts 20:17-28.

43. Philippians 1:1.

44. Acts 20:17 and 28.

45. 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:1-5.

46. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.

47. 1 Peter 5:1-5, James 5:14.

48. Acts 11:30.

49. Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1 and 8.

50. Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:7.

51. 1 Timothy 4:14.

52. Acts chapters 15 and 21.

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1643, wrote, in addition to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, which was subsequently adopted in England, Ireland, and Scotland.

- 5.) Almighty God in His providence has permitted that different portions of His Church should be governed in various ways, and has blessed bodies differently governed as His fruitful branches. Rejoicing in this fact, and in no wise casting aspersions upon bodies differently governed, we believe that government by presbyters is founded upon and in accordance with the Word of God and the practice of the Church from its earliest times, and is highly useful for the order of Christ's church.
- 6.) The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church seeks to establish and maintain a simplicity of presbyterian church government, in which Christ shall have the preeminence in all things,⁵³ and in which those who hold office in the church shall not act as lords over those entrusted to their care, but as examples to the flock of God, clothed with humility.⁵⁴
- 7.) We believe that government by two kinds of presbyters, ministers and ruling elders, who are to be joined in the oversight of the Church, is founded upon and in accordance with the Word of God.
- 8.) Believing that synods and councils as set forth in our Confession of Faith are founded upon and in accordance with the Word of God, and believing further that, when Scripturally conducted, such courts are an aid to the faith and life of the flock of Christ, we authorize the spiritual government of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church by sessions, presbyteries, and synods, which are to be composed only of presbyters.
- 9.) These courts shall not possess any civil jurisdiction, nor may they inflict any civil penalties. Their power is wholly moral and spiritual, and declarative of the Word of God. They possess the right of requiring obedience to the commands of Christ and of excluding offenders against Him from the privileges of the Church, but only in such manner and to such extent as is specifically authorized by the Word of God and the Constitution of this church.
- 10.) The ordinary and perpetual officers in this church are Ministers, Ruling Elders, and Deacons.
- 11.) The ERPC affirms the authority of local sessions and congregations to order their many diverse affairs in their own manner, consistent with the Holy Scriptures and the Constitution of this church. Recognizing this, it is consistent with this Form of Government that individual particular congregations have standing rules, by-laws or other forms of constitutional rule for the administration of their affairs, which in certain cases will surpass the minimum requirements of this Form of Government. In these cases, the wider courts of the church will not interfere with the application of these forms of constitutional rule by the local session or congregation.

53. Colossians 1:18.

54. 1 Peter 5:3-5.

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CHAPTER 8
OF MINISTERS

- 1.) The person who fills the office of minister 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.⁵⁵ As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor.⁵⁶ As he serves Christ in His Church, he is termed minister.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ As he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.⁶⁰ In humility he is the servant of Christ,⁶¹ separated unto the Gospel of God.⁶²
- 2.) The Holy Scriptures require that all ministers be men.⁶³
- 3.) The minister and his wife are to be members of the local congregation with all rights and privileges granted to other communicant members of that congregation.
- 4.) In order that the orthodoxy and distinctives of this church shall be uniformly maintained, all men who are not ordained officers of this church, who are engaged to provide pulpit supply for mission congregations, shall be required to sign the following statement before being permitted to supply the pulpit. As indicated in Section 11.3.d, this requirement does not apply to a particular congregation with a functioning session.

“I hereby state:

- a.) that I subscribe, without reservation or exception, to the Affirmations and Denials contained in chapter one of the Form of Government of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, and

55. Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7

56. Ephesians 4:11

57. Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 3:5, 4:1, 3:6, 6:4; Ephesians 3:7, Colossians 1:7, 1:23-25;
1 Thessalonians 3:2

58. Acts 14:23, 15:6, 15:22-23; 1 Timothy 5:17

59. 2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20

60. 1 Corinthians 4:1

61. Acts 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:24

62. Romans 1:1

63. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:7; Titus 1:5-9.

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b.) that in my service as pulpit supply to its mission churches and affiliated congregations I will uphold these positions, and will teach nothing contrary to them.”

This signed statement shall be held in the records of the appropriate court of the church by its Stated Clerk.

**CHAPTER 9
OF RULING ELDERS**

- 1.) Ruling elders are the particular representatives of the people, chosen by them from their own number, for the purpose of joining with the ministers in the government and discipline of the Church. This office is recognized in Holy Scripture.⁶⁴
- 2.) Those ordained to the office of ruling elder shall be men of wisdom, discretion, sound faith, and godly life, and who are qualified according to the standards recorded in the Scriptures.
- 3.) Ruling elders are, both individually and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their charge, so that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enters into it. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular congregation, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, encourage the weak, guide the wayward and the careless, comfort the mourner, and nourish and guard the children of the Church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon elders by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.
- 4.) The Holy Scriptures require that all ruling elders be men.⁶⁵

**CHAPTER 10
OF DEACONS**

- 1.) The office of deacon as set forth in the Scriptures is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus. It expresses also the communion of the saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need.

64. Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:17-19.

65. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:7; Titus 1:5-9.

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- 2.) Those chosen for the office of deacon shall be men of godly character, honest repute, exemplary life, brotherly love, sympathetic nature, and sound judgment, and who are qualified according to the standards recorded in the Scriptures.
- 3.) It is the duty of the deacons to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. It is their duty also to develop the grace of liberality in the members of the church, to devise effective methods of collecting the material and monetary gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts according to the purposes for which they are contributed. Unless otherwise specified in the by-laws of the particular congregation, deacons shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation in proper repair. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the congregation, they cannot take final action without the approval of the session and consent of the congregation.
- 4.) In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the session. In a congregation in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.
- 5.) The Holy Scriptures require that all deacons be men.⁶⁶

CHAPTER 11
OF THE CHURCH SESSION

- 1.) The church session consists of the minister or ministers and the active ruling elders of a particular congregation. A session shall consist of no less than one minister and one active ruling elder. It is desirable, however, that there be at least two ruling elders on each session. In a session having more than ten active ruling elders, four of them plus the pastor shall constitute a quorum; if there are five to nine active ruling elders, three of them plus the pastor shall constitute a quorum; if there are less than five active ruling elders, two of them plus the pastor shall constitute a quorum; if there are two or fewer ruling elders, one ruling elder plus the pastor shall constitute a quorum. If there is no pastor, the requirement that a minister be part of the quorum shall be satisfied under section five of this chapter. If a congregation has fewer than two active ruling elders, the requirements that a session have at least two ruling elders shall be satisfied under section six of this chapter.
- 2.) However, any session, by a majority vote of its members, may fix its own quorum, or a congregation may regulate quorum requirements by their own by-laws or other constitutional documents, provided that they are not smaller than the quorums stated in section one of this chapter.

66. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-36; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:7; Titus 1:5-9.

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- 3.) The church session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has the power:
- a.) To inquire into the spiritual knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the people of the congregation under its care; to censure those found delinquent; to see that parents do not neglect to present their children for baptism; to receive members into the communion of the congregation; to remove them for just cause; to grant letters of dismissal to other congregations, which when given to parents, shall always include the names of their non-communing, baptized children;
 - b.) To examine, ordain, and install ruling elders and deacons upon their election by the congregation, and to require these officers to devote themselves to their work; to examine the records of the proceedings of the deacons;
 - c.) To call congregational meetings when necessary; to establish and oversee all ministries of the local congregation; to establish and oversee all special ministry groups in the congregation such as men's, women's, or special Bible study groups; to promote obedience to the Great Commission at home and abroad; to order collections of monies and goods for pious uses;
 - d.) To exercise, in accordance with the Constitution of this church, authority over the time and place of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, over all other religious services, over the music in the services, and over the uses to which the church building and associated properties may be put; to ensure that the services of the church are conducted only by such men as are sufficiently qualified; to ensure that the Word of God is preached only by such men as are sufficiently qualified; to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to determine the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation;
 - e.) To observe and carry out the lawful actions of the wider courts of the church as they may affect the particular congregation; and to appoint representatives to the wider courts of the church, who shall, on their return, make a report of their service.
 - f.) To ensure the proper observance of the Lord's Supper, and to ensure the Biblical explanation of the significance of the Table. Additionally, they are to guard against anyone partaking in an unworthy manner, or the partaking of the Supper by children who are not yet of an age to be able to understand the significance of the sacrament, or have not yet made a public confession of faith in Christ. The practical means available to the session for guarding the Lord's Table may include an exhortation to the congregation concerning their approach to the Lord's Table, or the examination of visitors, members, and those attending regularly. It is the intention of the Form of Government that the session should permit and encourage all present who profess faith in Christ alone for their personal salvation, who are not otherwise disqualified, to partake of the Lord's Supper.

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- 4.) It is advisable that the pastor of the congregation shall be the moderator of the session. However, it shall be up to the individual session or the constitutional documents of the congregation to determine this matter.
- 5.) It is necessary, at every meeting of the session, that there be a minister in attendance.
 - a.) When, therefore, a congregation is without a pastor, the session shall be augmented by either:
 - i.) a minister of the ERPC in good standing invited by the local session, or
 - ii.) a minister of the ERPC appointed by the presbytery at the request of the local session.
 - b.) For purposes of points i.) and ii.) above, a minister shall be considered in attendance when participating in the meeting for its full duration via telephone conference call or other real-time means of communication.
 - c.) Where distance or other hindrances necessitate, a minister of another church body who is approved by the presbytery for this purpose may provide this ministerial oversight.
 - d.) Where it is impracticable, without great inconvenience, to procure the attendance of such a minister, the session may proceed informally without it, any action taken at such an informal meeting being subject to ratification at a duly constituted meeting.
- 6.) When a session has less than one ruling elder, the session may be augmented by either:
 - a.) a ruling elder in good standing from another congregation of the ERPC invited by the local session, or
 - b.) a ruling elder from another congregation of the ERPC appointed by the presbytery at the request of the local session.
 - c.) For purposes of points (a) or (b) a ruling elder augmenting the local session shall be considered in attendance when participating in the meeting for its full duration via telephone conference call or other real-time means of communication.
 - d.) Where distance or other hindrances necessitate, a ruling elder of another church body who is approved by the presbytery for this purpose may augment the session.
- 7.) All session meetings in which judicial matters governed by the Book of Discipline shall be discussed or decided shall have a minister physically in attendance, not via telephone conferencing or other means.
- 8.) If no standing rules or by-laws regulate the convening of the session, the pastor has power to convene the session when he may judge it necessary; and he shall always convene the session

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when requested to do so by any two of the elders. It is advisable for congregations or sessions to develop standing rules or by-laws governing the calling of special session meetings.

- 9.) Session meetings shall be held at least once a quarter.
- 10.) Every session shall keep a clear written record of its proceedings. All ministers and ruling elders of the particular congregation shall have access to all records of the session. Sessional records are subject to review by the presbytery upon the request of any member of the session, or upon request by a majority vote of the congregation.
- 11.) Every session shall keep registers or rolls of the members of the congregation, both of believers and of their baptized children; of suspensions from the Lord's Table; of the deaths and other removals of church members. The names of members shall be placed upon or removed from the rolls of the church only by order of the session.

CHAPTER 12
OF THE PRESBYTERY

- 1.) A presbytery consists of all the ministers of the ERPC, in good standing, living within a certain district. In addition, it consists of the ruling elders regularly elected by each congregation within that district as their commissioned representatives.
- 2.) A presbytery may be established in a given district with a minimum of two participating particular congregations.
- 3.) Presbyteries are established by the authority of the General Synod. Until a General Synod is established the founding presbytery shall determine the establishment of a second presbytery.
- 4.) The Presbytery shall be responsible to:
 - a.) Proclaim and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, with particular attention to its proclamation within the boundaries of its jurisdiction;
 - b.) Promote the spiritual health and vitality of every congregation within its boundaries; and
 - c.) Protect the orthodoxy of the member congregations within its jurisdiction.
- 5.) The Presbytery has power to:
 - a.) Examine and license ministerial candidates for service within Christ's church;
 - b.) Ordain ministers of the Gospel;
 - c.) Receive new congregations;

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- d.) Resolve all questions of doctrine or discipline brought before it, in a timely and orderly manner, condemning those opinions injurious to sound doctrine;
 - e.) Maintain theological discipline, consistent with the Holy Scriptures, among its members by hearing judicial cases brought before it;
 - f.) Resolve complaints brought before it from church sessions concerning matters which may harm the purity, peace, and unity of the church;
 - g.) Hear and act upon matters of mutual interest to the particular congregations, always respecting the liberties guaranteed to the congregations and individuals under the Constitution of this church.
- 6.) It shall be the duty of the Presbytery to keep a full and clear written record of its proceedings, and to report to the General Synod, every year, censures and ordinations; the formation, union, division, or dissolution of congregations; and, in general, all the important changes which may have taken place within its boundaries in the course of the year.
- 7.) The presbytery shall meet at least once per year. Any greater frequency of meetings shall be determined by the presbytery.
- 8.) The time and place of the next stated meeting shall be arranged and announced prior to adjournment.
- 9.) Any two ministers, and at least two ruling elders belonging to the presbytery, the ruling elders being from different particular congregations, being met at the time and place appointed, shall constitute a quorum competent to proceed to business. A presbytery may in its own by-laws specify a quorum of greater numbers than this, but not fewer.
- 10.) Each day's session of the presbytery shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- 11.) Committees
- a.) Presbyteries may authorize the establishment of standing committees. A standing committee is defined as any committee authorized to function for a period of more than one year. Additionally, *ad hoc* committees may be formed for a specific purpose. This purpose shall be clearly stated in the minutes of presbytery, and is to be achieved within a maximum time period of one year. If the committee's purpose is not achieved in the maximum one year period the presbytery may re-authorize it, for a specific time period not to exceed an additional year, to complete its work.
 - b.) All members of permanent committees shall be elected annually. Election to these permanent committees shall be by ballot. All newly elected members shall begin their term with the new year unless a special election is held to fill a vacancy occurring during the year. No person shall be permitted to serve more than three (3) consecutive years.

