THE BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Includes all amendments approved up to and including the 53rd General Assembly, in Louisville, Kentucky June 22-26, 2026

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

Amendments finally adopted by the General Assembly in the current year are indicated in *The Book of Church Order* (*BCO*) by a bullet in the margin beside the line where the change was made. New wording is underlined. In subsequent *BCO* reprints, marginal bullets and underlining for previous years are deleted.

For a chronological listing of changes in the *BCO*, the *Rules of Assembly Operations* (*RAO*), the *Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission* (*OMSJC*), and the Corporate Bylaws from 1982 to the present, see the list on the following page. For a chapter by chapter listing of these changes, go to http://www.pcahistory.org/bco/.

The Stated Clerk will appreciate receiving notice of any needed corrections to this 2025 update of the *BCO*.

May the Lord, the King and Head of the Church, bless and honor these efforts to make clearer our form of governance.

Fred Greco
Stated Clerk of General Assembly

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The following amendments to *The Book of Church Order (BCO), Rules of Assembly Operations* (*RAO*), *Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission* (*OMSJC*), and Corporate Bylaws were adopted by the General Assembly in:

1982 – *BCO* 8-7; 13-5; 14-1-12; 21-4; 23-2; 26-4; Index

1983 – *BCO* 8-4; 10-3; 13-2; 23-1; Index

1984 – *BCO* Chapter 5; 13-2; 14-1-12; 24-9; Chapter 42; Chapter 43; Index

1985 – *BCO* 5-9; 13-2; New 15-4; 20-1; 23-1; Index

1986 – *BCO* Pref. II, 1; 8-3; 12-5; 13-10; New 14-7; 18-2; 19-7; 19-8; 19-11; 19-16; 20-12; 20-13; 21-4; 24-1; 38-2; Index

1987 – *BCO* 42-4; 43-2; 3; Chapter 45; Index

1988 – *BCO* Pref. III; 8-3; 12-5; 13-8; 13-10; 14-3; 19-6; 19-10; 20-5; 20-9; 21-4; 22-3; 22-4; 24-6; 25-2; 26-1; 28-4; 32-2; 35-5; Index

1989 – *BCO* Pref. II, 1; III; 13-6; 14-1-12; 18-2; 19-2,b, 2; 19-5; 21-1; 21-4; 23-2; 23-3; 26-1; 30-1; 30-3; 31-1; 33-1; 34-1; 34-8; 34-9; 56-4; (also 15-1; 15-3; 15-4; 15-5 – adopted in 1988)

1990 – *BCO* 14-1.14; 19-10; 30-1,3; 34-7,8; 36-4,5; 37-1,2,3,7,8; 42-6; 45-1,4,5; 46-5

1991 – *BCO* 14-1.11; 14-1.12; 14-2; 15-2

1992 – *BCO* 10-3; 42-11; 43-3; 43-7

1993 – *BCO* 14-1.15; 15-4; 24-5

1994 – *BCO* 15-1; 21-4.d; 24-1; 37-9; *RAO* 4-3; 4-6; 5-1; 13-1; 13-6; 13-13.c.6; 13-14.d; 14-9.c; Corporate Bylaws Article VI, p. R-39 and Certificate of Incorporation, pp. R-29-31

1995 – *BCO* 13-10; 14-1.12; 32-18; *RAO* 15-3 and Corporate Bylaws Article IV,4 and VII,1

1996 – *BCO* 35-14; 42-5; 42-6; *RAO* 14 and Corporate Bylaws Article VI,5

1997 – *BCO* Preface II; 15-1; 15-4; 15-5; 19-1; 19-6; 38-4; 39-3; 46-2; 46-5

1998 – *BCO* 13-6; 15-5c; 38-3; *RAO* 14-7; Corporate Bylaws Article VI,5

1999 – *BCO* 13-5; 13-12; 20-2; 32-6; 33-2; 33-3; 34-4; *RAO* 4-18 [editorial changes to 15-3 and 16-3]; SJC Manual 6.2d; 8.3b; 19.10c; and 19.11 [editorial changes to 11.9a.2 and 18.7b]