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After three (3) years a member must rotate off of the committee and shall not be eligible for reelection to the same committee during that year.

- c.) All committees shall serve as nominating committees to fill vacancies at each election of members to their respective committee at succeeding Fall meetings of the Presbytery. Should vacancies occur during the year, the committee shall make recommendations to fill such vacancies at the next regularly scheduled stated meeting.
 - d.) A quorum of any committee shall be at least one half (½) of its current membership, and shall always include both minister and ruling elder representation.
- 12.) The presbytery meeting shall be moderated by a minister of the host congregation. Any item of business for consideration on the docket must be submitted to the minister of the host congregation two weeks prior to the meeting of the presbytery. Not less than one week prior to the meeting, he shall distribute a docket via electronic means to the congregational sessions. Items of business may be added to or removed from the docket during the meeting only by a two-thirds vote.
- 13.) A clerk of the presbytery shall be appointed for a one year term by the presbytery.
- 14.) Any expense for distributing the docket or minutes of the meeting of the presbytery shall be paid by the congregation hosting that session of the presbytery. In the case of a special meeting of the presbytery, the costs shall be paid by the congregations of the ministers who called for the special meeting of the presbytery. They shall determine the division of this cost among themselves.
- 15.) Representation at presbytery shall be on the following basis:
- a.) Every congregation has the right to be represented by one minister and one ruling elder from their congregation, both of whom shall have the right to vote on all matters brought before the presbytery. The clerk of the presbytery shall state the names of all authorized voting representatives during the calling of the roll.
 - b.) In the case of a congregation having more than one minister, all of its ministers shall have standing at presbytery to deliberate, but only one minister from each congregation shall have the right to vote on matters brought before the presbytery, except as specified in paragraph (c) below. Each session shall decide beforehand which of its ministers shall have the right to vote.
 - c.) Congregations of two hundred (200) communicant members or more shall have the right to have one (1) additional ruling elder or minister represent it at presbytery and vote on matters brought before it. Each session shall decide beforehand the name of the additional minister or ruling elder who will exercise such a voting privilege.

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- 16.) Ministers in good standing in other presbyteries of the ERPC, who may happen to be present, may be invited to sit with the presbytery as corresponding members. If so invited, such ministers shall be entitled to deliberate and advise, but not to vote in any decisions of the presbytery.
- 17.) The presbytery has the right to extend the privilege of deliberating or advising to any individual it chooses. However, voting privileges are reserved only to those specified in this Form of Government.
- 18.) When any emergency shall require a meeting sooner than the time to which it stands adjourned, the last moderator shall, with the concurrence or at the request of two ministers and two ruling elders, the ruling elders being of different congregations, call a special meeting. In the case of the last moderator's absence, death, or inability to act, the last clerk shall call the meeting. For this purpose the moderator or clerk shall send a letter specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, by either physical or electronic means, to every minister belonging to the presbytery, and to the session of every congregation, not less than fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the special meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meeting except the particular business for which the presbytery has thus been convened.

CHAPTER 13
OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

- 1.) The General Synod of this church shall consist of every minister, and of representative elders from all particular congregations, acting as commissioners. The session shall provide a written document to the General Synod naming its authorized commissioners, and the commissioners shall present that document to the clerk of the Synod at the time and place of meeting. Deliberatory and voting privileges shall be on the same basis set forth for presbyteries in Chapter 12, section 15.
- 2.) Until the establishment of two presbyteries, the founding presbytery shall act in all matters as the General Synod of this church.
- 3.) The General Synod is responsible to
 - a.) Proclaim and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world, with particular attention to its proclamation within the boundaries of its jurisdiction;
 - b.) Promote the spiritual health and vitality of every presbytery and congregation of this church;
 - c.) Protect the orthodoxy of its presbyteries and member congregations; and

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- d.) Promote charity, truth, and holiness, throughout all the Church.
- 4.) Any eight (8) or more of the commissioners, one half of whom shall be ministers, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- 5.) The General Synod shall have power to organize and conduct its business in a representative and Christian manner. It shall receive and act upon all appeals and complaints that affect the doctrine or Constitution of this church, and are regularly brought before it from presbyteries or sessions. The General Synod shall review the records of every presbytery. It shall give its advice and instruction, in all cases submitted to it, in conformity with the Constitution of this church, subordinate to the Scriptures.
- 6.) To the General Synod also belongs the power of
 - a.) Deciding in all controversies brought before it respecting doctrine and discipline;
 - b.) Repeating, warning or bearing testimony against error in doctrine, or immorality in practice, in any congregation or presbytery;
 - c.) Erecting new presbyteries when it may be judged necessary;
 - d.) Corresponding with other ecclesiastical bodies, on such terms as may be agreed upon by the Synod and the corresponding body; and
- 7.) The General Synod, as all the courts of this church, must take the utmost care to ensure that its decisions, resolutions, overtures, and other actions are in full accord with the Word of God. As such, they are to be treated with the proper esteem by all courts and congregations of this church. But whenever a Synod's decision, resolution, overture, or other action adds to the specific provisions of the Constitution of this church, they shall not be regarded as binding unless they become amendments to the Constitution.
- 8.) Committees
 - a.) The General Synod may authorize the establishment of standing committees. A standing committee is defined as any committee authorized to function for a period of more than two years. Additionally, *ad hoc* committees may be formed for a specific purpose. This purpose shall be clearly stated in the minutes of synod, and is to be achieved within a maximum time period of two years. If the committee's purpose is not achieved in the maximum two year period, the General Synod may re-authorize it, for a specific time period not to exceed an additional two years, to complete its work.
 - b.) All members of permanent committees shall be elected annually. Election to these permanent committees shall be by ballot. All newly elected members shall begin their term with the new year unless a special election is held to fill a vacancy occurring during

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the year. No person shall be permitted to serve more than three (3) consecutive years. After three (3) years a member must rotate off of the committee and shall not be eligible for reelection to the same committee during that year.

- c.) All committees shall serve as nominating committees to fill vacancies at each election of members to their respective committee at succeeding meetings of the Synod. Should vacancies occur during the year, the committee shall make recommendations to fill such vacancies at the next regularly scheduled stated meeting.
 - d.) A quorum of any committee shall be at least one half (½) of its current membership, and shall always include both minister and ruling elder representation.
- 9.) On the day appointed for the meeting of the General Synod the moderator of the last Synod, if present, shall open the meeting with a sermon. In the case of his absence or inability, some other minister shall open the meeting with a sermon and preside until a moderator is chosen. No commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Synod until his name shall have been enrolled, and his commission examined and filed among the papers of the Synod.
- 10.) Each session of the Synod shall be opened and closed with prayer. And the whole business of the Synod being finished, and the vote taken for dissolving the present Synod, the moderator shall say from the chair — "By virtue of the authority delegated to me by this church, let this General Synod be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another General Synod chosen in the same manner, to meet at _____ on the _____ day of _____ A.D." After this he shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce on those present the apostolic benediction.
- 11.) A special meeting of the General Synod shall be called by the moderator of the preceding Synod when it is requested of him by at least one-third of the ministers of this church and an equal number of ruling elders. In case of the previous moderator's death, absence, or inability to act, the clerk of the Synod may call the meeting in his stead. The request for the special meeting shall be in writing, and shall be signed by all the ministers and ruling elders making the request. Not less than thirty (30) days' notice shall be given of special meetings of the General Synod. The notice shall state the time, place, purpose(s), and proposed duration of the meeting, and shall be sent to all ministers of this church and the sessions of all its congregations. At a special meeting the General Synod shall conduct no other business except that which pertains to the stated purpose(s) of the meeting.
- 12.) When the General Synod convenes, it is fitting that it not only conduct the business of this church, but also that the men who are gathered receive spiritual instruction so that they may be further built up in the most holy faith. Therefore it is appropriate that the docket of the General Synod regularly include several sermons preached by men who are commissioners to the Synod, or by other qualified men invited for this purpose.

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CHAPTER 14
OF THE BOARD OF DEACONS

- 1.) In order to facilitate the performance of the duties of their office, the deacons of each particular congregation shall, with the pastor, be constituted a board of deacons.
- 2.) It is advisable that the pastor shall be the moderator of the board, but the board itself, or the by-laws of the congregation, shall determine the manner of choosing the moderator and all other officers of the board of deacons. The board of deacons of each congregation shall determine the number of its members constituting a quorum.
- 3.) The board of deacons shall be responsible for the congregation's ministry to those in material need or distress. Unless otherwise specified in the by-laws of the particular congregation, it shall have responsibility for the upkeep of the general property of the congregation, both real and personal.
- 4.) In the discharge of its duties, the board of deacons shall be under the supervision and authority of the session. The session may void or amend any action of the board of deacons, or return it for further consideration. It is recommended that the session and the board of deacons meet on a regular basis in joint session to confer on matters requiring mutual attention.
- 5.) The board shall make a regular report of its activities including its disbursements, to the session. The frequency of such reports shall be determined by the local congregation.
- 6.) If there are no deacons, the session of the particular congregation shall exercise the responsibilities of the office of deacon.

CHAPTER 15
OF ELECTING AND ORDAINING
RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS

- 1.) Every congregation shall elect men to the office of ruling elder, and in normal circumstances, to the office of deacon. The individuals chosen must be men in good standing in the congregation, nominated by the congregation, trained and approved by the session under the supervision of the minister, and, finally, elected by the congregation. Ruling elders and deacons must be men. No man is ever to be imposed upon a congregation as an elder or deacon without its approval.
- 2.) Every man elected to the office of ruling elder or deacon shall be ordained if he has not been ordained previously, and shall serve for a term of three (3) years. If he has served well, he may be re-elected for successive three (3) year terms, if the congregation shall so choose;

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however, ordination is not to be repeated. It is desirable, whenever possible, that ruling elders be given the opportunity of a one-year sabbatical after serving two consecutive terms.

- 3.) When any man who has not been ordained to either of these offices has been elected to it and has declared his willingness to accept it, he shall be ordained and installed in the following manner:
- a.) The minister shall state, in a concise manner, the Biblical warrant for and nature of the office of ruling elder or deacon, as well as its Scriptural qualifications and duties. He shall address to the candidate, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions:
 - i.) “Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”
 - ii.) “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?”
 - iii.) “Do you approve of the government and discipline of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church?”
 - iv.) “Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this congregation, and promise, by the grace of God, to faithfully perform all the duties thereof?”
 - v.) “Do you promise, by the grace of God, to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the Church?”
 - b.) The elder elect, or deacon elect, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel in the presence of the congregation. The minister and ruling elders of the congregation shall place their hands upon him, and the minister shall lead the congregation in prayer ordaining the man to the service of Christ.
 - c.) The minister shall then address to the members of the congregation the following question:
 - i.) “Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive this brother as a ruling elder (or deacon), and do you promise by the grace of God 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?”
 - ii.) The members of the congregation having answered this question in the affirmative, the minister shall lead the congregation in prayer, and shall give to the ruling elder or deacon, and to the congregation, an exhortation suited to the occasion.

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- 4.) When a man who has been previously ordained to the office in which he will serve shall be re-elected to that office, he shall be re-installed to the office but shall not be re-ordained. He shall be re-installed in the following manner:
 - a.) The minister shall address to him the following questions:
 - i.) “Do you now re-affirm that you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”
 - ii.) “Do you now re-affirm that you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?”
 - iii.) “Do you now re-affirm that you approve of the government and discipline of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church?”
 - iv.) “Do you now accept re-installation to the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this congregation, and promise, by the grace of God, to faithfully perform all the duties thereof?”
 - v.) “Do you promise, by the grace of God, to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the Church?”
 - b.) The elder or deacon having answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the congregation the following question:
 - i.) “Do you, the members of this congregation, acknowledge and receive this brother to serve once again as a ruling elder (or deacon)?” and
 - ii.) “Do you promise by the grace of God 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.) The members of the congregation having answered this question in the affirmative, the minister shall lead the congregation in prayer, and shall give to the ruling elder or deacon, and to the congregation, an exhortation suited to the occasion.
- 5.) Where there is an existing session or board of deacons, it is proper that the members of those bodies, in the presence of the congregation, take the newly ordained or installed ruling elder or deacon by the hand, extending to him the right hand of fellowship.
- 6.) Elders not in active service on the session may participate in wider courts of this church at the discretion of the session. Such approval shall be recorded in its minutes.

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- 7.) Elders or deacons may request emeritus status for reasons of age or incapacity, which shall be granted at the discretion of the session. Such approval shall be recorded in its minutes. When so designated, the elder or deacon assumes a permanently inactive status.

CHAPTER 16
OF LICENSING CANDIDATES
TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

- 1.) The Holy Scriptures teach that all who aspire to the office of minister must give evidence of a Divine call. These evidences include: an all-encompassing passion for the work; the ability to carry out the Gospel ministry; evidence of fruitfulness in the administration of the ministry; a request for such ministry by the people of God.
- 2.) The Holy Scriptures require that some examination be made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Gospel, and that their gifts and calling be demonstrated, so that this sacred office may not be committed to weak or unworthy men. This is also necessary so that the Church may have the opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts and calling of those by whom they are to be instructed and governed. For this purpose, the presbytery shall, after proper examination, license a candidate to preach the Gospel. Only after examining the evidence of his call by God to the Gospel ministry, making a competent examination of his abilities, and receiving from the congregations a good report, may the presbytery ordain the licentiate to the sacred office.
- 3.) Every candidate looking toward licensure shall ordinarily be taken under care of that presbytery to which he most naturally belongs.
- 4.) It is proper and requisite that a candidate applying to be taken under care of a presbytery be a communicant member of a particular congregation approved by the presbytery, and come with a written recommendation from the session of the congregation of which he is a member. It is the duty of the presbytery, for its satisfaction with regard to the piety of the candidate, to examine him respecting his saving knowledge of the true faith, and the motives which influence him to desire the sacred office. And the presbytery shall continue to show its concern, after such examination, for the progress of all the candidates under its care, and shall advise them with regard to their preparation for the work of the ministry.
- 5.) Because it is highly reproachful to the faith and dangerous to the Church to trust the holy ministry to weak and ignorant men, the presbytery shall admit a candidate to licensure only if he has received adequate training to satisfy the presbytery of his general educational qualifications. He must also have completed at least two years of supervised theological study.
- 6.) The presbytery, or an *ad hoc* committee appointed for that purpose, shall conduct a foundational examination in the English Bible, theology, and apologetics. Every candidate at

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the time of his examination in theology shall read a brief, written statement of his belief before the presbytery and file the same with the stated clerk. If the examination of a candidate is referred to an *ad hoc* committee, an examination in theology shall also be held before the full presbytery; and if one-fourth of the presbyters are dissatisfied with the examination in theology the candidate shall be required to undergo an examination in the subject again at a future meeting of the presbytery.

- 7.) In order to demonstrate his gifts and qualifications to explain, vindicate, and practically enforce conformity with the doctrines of the Word of God, the presbytery shall further require that the candidate prepare (1) a sermon to be delivered in its presence, (2) an essay on a theological theme assigned by the presbytery or the examining committee.
- 8.) If the presbytery is satisfied with the examinations of a candidate for licensure, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner. The moderator shall address to him the following questions:
 - a.) "Do you now reaffirm your personal faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your eternal salvation?"
 - b.) "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"
 - c.) "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any part of this system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this vow?"
 - d.) "Do you promise by the grace of God to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the Church?"
 - e.) "Do you promise by the grace of God to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the Constitution of this church, and the government of this presbytery, or of any other presbytery of this church in the boundaries of which you may be called?"
- 9.) The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, and the moderator having offered up a prayer suitable to the occasion, the moderator shall address the candidate in the following manner: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He has given to the Church for its edification, we do license you 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 form:

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“On this _____ day of _____ the Presbytery of _____ of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church completed the examination of _____ for licensure to preach the Gospel of Christ. We have received evidence that he has gone through a regular course of study, as well as testimonials of his good moral character, and of his being in the communion of the Church. He has given satisfactory evidence of his saving knowledge of the true faith, and of his proficiency in divinity and other studies. Therefore the presbytery hereby expresses its approval of all these parts of his examination. He has satisfactorily answered the questions that are put to candidates for licensure. Therefore the presbytery does license him to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, within the boundaries of this presbytery, or wherever else he shall be called in an orderly manner. We license him with the expectation that, after further examination, he may subsequently be ordained to the Gospel ministry.”

- 10.) When any candidate for licensure shall move from the boundaries of one presbytery into those of another while his examinations are in process, he shall place himself under the care of the latter presbytery. The clerk of the first presbytery shall forward to the latter presbytery the results of his examinations up to the time of his transfer. The latter presbytery shall continue his examinations from the point at which they were left, without repeating any that he has already successfully completed.
- 11.) When any candidate for ordination shall, after his licensure, by the permission of his presbytery move outside its boundaries, the presbytery shall prepare a copy of his licensure, along with a recommendation from the presbytery, both signed by the clerk. The clerk shall forward these documents to the clerk of the presbytery to which the candidate intends to transfer.
- 12.) When a licentiate shall have been preaching for a considerable time and his services do not appear to be edifying to the churches, the presbytery may, if it thinks it proper, recall his license.
- 13.) A ruling elder or deacon not seeking ordination to the Gospel ministry may be licensed by the presbytery to preach under the supervision of the minister of his particular congregation. The license shall be only for preaching, and not for conducting other functions of the ministry of the ordained such as administration of the sacraments, performing marriage services, or giving a benediction. The educational and other requirements for licensure set forth in this chapter shall serve as a guideline for the presbytery, but may be adjusted or waived according to the presbytery's wisdom. In no case shall the examination in theology on the floor of presbytery be waived. The license shall be valid throughout the presbytery that issued it, and may be accepted by other presbyteries at their discretion. A simple majority of the presbytery is needed to suspend or amend the license at any time, for any reason, which reason shall be stated in the minutes. If this takes place, it shall not be construed in and of itself to imply any judicial sanction against the individual. The presbytery may adopt any further restrictions that it deems best to it to impose. The form of licensure shall be as follows:

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“On this _____ day of _____ the Presbytery of _____ of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church completed the examination of _____ for licensure to preach the Gospel of Christ as a ruling elder (deacon), but without intention to seek ordination to the Gospel ministry. He has given satisfactory evidence of his saving knowledge of the true faith, and of his proficiency in divinity and other studies. Therefore the presbytery hereby expresses its approval of all these parts of his examination. He has satisfactorily answered the questions that are put to candidates for licensure. Therefore the presbytery does license him to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, within the boundaries of this presbytery, and in any other presbytery that shall choose to recognize his licensure.”

CHAPTER 17
OF ORDINATION TO THE MINISTRY

- 1.) Examination for ordination shall consist of, in addition to the examinations for licensure, an advanced examination of a prospective minister’s knowledge of the English Bible, theology, apologetics, the original languages of the Scriptures, church history, and the Constitution of this church; a sermon delivered before the presbytery (in addition to the sermon delivered prior to licensure); together with any written discourse or discourses, founded on the Word of God, that the presbytery shall deem proper. The examination in the languages of Scripture may be waived upon the presentation of a transcript showing that credible work has been done in these subjects, or upon the demonstration of proficiency in the use of the original languages in study and research for preaching and teaching.
- 2.) To guard against the admission of unqualified men into the sacred office, no exception shall be made to any of the educational or other requirements outlined above unless the presbytery shall judge, by a three-fourths vote of the members present, that such an exception is warranted by the qualifications of the candidate in question.
- 3.) The presbytery, being fully satisfied with his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a day for his ordination. This service ought to be, if appropriate and convenient, in the church of which he is to be the pastor.
- 4.) On the day appointed for ordination the presbytery shall convene, together with the people of the church. A minister previously appointed shall preach a sermon suitable to the occasion. After the sermon, a member of the presbytery appointed to preside shall inform the people that the candidate for ordination has met all qualifications for the office of minister; and he shall point out the nature and importance of ordination to the sacred office.
- 5.) Then addressing himself to the licentiate, he shall propose to him the following questions:

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- a.) “Do you now reaffirm your personal faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your eternal salvation?”
 - b.) “Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”
 - c.) “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any part of this system of doctrine, you will on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this vow?”
 - d.) “Do you approve of the government and discipline of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church?”
 - e.) “Do you promise, by the grace of God, such subjection to your brethren as is taught in the Word of God?”
 - f.) “Are you motivated, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry by love to God, and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?”
 - g.) “Do you promise, by the grace of God, 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 against you on that account?”
 - h.) “Do you engage, by the grace of God, to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties, which become you as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel; as well as in all related duties, and the public duties of your office; endeavoring to adorn the profession of the Gospel by your conduct; and being a godly example before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?”
- 6.) The licentiate, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel down. Then the members of the presbytery shall lay hands upon him according to the apostolic example. The presiding minister shall, by prayer, solemnly ordain him to the holy office of the Gospel ministry.
 - 7.) After prayer, the licentiate shall rise from his knees; and the presiding minister and other members of the presbytery shall take him by the right hand, by this signifying that they extend to him the right hand of fellowship, to take part in the ministry with them.
 - 8.) After this the presiding minister, or some other minister appointed to do so, shall give a solemn charge in the name of God, both to the newly ordained minister and to the people. In this charge he shall remind them of their duties toward one another and exhort them to persevere in the discharge of those duties.

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- 9.) After this the minister shall, by prayer, commend the newly ordained minister and the people to the grace of God and His holy keeping. Finally, at the conclusion of the whole service, the presiding minister shall dismiss the congregation with an appropriate benediction.
- 10.) The presbytery shall duly record the ordination in its minutes.
- 11.) Since a licentiate who has not received a call to be the pastor of a particular congregation may be called to engage in the work of the holy ministry, it is proper that he should be ordained, and, in this case, the last of the preceding questions shall be omitted, and the following used as a substitute:
- "Are you now willing to undertake the work of the Gospel ministry, and do you promise, by the grace of God, to discharge the duties which may be incumbent upon you in this character as God may give you strength?"
- 12.) When an ordained minister of another denomination seeks admission to The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, the presbytery to which he applies shall require him to give evidence of possessing the qualifications, in regard to faith, piety, and learning, which are demanded of candidates for ordination as given above; and it shall require him to answer affirmatively the questions appointed for the ordination of candidates in section 3 of this chapter, and section 9 if it shall apply.

CHAPTER 18
OF THE ELECTION OF PASTORS

- 1.) The election of a minister to a serve a particular congregation as pastor may be done in a manner determined by the local congregation, provided that the presbytery is satisfied that this reflects the will of the members of the congregation. The session shall present the minister's call to the presbytery.
- 2.) The call shall be in the following or similar 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. We promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of _____ in regular _____ payments during the time of your service as pastor (or other pastoral title) of this church, together with free use of a house (or _____ housing allowance) and _____ vacation each year."

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- 3.) The local congregation is also encouraged to make provision for the future livelihood of the minister upon his retirement from active ministry.
- 4.) When a congregation shall call an associate pastor, his ministry shall be under the supervision of the pastor.
- 5.) The pastoral call shall be ratified by the members of the congregation and shall be certified by the moderator of the meeting in which the call was approved, or by the clerk of the session.
- 6.) When a call shall be presented to any minister or candidate, it shall always be viewed as a sufficient petition from the people for his installation. The acceptance of a call, by a minister or candidate, shall always be considered as a request, on his part, to be installed. And when a candidate shall also be ordained in consequence of a call from any congregation, the presbytery shall at the same time, if practicable, install him as pastor of that congregation.
- 7.) The call shall be presented by the session to the presbytery under whose care the person called shall be, for its review and approval. If the presbytery does not approve, it shall state its reasons in writing to the session. If the presbytery approves the call, it shall then be presented to the person being called by the session of the local congregation. No minister or candidate shall receive a call except through the hands of the session.
- 8.) If the call is being presented to a licentiate of another presbytery, in that case the session shall send that presbytery a letter from their own presbytery, signed by the moderator and clerk, stating that the call has been presented to the presbytery and found to be in order. If the presbytery presents the call to their licentiate, and he is disposed to accept it, the presbytery shall then dismiss him from their jurisdiction, and require him to transfer to the presbytery into the boundaries of which he is being called. He shall then submit himself to the usual examinations preparatory to ordination in accordance with chapter 17 of this Form of Government.

CHAPTER 19
OF THE INSTALLATION OF MINISTERS

- 1.) When any minister is to be settled in a congregation, the installation, which consists in constituting a pastoral relationship between him and the people of that particular congregation, may be performed either by the presbytery or by an *ad hoc* committee appointed for that purpose.
- 2.) If a man is to be ordained to the ministry and immediately installed as the pastor of a congregation, it is appropriate to combine the service of ordination described in chapter 17 and the service of installation described below.

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- 3.) For the service of installation, the following order shall be observed:
- a.) A day shall be appointed for the installation, and due notice given to the congregation.
 - b.) On the day appointed, a service of public worship shall be held. The minister who is to preside shall state to the congregation the purpose of the meeting. A sermon suitable for the occasion shall be delivered by a minister previously appointed to do so. The presiding minister shall address the following questions to the minister to be installed:
 - i.) “Are you now willing to take the charge of this congregation, as their pastor, in accordance with your acceptance of its call?”
 - ii.) “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?”
 - iii.) “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 conduct yourself in all respects in a manner becoming to a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeably to your ordination vows?”
 - c.) The minister having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall address to the people the following questions:
 - i.) “Do you, the people of this congregation, affirm your readiness to receive the man you have called to be your minister?”
 - ii.) “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?”
 - iii.) “Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?”
 - iv.) “And will you be faithful to continue to provide for him, while he is your pastor, that financial and material compensation which you have promised; and whatever else you may see needful for his comfort among you?”
 - d.) These questions having also been answered in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall solemnly pronounce and declare the minister who is before them to be the duly installed pastor of that congregation. A charge from the Scriptures shall then be given to both the pastor and the congregation, by a minister or ministers appointed to do so; and prayer shall be offered. At the conclusion of the whole service, the congregation shall be dismissed with an appropriate benediction.

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- 4.) After the installation, the members of that congregation who are then present, with the elders and deacons, should come forward to their newly installed pastor, and give him their right hand of fellowship.

CHAPTER 20

**OF THE TRANSFER OF A MINISTER
FROM ONE CHARGE TO ANOTHER**

- 1.) No minister shall be transferred from one charge to another, nor shall he receive any call for that purpose, except by the approval of the presbytery.
- 2.) Any congregation desiring to call a settled minister from his present charge shall, through the session, present to the presbytery the grounds on which they request his transfer. The presbytery, having considered their plan, may either recommend to them that they desist from pursuing the call, or may order it to be delivered to the minister to whom it is directed.
- 3.) When the congregation calling any settled minister is within the boundaries of another presbytery, that congregation shall obtain permission from the presbytery to which it belongs, to apply to the presbytery of which the minister is currently a member, seeking his transfer. The minister's current presbytery shall consider the matter and come to a decision.
 - a.) If it agrees to the transfer, it shall release him from his present charge, and prepare a letter of recommendation addressed to the receiving presbytery. It shall also require him to transfer to that presbytery. The receiving presbytery shall take the proper steps for his installation in the calling congregation as soon as convenient. No minister shall be transferred without his own consent.
 - b.) If it does not agree to the transfer, it shall state its reasons in writing and communicate them to both the congregation seeking the transfer and the presbytery to which that congregation belongs.

CHAPTER 21

OF DISSOLVING MINISTERIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 1.) In all matters of a ministerial relationship being dissolved, the presbytery shall exercise oversight to ensure the purity, peace, and unity of the church and the exercise of Biblical discipline. In cases where no matter of discipline is involved, no minister shall be forced to remain in a charge against his will, nor shall a congregation be forced to retain a minister against its will. In cases where matters of discipline are involved, the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* shall be followed by all parties.