2000 – *BCO* 13-12; 15-1; 24-1; 38-1; 43-5

2001 – *BCO* 14-1.12; Appendix B; Appendix H; *RAO* 4-5; 9-6; 15-2; Corporate Bylaws Article VI,1; VI,4; VI,5

2002 – *BCO* 12-5.e; 13-1; 14-1.12; 32-3; 32-4; 32-18; 35-7; 43-1; Appendix I; *RAO* 4-2; 4-3; 4-8; 4-9; 5-1; 6-4; 7-5.c; 13-1; SJC Manual 13.8.c.5, 6, 16, 18, 19-22 renumbered; Corporate Bylaws Article V,E; V,F; V,G; Article VI,1; VI,5

2003 – *BCO* 14-1.12b.4; 21-4; 21-5.6; *RAO* 13-1.6; 13-2; 13-5.d; 13-6.e; 13-6.f-j renumbered; 14-3.e.5; 14-8; SJC Manual 13.10; 14.7; 15.7; 19.8.j; 19.8.k; 20.12; 21.2.f; Corporate Bylaws Article VI,1

2004 – *BCO* 58-5; SJC Manual 3.1; 11.7b; 12.3.b

2005 – *BCO* 24-3; 24-5; 24-6-9 relettered; 24-9 (now 24-10)

2006 – *BCO* 15-4; 24-1.b; 40-5; *RAO* 2006 Revised Edition: 4-19, 20; 7 (new Article, subsequent Articles renumbered); 8-2; 10-7; 11-5, 9; 12-1, 2, 3; 13-2 (much of 13-8–13-13 moved to Article 14); 14-1–3, 5–9; 15 (new Article); 16-3, 10; 17-2; 19-4

2007 – *RAO* 4-11; 11-1; 14-8.d; 19-2; SJC Manual 21.3

2008 – *BCO* 2-1, 12-2; *RAO* 14-6.k; 14-9.e, g; 14-9.f relettered; 15-8.c, e; 15-8.f-g relettered. [Editorial note added *RAO* 14-6.d and 15-6.i; editorial changes SJC 10.5; 11.6; 16.2; 17.2.(d); 18.1.(a); 21.5; 22.1]]

2009 – *BCO* 21-4 (editorial numeration); 59-1, 6; *RAO* 14-9.h (3); 15-8.g (3); 19-4.d; SJC Manual 3.2; 8.4 (a), (b); 11.10; 11.11; 13.10; 14.7; 15.7; 16; 19.6; 19.7 (a), (c); 20.6

2010 – No *BCO* changes; no *RAO* changes; SJC Manual new Section 2 added and renumber; 3.1; Sections 6 & 7 deleted; Section 17 moved to replace original 11.8; 13.8; 14.2; 15.2; 19.5

2011 – *BCO* 5-2; 5-3; 5-4; 5-8; 5-9; 5-10; 5-11; add new 5-5 & renumber as needed; 9-7; 13-6; 15-2; 37-7; *RAO* 16-3.e.5; SJC Manual 10.7.a; 12.10; 13.7; 14.7; 17.8.k; 18.2.

2012 – *BCO* 19-11; *RAO* 5-4; 8-3; 10-8; 11-5; 12-1; 14-6.h; 15-1; *OMSJC* 8.1.a, b; 8.4; 18:12; 18:13

2013 – *BCO* 19-2; 20-3; 24-2; 25-4; 42-4; 43-2; 43-3; Appendix J added; *RAO* 8-5.b; 10-9 added; 16-10.a; *OMSJC* 3.7; 9.1; 10.7