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- 2.) When any minister shall desire permission to resign his pastoral charge, and the minister, congregation, and session are agreed, the matter shall be brought before the presbytery. If the presbytery is satisfied that there is no issue requiring the exercise of church discipline involved, the dissolution of the relationship shall be duly recorded in the presbytery's minutes without further process.
- 3.) In cases where the minister, session, and congregation are not agreed on the dissolution of the relationship, the presbytery shall act as a mediator, as it sees fit, to seek to resolve the situation. For this purpose it shall hear the testimony of all parties who wish to be heard. If matters of church discipline are found to be at issue, the presbytery shall see to it that the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* are followed by all parties.
 - a.) When any minister desires permission to resign his pastoral charge and the minister, session, and congregation are not agreed, the session or congregation shall send commissioners to appear before the presbytery to show cause as to why his resignation shall not be accepted.
 - b.) If any congregation desires to be relieved of its pastor, and the minister is not in agreement, commissioners of the congregation shall appear before presbytery to show cause why the congregation should be relieved of its minister.
- 4.) No minister shall physically leave his charge until the presbytery has exercised its oversight responsibility.
- 5.) The associate pastor or assistant pastor of the congregation may continue to serve the congregation when the pastoral relationship of the senior pastor is dissolved. But he shall not succeed as pastor without having been duly elected and installed in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 18 and 19.
- 6.) The presbytery may designate a minister as honorably retired when the minister by reason of age or infirmity wishes to be retired from the active ministry of the Gospel. A minister thus honorably retired may continue to participate in the presbytery and General Synod, subject to the provisions of Chapters 12 and 13 of this Form of Government. He may serve on committees if so elected or appointed. He may be designated pastor emeritus by a congregation which seeks to honor his past earnest labors among them.

CHAPTER 22
OF MODERATORS

- 1.) It is necessary in the courts of the Church, that there should be a moderator, in order that business may be conducted in an orderly and efficient manner.

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- 2.) The moderator is to be considered to possess, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary for the preservation of order; for convening and adjourning the court; and directing its operations according to the rules of this church. If the court be equally divided on any question he shall possess the deciding vote. If he is not willing to decide, he shall put the question a second time; and if the court is again equally divided, and he declines to give his vote, the question shall be lost.
- 3.) In the absence of any other by-law or standing rule of a presbytery, the moderator of the presbytery shall be the minister of the host congregation.
- 4.) The moderator of the General Synod shall be a minister chosen at the convening of that court. The moderator of the preceding Synod, or, in the case of his absence, minister appointed for the purpose, shall open the next meeting with a sermon, and shall hold the chair until a new moderator is chosen.

CHAPTER 23
OF CLERKS

- 1.) Every court shall choose a clerk to record its transactions. The clerk shall serve for a term fixed by that court. It shall be the duty of the clerk, besides recording the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to promptly transfer all records to his successor; and to grant extracts from them, whenever properly required. Such extracts under the signature of the clerk, shall be evidence to any ecclesiastical court, and to every part of the Church.
- 2.) The clerk of each presbytery shall within its records maintain a census of the members of the congregations within its boundaries. The census shall be updated at its regular annual meeting based on data provided to the clerk by the session of each particular congregation.
- 3.) The clerk of each General Synod shall within its records likewise maintain a composite census for the entire church, to be updated at its regular annual meeting based on data provided to him by the clerks of the presbyteries.

CHAPTER 24
OF CONGREGATIONS HAVING VACANT PULPITS
ASSEMBLING FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

- 1.) Scripture teaches that every particular congregation, even in the absence of a permanent minister or pulpit supply, is to meet together on the Lord's Day. The congregation thus meets for the purposes of prayer; the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and the reading of the Holy Scriptures. And, in the absence of pulpit supply, it meets to read or hear together the sermons of any approved ministers that the presbytery may recommend.

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- 2.) In the absence of a permanent minister the elders shall preside. They shall establish the order of worship, and shall select the portions of Scripture and the sermons to be read or heard. They shall see to it that the service is conducted in a becoming and God honoring manner.
- 3.) The session of the congregation has primary responsibility to secure pulpit supply for weekly worship services when the pulpit is vacant, and to seek and to call a new permanent minister.
- 4.) Presbyteries shall provide guidance and assistance to congregations within their boundaries having vacant pulpits through an *ad hoc* committee appointed to work with the session, or through the session of another congregation in the presbytery. Such assistance shall include co-operation with the session, or with any authorized committee of the congregation when no session exists, in providing pulpit supply and in seeking and securing a permanent pastor, and in any other spiritual oversight that may be fitting.

CHAPTER 25
OF INCORPORATION AND CORPORATIONS

- 1.) The General Synod, the several presbyteries, and the particular congregations may at their discretion maintain corporations and other appropriate legal entities to handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters, which do not come properly under the jurisdiction of the courts of the church themselves. The trustees and other officers of all such entities shall be elected from among the elders and deacons in active service within each congregation, presbytery and the General Synod. The number of elders serving in such capacity shall always be greater than the number of deacons serving. The provisions for their election and terms of service shall be the same as those for the office of ruling elder stated in Chapter 15 of this Form of Government, unless provisions of civil law in the jurisdiction in which the congregation is situated require that they be otherwise.
- 2.) Only communicant members of a particular congregation in good standing who are at least eighteen years of age shall be entitled to vote at corporation meetings of the particular congregation. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted, nor shall any one be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken. Where the laws of the civil jurisdiction in which the church is situated differ from these provisions, the civil law shall have precedence.
- 3.) All particular congregations shall be entitled to hold, own, and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of reversion whatsoever to The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, its presbyteries, synods, or any other courts or entities of the church hereafter created, its trustees or other officers.
- 4.) The provisions of this chapter are to be construed as a solemn covenant whereby The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church as a whole undertakes never to attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation, whether or not such congregation remains

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within or chooses to withdraw from this church. All officers and courts of this church are hereby prohibited from making any such attempt.

- 5.) The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church shall not engage in the loaning of money for the acquisition or building of church properties. Wherever possible this church shall encourage individuals and congregations to provide such financial assistance to other congregations and mission works directly.
- 6.) The provisions of sections 3 and 4 of this chapter are un-amendable and irrevocable.

CHAPTER 26
CONCERNING MERGER WITH
ANOTHER ECCLESIASTICAL BODY

- 1.) The merger of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church with another ecclesiastical body, whether this church is be the successor parent body or is to be subsumed into another, shall take place only under the following procedure:
 - a.) The General Synod at its regular annual meeting shall by a two thirds majority vote recommend such a merger to the presbyteries, submitting the terms of the merger to them in writing.
 - b.) Two thirds of the presbyteries shall approve such a merger. A presbytery shall be considered to have approved a merger if two thirds of its particular congregations shall approve such a merger by at least a two-thirds majority vote in each, before the next annual meeting of the General Synod.
 - c.) The General Synod at its next annual meeting shall likewise approve the merger by a two thirds majority vote.
- 2.) A special meeting of the General Synod may not be called for the purpose of any vote related to a proposed merger.

CHAPTER 27
OF AMENDMENTS AND ALTERATIONS

- 1.) Amendments or alterations to this Form of Government (except as provided in section 2 of this chapter), the Book of Discipline, and Directory for Worship shall become a valid and binding part of the Constitution of this church only when:
 - a.) First approved by a two-thirds vote of the General Synod, and

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- b.) Subsequently approved within one year by a two-thirds vote in at least two-thirds of the presbyteries, and
- c.) Finally adopted by a two-thirds vote of the General Synod next ensuing.

The provisions of this section one do not apply to Chapter 25, sections 3 and 4, which are un-amendable.

- 2.) Amendments or alterations of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, including their proof texts, 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 become a valid and binding part of the Constitution of this church only when:
 - a.) The General Synod shall first appoint an *ad hoc* committee to consider the proposed changes; and
 - b.) The committee delivers its report to the next General Synod; and
 - c.) The changes shall be approved by a four-fifths vote of the General Synod following the Synod to which the committee delivers its report; and
 - d.) The changes shall be subsequently approved within two years by a four-fifths vote in each of at least four-fifths of the presbyteries; and
 - e.) The changes shall be finally adopted by a four-fifths vote of the next General Synod occurring after the approval of the presbyteries under (c.) above.
- 3.) A special meeting of the General Synod may not be called for the purpose of any vote related to a proposed amendment or alteration to the Constitution of this church.
- 4.) The provisions of this chapter are un-amendable and irrevocable.

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**TABLE OF AMENDMENTS ENACTED
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 27**

<u>Date of Approval</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Changes</u>
July 28, 2007	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11.1 was amended to change the minimum number of ruling elders from two to one. The third sentence (“It is desirable...”) was added.• 11.6 was amended to agree with the change to 11.1.
October 26, 2007	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15.2 was amended to permit successive re-elections of elders after two terms without a one-year sabbatical if the congregation shall so choose, and to eliminate the requirement for Presbytery approval of such an action. The last sentence (“It is desirable...”) was added.
October 26, 2007	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8.4 was added, requiring written subscription to the <i>Affirmations and Denials</i> of Chapter 1 by non-officers of this church who provide pulpit supply for mission congregations.
January 18, 2008	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25.1 was amended to limit the membership of boards of trustees to elders and deacons in active service, and requiring that the number of elders be greater than the number of deacons.
July 18, 2008	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12.11.a was amended to permit presbyteries to establish standing committees as well as <i>ad hoc</i> committees. Sections 12.b through 12.d. were added.
July 18, 2008	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13.8.a was amended to permit the General Synod to establish standing committees as well as <i>ad hoc</i> committees. Sections 13.b through 13.d were added.

BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

OF

THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Adopted June 25, 2005

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CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE

- 1.) Ecclesiastical discipline is the exercise of that authority which the Lord Jesus Christ has committed to the visible Church for the preservation of its purity and good order. It may be either judicial or administrative.
- 2.) Judicial discipline is concerned with the prevention and correction of offenses. An offense is anything in the doctrine or practice of a communicant member of this church or of a church court which is contrary to the Word of God. The purpose of judicial discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of his church, and to reclaim the offender.
- 3.) Administrative discipline is concerned with the maintenance of good order in the government of the church in other than judicial cases. The purpose of its exercise is that all rights may be preserved and all obligations faithfully discharged.
- 4.) All communicant members of this church are under the care of this church, and subject to its discipline.

CHAPTER 2

JURISDICTION

- 1.) Original jurisdiction over communicants, ruling elders and deacons belongs to the session of the congregation of which the individual is a member.
- 2.) In matters of morals and conduct original jurisdiction over a minister belongs to the session of which he is a member.
- 3.) In matters of doctrine original jurisdiction over a minister belongs to the presbytery to which the congregation is related.
- 4.) If an individual or minister has been dismissed to another particular congregation, he shall be considered subject to the jurisdiction of the body which dismissed him until the time when he is actually received by the body to which he has been dismissed.
- 5.) All certificates of dismissal shall specify the particular body to which the person is dismissed, and shall be sent directly to that body by the dismissing body. The receiving body shall notify the dismissing body of the fact of the person's reception when it has been accomplished.

CHAPTER 3

STEPS IN THE INSTITUTION OF JUDICIAL PROCESS

- 1.) Judicial process shall be deemed to have been instituted only whenever formal charges and specifications, as defined herein, have been filed with the clerk of the body having original jurisdiction, and that body, after having heard the charges read, decides that there is reasonable ground to support the charges.
- 2.) No charge of an offense shall be admitted if it is brought more than two years after the commission of the alleged offense, unless the charge alleges grave heresy and it can be proved that the expression of heretical teaching is still proceeding orally or in written or printed form.
- 3.) A charge of an offense may be brought by an injured party, by a person not an injured party, or by a court of the church. A charge against a minister or ruling elder must be brought by no fewer than two persons.
- 4.) Every charge of an offense must be presented to the court in writing. Every charge must set forth the alleged offense together with the specifications of the facts relied upon to sustain the charge. Each specification shall declare, as far as possible, the time, place, and circumstances of the alleged offense, and shall be accompanied with the names of any witnesses and the titles of any documents to be produced.
- 5.) Offenses are either private or public. Private offenses are those known to an individual only, or, at most, to a very few persons. Public offenses are those which are notorious and scandalous.
- 6.) No charge of a private offense shall be admitted unless the court has assured itself that the course set forth by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 has been followed as far as possible by the accuser.
- 7.) Every person about to present a charge shall be solemnly warned by the court that he may be censured if the charge is not substantiated by such evidence as will establish reasonable proof of guilt.
- 8.) At the discretion of the court, a preliminary investigation may be conducted by a committee of the court or the court as a whole. In every case, the findings shall be reviewed by the court as a whole. The court or committee, as the case may be, shall consider the respectability and presumptive credibility of the witnesses to be produced, and shall examine the evidence submitted to it to determine whether, if charges and specifications were prepared on the basis of such evidence, their proof would show the commission of an offense serious enough to warrant a trial.

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- 9.) If allegations of an offense not framed as formal charges and specifications are presented to the court of jurisdiction, it shall conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether judicial process shall be begun. If the preliminary investigation is conducted by a committee appointed for that purpose, its findings shall be reviewed by the court. The court or committee, as the case may be, shall consider the respectability and presumptive credibility of the witnesses to be produced, and shall examine the evidence submitted to it to determine whether, if charges and specifications were prepared on the basis of such evidence, their proof would show the commission of an offense serious enough to warrant a trial. If, after a consideration of all of the foregoing factors, the court decides that judicial process may be instituted, it shall cause formal charges and specifications to be prepared and shall fix a time for the trial of the case.
- 10.) In all cases of charges of heresy or delinquency in doctrine against an elder or deacon, if a charge is dismissed after the preliminary investigation by the session, the full case shall be forwarded to the presbytery for review. If the presbytery finds that the session erred in not admitting the charge, the presbytery may act to assume jurisdiction of the case, or may remand the case to the session for trial.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRIAL OF JUDICIAL CASES

- 1.) At the beginning of every trial the moderator shall announce that the body is about to sit in a judicial capacity, and shall exhort the members to bear in mind their solemn duty to faithfully minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human judgments to that infallible rule. The announcement and the exhortation shall be made at the opening of each session of the trial court.
- 2.) The courts of the church shall ordinarily sit with open doors. In every case involving a charge of heresy the court shall be without power to sit with closed doors. In other cases, where the ends of discipline seem to require it, the trial court at any stage of the trial may determine by a vote of three fourths of the members present to sit with closed doors. If this is done, the court shall record in its minutes the reason for determining to sit with closed doors, and a brief summary of the results of its deliberations with closed doors.
- 3.) At the first meeting of the trial court only the following things may be done:
 - a.) The charges and specifications shall be read and formally presented to the accused, together with the names of any witnesses and copies of any documents which may be presented against him;
 - b.) The court shall fix the time for the next session of the trial, which shall not be less than ten days later, and shall issue citations directing all persons concerned to appear at that time;

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- c.) The accused shall be granted citations in which he may insert the names of the witnesses whom he wishes the court to summon; and
 - d.) The parties may challenge the right of any member of the court to sit in the case, which challenge shall be decided by a majority of the other members of the court.
- 4.) If it becomes necessary to summon witnesses who are subject to the jurisdiction of another court of the church, such court at the request of the trial court shall issue citations directing such persons to appear and testify.
 - 5.) The testimony of witnesses living at a distance from the place of trial may be taken by a commission appointed by the trial court whenever such course seems advisable, provided, however, that in such case the accused may appear personally before such commission or be represented by counsel. The commissioners must be communicant members of this church. They shall take such testimony and evidence as may be offered and transmit them to the trial court without delay. The Court may, at its own discretion, admit sworn statements from persons who by reason of infirmity or distance are unable to appear as witnesses.
 - 6.) All citations should be served personally, but in case this is not possible, citations shall be sent by certified mail, with proof of delivery, to the last known address of the person cited.
 - 7.) If the accused refuses or fails to appear before the trial court, without satisfactory reason for his absence, at the time appointed for the trial of the case, he shall again be cited, with the warning that, if he does not appear, he may be disciplined for contempt, and the court will proceed with the trial in his absence. The time allowed for the appearance on a citation shall be determined by the issuing court with due consideration for the circumstances.
 - 8.) If a witness who is a member of this church fails to obey a lawful citation, he shall be cited again with the warning that if he does not appear or give satisfactory reason for his absence, he may be censured for contempt. The time allowed for appearance on a citation shall be determined by the issuing trial court with due consideration for the circumstances. A communicant member of this church under the jurisdiction of another court shall, if likewise cited and refusing to appear, or, having appeared, refuses to testify, the trial court shall communicate the facts to the court having jurisdiction over the person concerned. An officer or private member of the church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.
 - 9.) The accused shall be entitled to the assistance of counsel. No person shall be eligible to act as counsel who is not a member in good standing of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church. The prosecution shall also have the right to assistance from any member in good standing of the ERPC. No person who is counsel for the accused, or assists the prosecution in a judicial case, may sit in judgment on the same case at any stage thereof.
 - 10.) At the second meeting of the trial court the accused may interpose objections concerning (a) the regularity of the proceedings up to this point and (b) the legal sufficiency of the charges and specifications. The court shall decide on the validity of such objections. It may

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dismiss the case forthwith, or permit such amendments of the charges and specifications as do not alter their essential nature. If the court decides that the trial should proceed the accused shall be called upon to plead "guilty" or "not guilty" and his plea shall be entered upon the record. If the accused pleads "guilty" the court shall retire to determine the censure. If the accused pleads "not guilty" or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed. Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Parties necessarily absent should have counsel assigned to them.

- 11.) No person shall be deprived of the right to set forth, plead, or offer in evidence in any court of this church the provisions of the Word of God or any other part of the Constitution of this church.
- 12.) Witnesses shall testify in the presence of the accused unless the accused has failed to present himself after citation as provided in section 7 of this chapter. When all of the testimony has been taken the prosecution and the accused may present argument as to the law of the church and the facts. The court shall then retire, and, after deliberation, shall vote on each charge and specification separately. If the court decides that the accused is guilty, it shall then determine the censure.
- 13.) Only members of the court who have been present during the whole of the trial shall be allowed to vote therein, nor may any member who has been absent be thereafter counted in the computation of a quorum. The clerk shall keep an accurate roll of the members attending each session of the court.
- 14.) When the trial court has concluded its deliberations, the moderator shall announce its judgment on each charge. If the accused has been found guilty, the court shall state what censure it proposes to pronounce upon the accused. The censure shall not be pronounced before the expiration of the time in which the accused may file notice of appeal. If notice of appeal is filed and an appeal is taken within the time prescribed by this Book of Discipline, the court may not execute its judgment unless and until the judgment is affirmed by the highest court to which appeal is taken.
- 15.) The trial court shall preserve a complete stenographic record of the trial including the following: charges and specifications, objections made by the accused at any stage of the trial; the testimony of witnesses; and all rulings and findings of the court as well as the minutes of its private deliberations. This record, together with all relevant papers, shall be certified by the clerk of the trial court and transmitted to the higher court in cases of appeal. This record shall include either a complete stenographic record or a record made by electronic recording devices. If electronic recording devices are used, at least two such devices must be employed under the supervision of the clerk. These recordings must be certified by both the clerk and the moderator of the trial.
- 16.) The accused and accuser(s) shall each be allowed one copy of the record at the expense of the trial body. Additional copies may be obtained by them at cost.

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- 17.) The accused may take exception to any and all rulings or findings made by the trial court. All such exceptions must be entered on the record.

CHAPTER 5

EVIDENCE IN JUDICIAL CASES

- 1.) Evidence must be of a factual nature. It may be direct or circumstantial. Caution should be exercised in giving weight to evidence which is purely circumstantial.
- 2.) Any person may be a witness in a judicial case if the trial court is satisfied that he has sufficient intelligence to understand, and can sincerely take the following oath, or make the following affirmation:

"I solemnly swear (affirm) in the presence of the omniscient and heart-searching God that I will speak the whole truth concerning the matters on which I am called to testify, as I shall answer to Almighty God."

The moderator shall require each witness before he testifies to take this oath or make this affirmation.

- 3.) The accused may object to the competency and relevancy of any testimony or evidence produced in support of the charges and specifications. The trial court shall decide on all such objections after allowing the accused to be heard in support thereof.
- 4.) Proof of a charge may be attempted by oral testimony or by duly authenticated documents. The testimony of at least two witnesses, or the testimony of one witness accompanied with admissible documentary evidence, shall be necessary in order to establish the truth of any specification.
- 5.) If the accused requests, no witness called to prove facts in support of any one specification shall testify in the presence of another witness who is to testify concerning the same specification.
- 6.) In a case initiated by a court, it shall appoint one of its members as a prosecutor, whose duty it is to secure a fair presentation of known facts to the court. He shall organize, direct, and present the case for the prosecutor. He shall have no part in the deliberations or decisions of the trial court.
- 7.) Witnesses named in the specifications shall first be examined by the prosecutor. The accused may then cross-examine. If the prosecutor or members of the court ask further questions, the accused shall be given the opportunity for re-cross-examination. Witnesses summoned at the request of the accused shall first be examined by the accused. If the prosecutor cross-

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examines, the accused shall be given opportunity to conduct a re-direct examination. Leading questions shall be permitted only under cross-examination.

- 8.) Private parties shall have the right to act before any court as prosecutors or be represented by counsel, who shall meet the qualifications set forth in Chapter 4, section 9.
- 9.) Regularly authenticated records of a court may be received in evidence in any other court.
- 10.) All questions concerning the relevancy or competency of evidence taken by a commission at a distance shall be determined by the trial court after the accused has been given an opportunity to be heard on such questions.
- 11.) If new evidence is produced after one accused has been found guilty, the trial court shall examine the evidence. If it is satisfied that there was good reason for not producing it at the trial, it shall grant a new trial, or, if an appeal has been lodged, it shall certify these facts to the appellate court, and the record of the case may then be returned to the trial court for the purpose of a new trial, or the higher court may conclude the case after hearing the new evidence as if it were a trial court.
- 12.) New evidence discovered during a trial may be offered, but, if such evidence is produced against the accused, he shall be given at least ten days in which to investigate it and prepare a reply thereto.

CHAPTER 6

CASES WITHOUT FULL PROCESS

- 1.) When a person comes before a court as his own accuser, it may proceed to judgment without full process, first determining what offense, if any, has been committed; and, if it determines that an offense has been committed, what censure should be pronounced.
- 2.) When a communicant member informs the session that he does not desire to remain in the fellowship of this church, the session shall first seek to help him overcome his difficulties. If these efforts fail, the session shall take no other action than to erase his name from the roll.
- 3.) When a member unites with another church without a certificate of dismissal, the session shall erase his name from the roll and record the reason in its minutes.
- 4.) When a member removes from the bounds of the congregation and cannot be found, the session shall, after two years, erase his name from the roll, recording the reason in its minutes. When the session has information concerning the new residence of a member who has removed from the bounds of the congregation, the clerk shall communicate with the session of the particular congregation of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church nearest to the member, in order that he may not be lost to this church.

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- 5.) When a minister renounces the jurisdiction of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church by abandoning his ministry and membership therein, or by declaring himself independent, or by joining another body not deemed heretical without a regular dismissal, the presbytery shall erase his name from its roll and record the reason in its minutes. If a minister joins a body deemed heretical, the presbytery shall erase his name from the roll; it shall also notify all particular congregations of this church, all churches with which this church is in correspondence, and the public generally so far as possible, that he has ceased to be a minister of this church and has abandoned the faith of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- 6.) When a minister shall ask to be relieved of the office of the holy ministry, 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 of ministers within the ERPC.

CHAPTER 7

CENSURES

- 1.) In judicial discipline there are five degrees of censure: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and excommunication. Censures shall be pronounced by the moderator for the trial court in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church's only Head and King.
- 2.) If a person, adjudged guilty and remaining under the jurisdiction of this church, refuses or fails to present himself for censure, the trial court shall again cite the person to appear. If he does not appear after a second citation, the censure shall be imposed in his absence. Willful refusal to appear may be deemed an aggravation of the original offense.
- 3.) Admonition consists in tenderly and solemnly addressing the offender, placing his sin before him, warning him of his danger, and exhorting him to repentance and greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4.) Rebuke is a form of censure more severe than admonition. It consists in setting forth the serious character of the offense, reproving the offender, and exhorting him to repentance and more perfect fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5.) Suspension is a form of censure by which one is deprived of the privileges of communicant membership in this church, of his office, or both. It may be for a definite or an indefinite time. Suspension of an officer from the communion of this church shall always be accompanied with suspension from office, but the latter does not necessarily require the former.

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- 6.) An office-bearer or other communicant member of this church, while under suspension, shall be the object of deep solicitude and earnest dealing to the end that he may be restored. When the trial court which pronounces the censure is satisfied of the penitence of the offender, or when the time of suspension has expired and no new offense has arisen, the censure shall be removed, and the offender shall be restored. This restoration shall be accompanied with solemn admonition. Restoration to the privileges of communion may take place without restoration to office.
- 7.) Deposition of an officer consists in depriving him permanently of the exercise of his office, and may follow upon conviction of heresy or gross immorality.
- 8.) Deposition of a pastor or his suspension for an indefinite time involves the dissolution of the pastoral tie. The sentence of deposition or suspension shall be read before the congregation, and the pulpit shall be declared vacant. In case of suspension for a limited period the presbytery shall decide whether the pastoral relation shall be dissolved.
- 9.) When a minister has been deposed or has been suspended for an indefinite time, the court shall immediately notify all the presbyteries of this church.
- 10.) Excommunication is the most severe form of censure and is resorted to only in cases of peculiar aggravation and persistent impenitence. It consists in solemnly excluding the offender from the communion of the visible Church of Jesus Christ.
- 11.) The suspension, deposition, or excommunication of an officer or other member of the church shall be announced to the congregation in which the officer concerned holds office, or in which the member concerned holds membership. Such announcement shall be accompanied with an urgent request for prayer for the offender to the end that he may be restored.
- 12.) When, after the passing of a year, a suspended person has failed to repent, it may be the duty of the court to impose further censure and it may proceed to deposition or excommunication or both, after investigation of the present status of the person involved and consideration of the effect of the action upon this church.
- 13.) The censures herein set forth shall always be accompanied with prayer to God that He may graciously use the act of discipline for the restoration of the offender, the edification of the Church, and His own glory.
- 14.) An officer deposed because of immoral conduct shall be restored only upon the most evident repentance, and after the court has assured itself that the restoration will not be attended by injury to the cause of the Gospel.
- 15.) A minister, ruling elder, or deacon who has been lawfully deposed cannot resume his former office without again being ordained.

CHAPTER 8

RESTORATION

- 1.) Restoration, which is always to be regarded as the goal of discipline, and which may be accomplished even after the extreme penalty of excommunication, shall always be accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His redeeming grace. There is no degree of guilt which precludes the restoration of an offender to the communion of the Church, following satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation.
- 2.) An offender is to be restored by the same court which censured him or by the authority of a higher court. An offender desiring restoration shall make application to the court, acknowledging his offense and expressing his desire to be restored to the fellowship and privileges of this church. The necessity of initiative on the part of the offender in no manner releases the Church from its responsibility in seeking the repentance and restoration of the offender.
- 3.) The court is to consider carefully the request of the offender with the evidence of his repentance. If it is satisfied of his sincerity and of the earnestness of his purpose to live a Christian life, the court is to remove the sentence and to restore him to the fellowship and privileges of the Church.
- 4.) An officer who has been suspended or deposed from office and has had the privileges of this church suspended is to be restored on satisfactory evidence of repentance. He is not to be restored to the exercise of his office unless and until the court shall determine that the witness of the Church will not be impaired by such restoration. Any restoration of an officer by a session is subject to review by the presbytery; any restoration of an officer by a presbytery is subject to review by the General Synod.
- 5.) The act of restoration should normally be publicly announced but may privately conveyed. The court shall determine this based on the good of the offender and of the Church.
- 6.) When an offender has been restored he is, as one forgiven through Christ, to be received by the Church as a brother.

CHAPTER 9

APPEALS

- 1.) An appeal is the removal of a judicial case to the next higher court by the filing of a petition asking that the judgment of a lower court be reversed or modified. An appeal may be taken by the accused, or by a prosecutor when a judgment of guilty has been reversed or modified

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by an appellate court. An appeal is not a re-hearing of an entire judicial case, but is limited to alleged specifications of error in the proceedings or judgment of a lower court.

- 2.) Preliminary decisions made by the trial court during the course of a trial may be excepted to by the accused, or by the prosecutor (subject to the provisions of section 1), and then may be assigned as grounds of appeal from the final judgment of the court.
- 3.) If an appeal is contemplated, written notice of appeal must, within fifteen days after the judgment has been announced, be filed with the clerk of the court from which appeal is taken.
- 4.) In order to perfect an appeal, the appellant must lodge the appeal and the specifications of error with the clerk of the appellate court within forty-five days after the filing of the notice of appeal. The appellant shall also serve a copy of the appeal upon the clerk of the court from whose judgment the appeal is taken. The clerk of the appellate court shall give the appellant and the court from which the appeal is taken reasonable notice of the time and place fixed for the hearing of the appeal.
- 5.) The clerk of the court from which the appeal is taken shall lodge the entire record of the case with the clerk of the higher court.
- 6.) If the appellate court does not sustain any of the specifications of error in the appeal, the judgment of the lower court shall be affirmed. If one or more material specifications of error are sustained, the appellate court shall reverse or modify the judgment, or return the case to the lowest court for a new trial.
- 7.) When the judgment of a lower court is before an appellate court, none of the following shall have any vote in the decision of the case by the appellate court:
 - a.) Members of the court from which the appeal is taken;
 - b.) The accused, the counsel for the accused, or anyone else who has acted in an official capacity on behalf of the accused;
 - c.) The accuser, the prosecutor, or anyone else who has acted in an official capacity for the accuser.

When it is not clear, the appellate court shall determine the voting status of any member.

CHAPTER 10

COMPLAINTS

- 1.) A complaint is a written representation, other than an appeal or a protest, charging a court with delinquency or error. It may be brought by an officer or other member of this church

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against the session or the presbytery of which he is a member, by one session against another session, by a session against the presbytery which has jurisdiction over it, or by one presbytery against another presbytery.

- 2.) A complaint shall first be presented to the court which is alleged to be delinquent or in error, and this court shall be asked to make amends. The complaint shall be presented as soon as possible after the alleged delinquency or error, and always within three months, unless it is shown that it could not have been presented within that time.
- 3.) If, after considering a complaint, the court alleged to be delinquent or in error is not convinced that it has been delinquent or has erred, and refuses to make amends, the complainant may appeal to the next higher court having jurisdiction. The appeal shall carry the complaint to that court. Appeal shall be entered at the earliest possible time. Before this action is taken, notice of intention to appeal must be given to the court against which the complaint is directed. The complaint carried to the higher court must be the same complaint presented to the lower court.
- 4.) When a complaint has been carried to a higher court, the clerk of the court which is charged with delinquency or error shall submit to the clerk of the higher court the relevant materials, including a statement of the facts of the case arranged by date in the form of a chronology, and a certified copy of any minutes or other documents evidencing the alleged delinquency or error. The clerk of the higher court shall give the complainant and the court against which the complaint is directed reasonable notice of the time, date, and place fixed for the hearing of the complaint by the higher court. Neither the complainant nor any member of the court whose alleged delinquency or error is complained of shall propose or second motions, or vote in any decisions concerning the matter.
- 5.) If a complaint against a session has been carried to the presbytery which has jurisdiction over it, and the presbytery has rendered a decision, either the complainant or the session may appeal the decision to the General Synod. The appeal shall carry the complaint against the session to the General Synod and the Synod shall adjudicate the case as constituted by that complaint. Appeal shall be entered at the earliest possible time. Notice of intention to appeal, and copies of the appeal itself, shall be given to both lower courts, and the clerks of those courts shall submit the relevant papers to the clerk of the General Synod. Reasons may be appended to the appeal. These reasons may include alleged delinquencies in the presbytery's handling of the case and other matters germane to the issues of the case as constituted by the complaint against the session.
- 6.) A complaint, carried by appeal to a higher court, may be sustained; or, denied; or, remanded, with grounds, to the next lower court. A decision to remand shall state whether jurisdiction in the matter is being returned to the lower court, or retained by the higher court.
- 7.) If a court is adjudged delinquent or in error by a higher court, the higher court shall determine what amends are to be made.

CHAPTER 11

PROTESTS, PETITIONS AND OVERTURES

- 1.) Any member of a court who has voted on a question and is not satisfied with the decision, is entitled to have his protest recorded. By so doing he relieves himself from responsibility for the decision, and saves himself from censure on account of it. The protest must be submitted when the decision is announced. Reasons of protest submitted at the time, or within ten days, if in proper language, shall be entered in the minutes. When deemed necessary, the court shall prepare answers which shall be entered in the minutes.
- 2.) Members who have voted in the minority may signify their adherence to a protest and have their adherence recorded, either at the time, or at the following session of the court when the minutes are confirmed, but not afterwards.
- 3.) Every member of this church has the right of access to any church court by petition. He has direct access to the session of the congregation to which he belongs, but a petition to a higher court must, in the first place, be presented to the session, with a request for its transmission.
- 4.) A lower court may transmit a petition with or without approval or concurrence, as it sees fit. Before transmitting, the court should see that the petition is in proper form and expressed in respectful language. If transmission is refused, the court shall state its reasons, and the petitioner shall have the right of appeal. These provisions shall apply alike to a petition from an individual, from any number of persons, from a congregation, or from a lower court.
- 5.) When a court of the church wishes to propose an amendment to the Constitution, or generally the adoption of any measure appertaining to the functions of a presbytery or the General Synod, an overture on the subject shall be presented.
- 6.) All petitions and overtures intended for the General Synod shall be sent by the clerks of the lower courts, or by the parties signing them, to the clerk of the Synod.

CHAPTER 12

TIME LIMITATIONS FOR COURTS

- 1.) Sessions shall observe the following time limits in order to ensure orderly process of judicial matters without delay:
 - a.) The session shall, within ninety (90) days from the date on which it receives a charge in its proper form in a duly constituted meeting, conclude a preliminary investigation of the charge and render its decision on whether to proceed to trial.

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- b.) In cases of a charge moving to trial, the first day of the trial shall be within ninety (90) days of the date on which the session determined to move the matter to trial.
 - c.) The session shall initiate consideration of a complaint within sixty (60) days from the date on which it receives the complaint in its proper form in a duly constituted meeting. Disposition of complaints shall normally be completed within ninety (90) days after the session initiates consideration.
- 2.) When a presbytery is the court of original jurisdiction, it shall observe the time limits above multiplied by two.
 - 3.) Failure to adhere to these time limits shall be grounds for the party bringing a charge or complaint to file a complaint with the next higher court. The higher court has the authority to question the lower court regarding such a complaint, in order to ascertain that the judicial matter is being considered in a timely and orderly manner. The higher court further has the authority to appoint one or more presbyters to investigate the matter on behalf of the higher court and report back to it. If the higher court determines that a lower court persistently refuses to act in a timely manner, the higher court may determine to assume jurisdiction of the matter.

CHAPTER 13

JUDICIAL ACTION AGAINST A CONGREGATION

- 1.) In serious and prolonged cases where there is evidence of corporate responsibility, a charge may be brought against a member congregation as a body for failure to adhere to the Constitution of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church. The charge shall be brought by the action of any three (3) congregational sessions of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church; or the presbytery itself may bring the charge. The charge is to address the entire session of the congregation as the accused; the session will act in all matters related to the charge on behalf of the congregation. In either case the presbytery shall have original jurisdiction, and the charge shall be filed with the clerk of the presbytery.
- 2.) When three congregational sessions have brought a charge, the moderators of all three sessions shall affix their signatures to the charge. The charge shall include a statement that it has been subscribed to by a majority vote in each session.
- 3.) When the presbytery has brought a charge, the moderator of the presbytery shall affix his signature to the charge. The charge shall include a statement that it has been subscribed to by a majority vote of the presbytery. No minister or ruling elder of the congregation named as the accused in the charge may make motions, or vote in the matter, or take any actions beyond providing such information to the presbytery as it may require.

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- 4.) A charge against a congregation shall be adjudicated in accordance with Chapters 3 and 4, with proper allowances made for the number and locations of the parties involved.
- 5.) The General Synod shall review the verdict of the presbytery in all cases involving a charge against a congregation. The General Synod may sustain the verdict, reverse the verdict, or return the case to the presbytery for such further action as the Synod may specify. No member of the presbytery of original jurisdiction, the accused congregation, or the accusing congregations may make motions, or vote in the matter, or take any actions beyond providing such information to the General Synod as it may require.
- 6.) If the General Synod sustains a guilty verdict or reverses a not-guilty verdict, and there is no evidence of corporate repentance on the part of the congregation, the sentence to be imposed is expulsion of the congregation from The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, erasure of its ministers from the roll of the presbytery, and forfeiture of the congregation's right to use the name Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church. The sentence is to be carried out by the presbytery within sixty (60) days of the Synod's decision.
- 7.) However, if there is evidence of repentance, the General Synod may direct the presbytery to place the congregation on probationary status, and to appoint a committee to work with the session and congregation to restore adherence to the Constitution of this church. The committee shall report to the next General Synod on the results of these efforts. If the Synod determines that adherence has been restored, the sentence shall be vacated and the congregation shall be removed from probationary status. Otherwise, the sentence shall be carried out within sixty (60) days of the Synod's decision.
- 8.) Whenever sentence is carried out, the presbytery shall at the same time also notify all particular congregations of this church, all churches with which this church is in correspondence, and the public generally so far as possible, that the congregation has been declared no longer to be a particular congregation of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.
- 9.) If a congregation is to be expelled, but any individual communicant members are found not to have been parties to the actions of the congregation that were contrary to the Constitution of this church, or have been parties to such actions but are individually repentant:
 - a.) If any of them wish to remain as members of this church under its Constitution, and in fellowship with one another as a particular congregation, the presbytery shall provide all possible pastoral care to them with a view to the formation of a successor congregation.
 - b.) If any of them desire dismissal as members in good standing to another congregation of this church, or to another body that is not deemed heretical, the presbytery shall provide them with letters of dismissal.

CHAPTER 14

MATTERS NOT PROVIDED FOR

- 1.) Any matters of discipline or details of process not provided for are left to the judgment of the court having jurisdiction in the case. In all such matters the court is to be governed by the general principles and rules set forth in the Constitution of the Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, and specifically in this Book of Discipline.

Finis.

SUGGESTED FORMS
FOR USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
BOOK OF DISCIPLINE
OF
THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Adopted June 25, 2005

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR
CHARGE AND SPECIFICATIONS**

THE CHARGE:

[Name(s) of the accusers]

charge(s)

[name of the accused]

with

[here name a single alleged offense]

contrary to

[here cite passages from the Word of God, the confessional standards of this church, or other relevant provisions of the Constitution of this church that are alleged to have been violated].

SPECIFICATIONS:

That on or about *[date]* *[the accused]*

[Here set forth briefly the place and circumstances of the alleged offense. If there is more than one specification, list each separately and number each specification].

WITNESSES AND/OR DOCUMENTS:

[Here set forth the names of witnesses and/or the titles of documents to be produced in support of the Charge and Specifications.]

Printed name and signature of the Accuser
or, in case of a church court, the Moderator

Printed name and signature of the Clerk
when a court is the accuser

Date

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR
CITATION OF THE ACCUSED**

To: [*name of the accused*]

You are hereby cited to appear before [*name of judicatory*], meeting on [*date*] at [*time*] at [*location*], then and there to hear and receive certain charges and specifications which have been admitted against you by this court of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

[In the case of a second citation, add the following warning according to Book of Discipline Chapter 4, section 7]

This is a second citation. If you, the accused, refuse or fail to appear before the trial court, without satisfactory reason and prior notification of your absence, at the time appointed for the trial of the case, you may be disciplined for contempt, and the court will proceed with the trial in your absence.

By order of [*name of the trial court*] of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Printed name and signature of the Moderator

Printed name and signature of the Clerk

Date

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR
CITATION OF A WITNESS**

To: [*name of witness*]

You are hereby cited to appear before [*name of judicatory*], meeting on [*date*] at [*time*] at [*location*], then and there to give evidence in the trial of [*name of the accused*].

[*In the case of a second citation, add this warning in accordance with Book of Discipline Chapter 4, section 8*]

This is a second citation. If you refuse or fail to appear before the trial court, without satisfactory reason and prior notification of your absence, at the time appointed, you may be disciplined for contempt.

By order of [*name of the trial court*] of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Printed name and signature of the Moderator

Printed name and signature of the Clerk

Date

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR
NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL
IN JUDICIAL CASES**

To [*name of Clerk or Moderator*] of [*name of the court from which the appeal is to be taken*] of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

I hereby give notice of my intention to appeal to [*here insert the name of the court to which the appeal will be carried*] the judgment of the above named court in the case of [*here insert the name of the accused*].

Printed name and signature of the Appellant

Date

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR AN
APPEAL TO A HIGHER COURT
IN JUDICIAL CASES**

To [*name of Clerk or Moderator*] of [*name of the court to which the appeal is to be taken*] of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

I hereby appeal the judgment of [*here insert the name of the trial court or appellate court*] in the case of [*here insert the name of the accused*], and in support of this appeal set forth the following specifications of error:

[*Here insert the title of the court from which the appeal is taken*]

of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church erred in

[*here state concisely the error alleged to have been made*]

contrary to

[*here cite passages from the Word of God, the confessional standards of this church, or other relevant provisions of the Constitution of this church that are alleged to have been violated*].

[*Repeat the above for any additional specifications of error.*]

Printed name and signature of the Appellant

Date

**SUGGESTED FORM
FOR A
COMPLAINT**

To [*name of Clerk or Moderator*] of [*name of the court to which the Complaint is taken*]
of The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church.

I hereby complain against the action [or delinquency] of [*name of court of the church*]

in connection with

[*here briefly state the matter regarding which the complaint is made*],

and in support of this Complaint set forth the following reasons:

[*Here set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs the reasons for the complaint, citing passages from the Word of God, the confessional standards of this church, or other relevant provisions of the Constitution of this church that are alleged to have been violated or neglected.*]

The Complainant may also request remedial actions:

As [remedy/remedies] I hereby request that the following actions be taken:

[*Here set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs the actions requested of the court to which the Complaint is taken.*]

Printed name and signature of the Complainant

Date

DIRECTORY FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD
IN
THE EVANGELICAL REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

INCLUDING
SUGGESTED FORMS FOR PARTICULAR SERVICES

Adopted June 25, 2005

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CHAPTER 1

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY

- 1.) It is the duty of every one to remember the Lord's Day and to prepare for it before its approach.
- 2.) God commanded His Old Testament people to keep holy the last day of the week, but He sanctified the first day as the Sabbath by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. For this reason the church of the new dispensation has from the time of the apostles kept holy the first day of the week as the Lord's Day.
- 3.) Although it is fitting and proper that the members of Christ's church meet for worship on other occasions also, which are left to the discretion of the particular churches, it is the sacred duty and high privilege of God's people everywhere to convene for public worship on the Lord's Day. God has expressly enjoined them in His holy Word not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.
- 4.) It is well for each family to prepare at the family altar for communion with God in His public ordinances by reading the Scriptures, by holy meditation and by prayer, especially for a blessing upon the ministry of the Word.
- 5.) The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord, and is to be employed primarily in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore it is requisite that there be a holy resting all the day from such labors and an abstaining from such thoughts, conversations and recreations as are not consonant with this end.
- 6.) Let works of necessity on that day be so ordered that servants or others be not improperly detained from the public worship of God, nor otherwise hindered from sanctifying the Sabbath.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

- 1.) Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source.
- 2.) A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other but before all else a meeting of the triune God with His chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

- 3.) The end of public worship is the glory of God. His people should engage in all its several parts with an eye single to His glory. Public worship has as its aim the building of Christ's church by the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved – all to the glory of God. Through public worship on the Lord's Day Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in their every activity, remembering, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.
- 4.) Public worship is rightly said to be divine because God is its beginning and its end. It is of Him and through Him and unto Him.
- 5.) Public worship is Christian when the worshippers recognize that Christ is the Mediator by whom alone they can come unto God, when they honor Christ as the Head of the church, who rules over public worship, and when their worship is an expression of their faith in Christ and of their love for Him.
- 6.) Public worship must be performed in spirit and in truth. Externalism and hypocrisy stand condemned. The forms of public worship have value only when they serve to express the inner reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion.
- 7.) The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given His church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God's people should serve Him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterized by that simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness.
- 8.) Public worship differs from private worship in that in public worship God is served by His saints unitedly as His covenant people, the body of Christ. For this reason the covenant children should be present so far as is possible as well as adults. For the same reason no favoritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than himself.
- 9.) It behooves God's people not only to come into His presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of His perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise for the great salvation which He has so graciously wrought for them through His only begotten Son and applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

THE USUAL PARTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

- 1.) As a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of God and His people, the parts of the service are of two kinds: those which are performed on behalf of God, and those which are performed by the congregation. In the former the worshippers are receptive, in the latter they are active. It is reasonable that these two elements be made to alternate as far as possible.
- 2.) The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is performed by the minister as God's servant. Through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the interpretation of Holy Writ in the sermon. For this reason the minister does well to refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human comments, and the congregation should attend to the reading with deepest reverence. The reading of the Scriptures by the minister is to be distinguished from the responsive reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation. In the former God addresses His people; in the latter God's people give expression in the words of Scripture to their contrition, adoration, gratitude and other holy sentiments. The psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for responsive reading.
- 3.) In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of His servant. It is a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of man, that he declare the whole counsel of God, and that he handle aright the Word of truth. To these ends the sermon must be prepared with the utmost care. Let the session give diligence that no person enter the pulpit concerning whose doctrinal soundness or knowledge of Scripture there is reasonable doubt. A text may not be used merely to introduce a sermon but must be carefully expounded. In the sermon the minister should explain the Word of God for the instruction of his hearers and then apply it for their exhortation. Care should be taken in preaching that Christian duty be not divorced from Christian truth. That minister fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls who neglects to warn the congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the Gospel. The minister should seek to perfect the saints by building them up in the most holy faith and in Christ's stead should beseech the unconverted that they be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the Gospel of salvation by grace be proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, in order that the unsaved may rely for salvation on the grace of God only, to the exclusion of their own works or character, and that the saints may ascribe glory for their salvation to God alone.
- 4.) It is proper that the minister at the beginning of the service extend a welcome in God's name to the congregation by the use of the apostolic salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" or other appropriate words. At the conclusion of the service the minister may pronounce in God's name either the high-priestly benediction, "The Lord bless You, and keep You: the Lord make His face to shine upon You, and be gracious unto You: the Lord lift up His countenance upon You, and give You peace," or the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of

the Holy Spirit, be with you all." If, however, the minister deem another scriptural benediction more fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it. The salutation and benediction, as pronounced in God's name, are properly used only by an ordained minister and in a gathering of Christ's church.

- 5.) It is altogether fitting that, before the service, each person in the congregation engage in silent prayer. In public prayer the minister is the voice of the congregation. He should pray in such a way that the whole assembly of God's people may pray with him, and the members of the congregation not only are bound to listen as he prays but should themselves pray in their hearts. To these ends it is desirable that the minister prepare himself for public prayers by previous meditation. Early in the service he shall offer a brief invocation, humbly imploring for the congregation and himself the guidance of the Holy Spirit in worship. At some point before the sermon there shall be a comprehensive prayer comprising adoration of God's perfections, thanksgiving for His mercies, confession of sins, supplication for the pardon of sins through the blood of the atonement and for renewal by the Holy Spirit, intercession for the poor, the sick, the dying, the mourning, the persecuted, the erring, the rising generation, the aged, the churches of the denomination, Christian missions at home and abroad, Christian education and other Christian activities, the church universal, the civil rulers, the community, human society in general, or whatever causes may be particularly worthy. The prayer after the sermon ought usually to have a relation to the subject that has been treated in the discourse. Public prayer must be offered with deep humility and holy reverence and be free from vain repetition or display of words.
- 6.) As it is the aim of public worship to glorify God, prayer and praise should predominate in congregational singing. Let every member of the church take part in this act of worship. It should be performed not merely with the lips but with the spirit and the understanding. Since the metrical versions of the Psalms are based upon the Word of God, they ought to be used frequently in public worship. Great care must be taken that all the materials of song are in perfect accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture. Let the tunes as well as the words be dignified and elevated. The stately rhythm of the chorale is especially appropriate for public worship. No person shall take a special part in the musical service unless he is a professing Christian and adorns his profession with a godly walk.
- 7.) The bringing of offerings into God's house is a solemn act of thanksgiving to almighty God. In order that the receiving of the offering may stand out as a specific act of worship it is well that the minister either precede or immediately follow it with a brief prayer, invoking the blessing of God upon the offering and devoting it to His service. It is the duty of the minister to cultivate the grace of liberal giving in the members of the church by reminding them of the scriptural admonition that every one should give as the Lord has prospered him, of the assurance of Scripture that God loves a cheerful giver, and of the blessed example of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, became poor in order that poor sinners through His poverty might become rich. The session shall take care that the offerings of the congregation are used only for the maintenance of public worship, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and other Christian ministries. If a member of the church designated his gift to a particular cause, the session shall respect his wish unless it is convinced that the specified cause is unworthy, in which case the gift shall be returned to the donor.

- 8.) Nothing in the preceding sections shall be understood so as to prohibit ruling elders from leading in public prayer, reading the Scriptures, leading responsive readings, or, on occasion, exhorting the congregation as part of public worship.

CHAPTER 4

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SACRAMENTS: GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 1.) In order that the sacraments, as occasional elements of the public worship of God, may be celebrated with discernment and understanding, it is necessary that adequate preparation be made prior to their administration. It is imperative that believers meditate beforehand upon the teaching of the Word of God relative to their meaning in order that they may participate in a worthy manner. Such preparation may well include the study of that summary of this teaching which is found in the Confession of Faith. To avoid ignorance and superstition suitable preparatory sermons should be preached from time to time, and the celebration of the sacraments should be accompanied by the preaching of the Word. Moreover, in connection with the administration of the sacraments, a summary of the teaching of the Word of God as to their meaning shall be set forth.
- 2.) The baptism of infants is not to be unnecessarily delayed. Notice of intention to present a child for baptism must be given to the session by a parent, or some other qualified person, who is a believer. The baptism of adults must await their public profession of faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently, but the frequency may be determined by each session as it may judge most conducive to edification.
- 3.) Since the sacraments are ordinances of the visible church, they are not to be administered except under the oversight of the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God, baptism signifying solemn admission into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper constituting the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of His mystical body. Nevertheless, if a session judge that very unusual circumstances obtain in a particular instance, the sacraments may be administered elsewhere; but, in any event, the church must be represented in the service.
- 4.) Although the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the piety or intention of the minister, they are not to be administered by any private person but only by a minister of Christ, called to be a steward of the mysteries of God.
- 5.) In the administration of the sacraments, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in the subsequent divisions of this chapter, but he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms, which are suggested as appropriate. He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom as the edification of the people shall require.

CHAPTER 5

BAPTISM

- 1.) Before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, the minister shall give instruction as to the institution and nature of the sacrament:

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sign and seal of the inclusion of the person who is baptized in the covenant of grace. Teaching that we and our children are conceived and born in sin, it signifies and seals unto us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation.

Baptism with water does not save the one who is baptized. Rather, it signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ for those who come to personal faith in Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Since these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as His very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Baptism summons us to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to His commandments.

- 2.) When an infant is to be baptized, the minister shall proceed to give instruction as to the ground of infant baptism:

Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For the promise of the covenant is made to believers and to their children, as God declared unto Abraham: "And I will establish my covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you and to your seed after you."

In the new dispensation no less than in the old, the children of believers, born within the church, have, by virtue of their birth, interest in the covenant and right to the seal of it and to the outward privileges of the church. For the covenant of grace is the same in substance under both dispensations, and the grace of God for the consolation of believers is even more fully manifested in the new dispensation. Moreover, our Saviour admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, and saying, "Of such is the kingdom of God." So the children of the covenant are by baptism distinguished from the world and solemnly received into the visible church, though they have not yet received Christ as their Savior. We baptize our young children in the hope that God will graciously bring them to personal faith in Christ.

- 3.) When an adult is to be baptized, the minister shall follow the opening statement on the institution and nature of the sacrament of baptism with instruction as to the distinctive basis of the baptism of adults:

Although the young children of believers are to be baptized as members of the covenant, the baptism of adults must await their own profession of faith in Christ.

Having come to years of discretion, they become the heirs of salvation and members of the visible church only by way of personal belief in and acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord. So our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

- 4.) Before the baptism of an infant, the minister shall require that the parents or other responsible individual(s) acknowledge the duty of believers to present their children for holy baptism and that they assume publicly their responsibility for the Christian nurture of their children:
 - a.) Do you acknowledge that _____ is a sinner, in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
 - b.) Do you pray for God's Covenant promises to be fulfilled in _____, looking in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for _____ to come to personal trust in Christ for his (her) salvation, as you do for your own?
 - c.) Do you now unreservedly dedicate _____ to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon God's grace, that you will endeavor to set before _____ a godly example, that you will pray with and for _____, that you will teach _____ the doctrines of our faith as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and that you will strive by all the means available to bring _____ up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?
- 5.) Prior to the baptism of an adult, the person to be baptized, having previously made profession of faith before the session, shall be required to confess his faith publicly before the congregation, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 7 of this Directory.
- 6.) After prayer for the presence and blessing of the triune God that the grace signified and sealed by holy baptism may be abundantly realized, the minister, calling the person by name, shall say:

I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

- 7.) As he pronounces these words, he is to baptize with water, without adding any other ceremony, and the whole service of baptism shall be concluded with prayer.

CHAPTER 6

THE LORD'S SUPPER

- 1.) Before the administration of the Lord's Supper, the minister shall read the words of the institution of the sacrament from one of the evangelists or from I Corinthians 11. Thereupon he shall give instruction as to its institution and nature:

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Until His coming again it is to be observed for a perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death. The physical elements, representing the broken body and the shed blood of the Saviour, are received by true believers as signs and seals of all the benefits of His sacrifice upon the cross.

The elements signify what Christ has done for His people in His death, which is applied to believers by the Holy Spirit through repentance and faith. The elements are a seal bearing witness to the remission of sins and nourishment and growth in Christ, and are a bond and pledge of the communion of believers with Him and with each other as members of His body.

Partaking of the elements does not save, nor does partaking of the elements serve in any way to maintain the believer in the state of saving grace. Rather, as signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace they declare that it is God who is faithful and true to fulfill the promises of the covenant. The Lord's Supper also summons believers to all the duties of the children of God, and therefore calls us to renewed consecration in gratitude for His salvation.

- 2.) The minister shall then declare who may come to the Lord's table and who are excluded, according to the Word of God using the following or like words:

It is my solemn duty to warn unbelievers, and those who secretly and impenitently live in any sin, not to approach the holy table lest they partake unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, and so eat and drink condemnation to themselves.

Nevertheless, this warning is not designed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if the supper were for those who might be free from sin. On the contrary, we who are invited to the supper, coming as guilty and polluted sinners and without hope of eternal life apart from the grace of God in Christ, confess our dependence for pardon and cleansing upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ, base our hope of eternal life upon His perfect obedience and righteousness, and humbly resolve to deny ourselves, crucify our old natures, and follow Christ as becomes those who bear His name.

Let us therefore, in accordance with the admonition of the apostle Paul, examine our minds and hearts to determine whether such discernment is ours, to the end that we may partake to the glory of God and to our growth in the grace of Christ.

- 3.) After prayer and thanksgiving the minister shall take the bread and, having broken it, give it to the people saying:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, having taken bread and blessed and broken it, gave it to His disciples – as I, ministering in His name, give this bread unto you – saying: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.”

- 4.) Having given the bread, the minister shall take the cup and give it to the people saying:

Our Savior also took the cup and having given thanks – as has here been done in His name – He gave it to His disciples, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it.”

- 5.) The minister may read appropriate passages of Scripture during the distribution of the elements, or the congregation may be encouraged to pray silently.
- 6.) After a prayer of thanksgiving, an offering may be taken for the relief of the poor or for some other sacred purpose.
- 7.) A psalm or hymn should then be sung, and the congregation dismissed with the following or some other appropriate benediction:

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER 7

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST

- 1.) In order to aid those who contemplate making public profession of faith in Christ to understand the implication of this significant act and to perform it intelligently, the pastor shall conduct classes in Christian doctrine both for the covenant youth and for any others who may manifest an interest in the way of salvation.
- 2.) Before permitting any one to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall examine him in order to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the knowledge of the Gospel requisite for saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.
- 3.) When the session is satisfied that any one is qualified to make public profession of faith in Christ, his name shall be publicly announced to the church at least one week before the day chosen for this solemn event. When a sinner repents, all Heaven rejoices.
- 4.) No one shall be allowed to take part in the Lord's Supper who has not first made public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord.
- 5.) On the occasion of public profession of faith in Christ, the minister shall address the candidate in these or like words, using the form which the circumstances require:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace which was given you, in that, having come to years of discretion, you have personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, which was signified and sealed unto you in your infancy by holy baptism.

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace which was given you, in that, although you have not been privileged to receive the sacrament of baptism in your infancy, nevertheless, through faith you have personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation, and have thus become a partaker of the covenant of grace.

6.) Thereupon the minister shall ask these, or equivalent, questions:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
2. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure and wrath, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?
3. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
4. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
5. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
6. Do you agree to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

When any one has publicly professed his faith by answering these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall address him in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper. I charge you that by the faithful use of the means of grace – the Word of God, the sacraments and prayer – and in humble reliance upon the grace of God, you continue steadfastly in the confession which you have made. Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, He will confess you before His Father who is in heaven. May the God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7. This part of the service shall be concluded with an appropriate prayer.

CHAPTER 8

SUGGESTED FORM FOR THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

At the time and place appointed for the solemnization of matrimony, the persons to be married shall take their places before the minister, the man having the woman at his left hand, and all present reverently standing.

The minister shall say:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony.

Marriage was instituted by God himself in the time of man's innocence and uprightness. The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suited to him." Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and brought her unto the man. Our Lord Jesus Christ honored marriage by His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And He confirmed it as a divine ordinance and a union not to be severed when He declared, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Moreover, the apostle Paul set forth the sacred and exalted nature of marriage when he likened it to the mystical union between Christ and His church.

The purpose of marriage is the enrichment of the lives of those who enter into this estate, the propagation of the race, and the extension of Christ's Church to the glory of the covenant God.

Let us reverently hear what the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the duty of husbands to their wives and of wives to their husbands:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” (Ephesians 5:25-28)

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” (Ephesians 5:22-24)

These two persons are come to be joined in this holy estate of marriage. If anyone can show just cause why they may not lawfully be wedded, let him now declare it, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

I require and charge you both that, if either of you knows any cause why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it.

Let us pray:

Most holy and most merciful Father, at once the God of nature and of grace, creator, preserver and redeemer of mankind, fill these, Your servant and Your handmaiden, with a sense of the

solemnity of the vows they are about to make. May they look to You for Your assistance, and enter into these sacred obligations in humble dependence upon Your enabling grace. Grant this, O Father, with the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ, Your Son. Amen.

After prayer the minister shall say:

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

The father of the woman, or someone in his stead, shall place her right hand in that of the minister, and the minister shall cause the man to take with his right hand the woman's right hand.

The minister shall then say:

_____, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live with her after God's commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love her, honor and cherish her, so long as you both shall live?

The man shall answer:

I will.

Then the minister shall say:

_____, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live with him after God's commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love him, cherish and obey him, so long as you both shall live?

The woman shall answer:

I will.

The man shall say:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

The woman shall say:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful wife in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

The man shall then put the ring on the third finger of the woman's left hand, and shall say after the minister:

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

The minister shall say to the woman:

Do you, _____, receive this ring as a token of your pledge to keep this covenant and perform these vows?

The woman shall say:

I do.

The woman shall then put the ring on the third finger of the man's left hand, and shall say after the minister:

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

The minister shall say to the man:

Do you, _____, receive this ring as a token of your pledge to keep this covenant and perform these vows?

The man shall say:

I do.

The minister shall say:

Let us pray.

After prayer the minister shall say:

By virtue of the authority committed to me by the church of Christ and the law of the state, I now pronounce you, _____ and _____, husband and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister shall cause the husband and wife to join their right hands, and shall say:

"What God has joined together, let not man separate."

The Lord our God fill you with His grace, and grant that you may long live together in all godliness and holiness. Amen.

CHAPTER 9

SUGGESTED FORM FOR THE BURIAL SERVICE

It should be observed that the Scriptures and the prayers in the following service have been arranged with the burial of believers or their children primarily in mind. When other persons are to be buried, the service should be modified accordingly.

From the references to the minister in this service it is not to be inferred that only a minister may officiate.

When the people have assembled, the minister shall begin the service with several of these sentences from the Holy Scriptures:

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 124:8).

“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13, 14).

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"
(I Timothy 6:7).

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27).

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.’” (John 11:25, 26).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Then the minister shall lead the people in the invocation, using the following, or a similar, prayer, and ending, if desired, with the Lord's Prayer.

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in You. We come to You in the name of Your only begotten and well beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who died for our sins and rose again. Grant us, we beseech You, through His

precious blood, peace and pardon, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And seeing that we have in Him a high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, may we come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in this time of need.

We thank You for the precious promises of Your Word. We praise You for the light of the Gospel. We acknowledge Your sovereign will and infinite compassion. Be pleased, therefore, to look upon our sorrow, and for the sake of Your dear Son, enable us to hear Your holy Word, so that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. Grant us the consolation of Your Holy Spirit. May we hold fast our confidence in Your forgiving mercy and the blessed assurance of eternal life, through Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree and rose from the dead and is exalted at Your right hand, even Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Then a hymn may be read by the minister, or sung by the people.

Then let the minister read one or more of the following Psalms:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” (Psalm 23).

“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You turn man to destruction, and say, ‘Return, O children of men.’

“For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night. You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.

“For we have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.

“For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

“Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

“Return, O Lord! How long? And have compassion on Your servants.

“Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil.

“Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.” (Psalm 90).

“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.” (Psalm 103:13-18).

Psalm 39:4-13 and Psalm 130 may also be found appropriate:

“Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.

“Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them.

“And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions; do not make me the reproach of the foolish. I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it. Remove Your plague from me; I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, you make his beauty melt away like a moth; surely every man is vapor.

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were. Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, before I go away and am no more.” (Psalm 39:4-13)

“Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning — yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” (Psalm 130)

Then let the minister read one or more of these, or similar, passages presenting the Gospel message of salvation through Christ:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His

Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:16-17)

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.” (John 10:9-11, 27-30)

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” (Romans 5:1-11)

Romans 8:1-11 may also be found appropriate:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:1-11)

Then, if it is deemed fitting, the minister may read these or similar, passages, concerning a notably useful and fruitful Christian life:

“But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4:18)

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. ‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.’ ” (Malachi 3:16-18)

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:23-25)

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ ” (Matthew 25:34-40)

“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20)

Then another hymn may be read or sung.

Then let the minister read one or more of these Scripture passages giving the Gospel promise of the resurrection and the life everlasting:

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His

coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For ‘He has put all things under His feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain — perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:35-58)

“Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased

and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10)

“While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, ‘Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?’

“As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, ‘Do not be afraid; only believe.’ And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’ (Mark 5:35-39)

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3)

“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:15-20)

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:25-27)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not

see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:3-9)

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” (Revelation 21:22-27)

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Then he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true.’ And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ‘Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.’ ” (Revelation 22:1-7)

II Corinthians 4:16-18; I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-11 and Revelation 7:13-17 may also be found appropriate:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

“So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” (1 Thessalonians 3:13)

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’

“So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’ ” (Revelation 7:13-17)

If it is desired, an address may here be given.

Then another hymn may be read or sung.

Then shall the minister lead the people in this, or other, fitting prayer:

Almighty and most merciful God, we come again to You in prayer, acknowledging Your sovereign power and right both to give and to take away as seems good unto You. We remember all Your mercies, and Your saving grace revealed to us in Christ, Your Son, our Redeemer. We thank You for Your favor shown to our beloved friend in bringing him to a knowledge of Your redeeming love, granting him faith in Christ, the Savior.

We humbly pray for Your bereaved servants that You will give to them meek and trustful submission to Your will. May they have divine comfort through the joy of Christ's risen presence and the illumination of Your Holy Spirit. Fill their sorrowing hearts with Your love, that they may wholly rest in You, who bring eternal joy out of grief, and life from death, through the power of the resurrection of Your Son.

Grant to us who remain grace to imitate the righteous dead in faith and in loving service. Give us, we pray, perseverance to continue faithful unto the end, following Christ our Lord, so that we may finally be received unto heaven through His vicarious sacrifice, and, with all Your elect, adore You the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

At the place of burial, if it seems desirable, let the minister say:

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Then, if it seems desirable, earth or flowers may be scattered upon the casket, while the minister shall say:

Forasmuch as it has pleased almighty God, in His wise providence, to take out of this world the soul of our brother [sister], we therefore commit his [her] body to the ground, looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose coming in glorious majesty the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the mortal bodies of those who sleep in Him shall be changed, and made like unto His own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Then the minister may say:

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” ’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’ ”

Then the minister shall offer the following, or a similar prayer:

Almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, grant that we may realize the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that we may live before You in godly fear all our days, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

We humbly beseech You to comfort the sorrowing, and to support them in their grief. Raise us up each one, we pray You, from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, so that we too, when we depart this life, may rest in Christ, and at the resurrection be found acceptable in Your sight, through the mediation of Him who died on the cross for our offenses and rose again for our justification. Amen.

CHAPTER 10

SUGGESTED SERVICE FOR THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH

The congregation shall stand, and the following portions from the Psalter shall be read by the presiding minister and the people responsively, or, if desired, by the minister alone.

“Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.” (Psalm 100)

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. For thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces. For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you.’ Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.” (Psalm 122)

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young — even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. " (Psalm 84: 1-4, 10)

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face. Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.” (Psalm 24)

The minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, we are gathered to consecrate and set apart this house for the worship of the one living and true God. Let us therefore dedicate this place to its proper and sacred uses.

Then the minister and the people shall say responsively:

Minister: To You, God and Father of Jesus Christ, our Lord:

People: We dedicate this house.

M: To You, eternal Son of God, Redeemer of Your people and Head of Your church:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: To You, Spirit of God, lord and giver of life, our teacher, sanctifier and comforter:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: For the worship of God in praise and prayer;
For the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God;
For the celebration of the holy sacraments:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: For the diffusion of sacred knowledge;
For the promotion of righteousness;
For the extension of the kingdom of God:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: For release to the captives;
For recovering of sight to the blind;
For rest to the heavy laden:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: For comfort to those who mourn;
For strength to those who are tempted;
For assurance to those of little faith:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: For the sanctifying of the family;
For the nurture of the young;
For the perfecting of believers:

P: We dedicate this house.

M: In gratitude for the gracious keeping of the divine covenant throughout past generations;
In reliance upon the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church;
In the hope of the eternal glory of the church triumphant:

All: We dedicate this house, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and for His glory. Amen.

Then the minister shall say:

Beloved in the Lord, seeing that it has pleased almighty God to prosper us in our undertaking to build [or secure] a house for His worship, let us now invoke upon it His abiding blessing, to the end that pure apostolic doctrine and order may be maintained herein, and that the Holy Spirit may make His own ordinances effectual. In so doing let us reverently set this house apart for these sacred uses with prayer and supplication. Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, maker of heaven and earth, who dwells in the high and holy place, with him also who is of contrite and humble spirit, we adore You for Your manifold perfections, for the infinite majesty and glorious beauty of Your being, and for the truthfulness and sanctity of Your divine revelation.

We give thanks unto You for Your infinite mercies to us, and, in particular, for the gift of Your Son to be our Saviour. We praise You for the church of God, of which He is the only Head and King and of which we are humble and unfaithful members. We acknowledge that we are not worthy to receive from Your hand the blessings of Your common grace; and especially do we recognize the abundance of Your great goodness in granting to us, through Your particular grace, membership in the church universal, the mystical body of Christ.

You have put it into our hearts to prepare this house of worship where men may gather in Your service. We earnestly beseech You that You will watch over and protect this place which we have dedicated in Your name. We ask that here may be preached only the pure Gospel of the free grace of God. May all that is proclaimed be firmly grounded upon the unchanging foundation of Holy Scripture. Grant that no portion of Your sacred revelation to man may be neglected but that Your servants who minister here shall give to all its parts that due regard which will exhibit its majesty and scope. We pray that by the favor of the Spirit sinners may in this house be converted unto You, and that the saints of God, the members of Your holy body, may be built up and edified by the proclamation of Your matchless Word.

May the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the blessed Trinity, ever be present to guide, illumine and inform those who teach here. May He prepare the hearts of the hearers to receive with meekness the instruction which is presented, so that their lives may show forth the wonders of His grace and truly adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Bless this Your house that it may serve without ceasing the extension of the kingdom of God. Teach us so to look for the return of the Lord of glory that we shall be quickened day by day in our present service of Him, and shall be always prepared to greet Him and to enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb, forever to dwell in that holy city where there is no candle neither light of the sun for the Lamb is the light thereof.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

An offering to the Lord may then be received.

After the singing of an appropriate psalm or hymn, a sermon appropriate for the occasion shall be preached.

Finis.