2014 – *BCO* 34-8; 37-6; 43-10; [editorial corrections: *BCO* 13-6; 39-3]; *RAO* 16-3.e.6; 16-3.e.7, 8 (renumbered); 16-6.c.1; [editorial corrections: *RAO* 11-5; 11-8]; [*OMSJC* editorial corrections: 18.11; 18.12.b.(4)]; References to Committee on Christian Education and Publications (CEP) changed to Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM) – *BCO* 14-1.12; *RAO* 4-2; 5-1.b.1); 6-1; 14-1.2

2015 – *BCO* 5-2; 8-6; 18-7; 43-3, 8, 9; *RAO* 14-6.a; 14-6.e; *OMSJC* 4.l; 7.4; 9.2.e; 10.3.d; 10.6

2016 – [editorial correction: *BCO* 58-5]; *RAO* 8-4.i; *OMSJC* 7.2.b; 7.4.d; 7.4 (add 7.4.b. and re-letter); 10.9; 18.12.b, c

2017 – *BCO* 5-3; 13-2; editorial – *BCO* 55-1; *RAO* 7-3.c; 9-2 (added and renumbering); 13-2; 13-6 (added); 14-8; 17-4; *OMSJC* 8.2; 8.4.a; 10.11.a (6) and (7); 17.5; 17.7; Reformed University Ministries (RUM) name changed to Reformed University Fellowship (RUF): *BCO* 14-1.12; *RAO* 4-2, 5-1, 6-4, 14-1.10; Bylaws Article V.

2018 – *BCO* [editorial additions/corrections: 42-6, parenthetical reference; Appendices, introductory note; Appendix C, Scripture references; Appendix I, preface]; *RAO* 8-4.i; 13-2; 16-7.h; 16-10.c; formatting corrections: 6-1; 14-7.c*; OMSJC* 4.1; 10.11.a(2); 12.10; 13.7; 14.7; 15.9; 17.8.k; 18.10.b; 18.12.c; 19.2.f

2019 – *BCO* 8-1; 8-3; 25-11; 35-11; Preface to Directory for Worship; 59-3; *RAO* 11-5; 11-12; 13-2; 13-6 (struck); 16-4.a; 16-4.c.1; 16-4. d.

2021 – *BCO* 42-4; 43-3; 32-8; 32-13; 35-10; *RAO* 8-4.i; 9-3; 13-2; 15-6.s.2&3; 16-4-c.1(1); *OMSJC* Contents page added; 4.1; 2.10.d

2022 – *BCO* 12-6; 13-4; 20-4; 22-2; 24-1; 24-3; 24-4; 32-20; 38-1; Appendix F; Index; *RAO* 3-2.h; 11-2; 11-10; 16-4.c; *OMSJC* 2.6; 17.2; 17.8.h-i; 18.12

2023 – *BCO* 8-8 and renumber; 14-1; 15-1, 15-3; 16-4; 21-4.e and reletter, 24-1; 31-10, 33-4; 35-1-5 and renumber; 38-1; 42-2; 42-6; 43-2, 43-3; Appendix J; *RAO* 4-21.d.4; 16-3.e.5; 16-3.e.6; 16.3.e.8; 16-10; 4-3, 5-1.b.7, 14-1 (name change); *OMSJC* 2.12.c; 4.2.a; 8.4.a,b; Bylaws VI.1

2024 – *BCO* 7-3; 8-2; 9-3; 13-6 (editorial); 32-18 (editorial); 38-1; 46-8 (editorial); Appendix H; *RAO* 4-21.d.5; 11-5; 16-3.e.5; 16-3.e.6 and renumber; 16.6.c.1; *OMSJC* 4.2; 7.2; 7.4.c-d; 8.1 and renumber; 8.5; 9.1; 9.2; 10.5.a (editorial); 10.7.b; 10.10; 10.11.a; 11.3.b; 12.10; 13.7; 14.7; 17.1; 17.6; 17.7.d; 17.8.h(4)-(5); 18.4.a(2); 18.4.b(2); 18.6; 18.8.a; 18.10

2025 – *BCO* 13-6; 32-19; 43-1; Appendix H (editorial); *RAO* 8-3 (editorial); 14-2 (editorial); 14-6 (editorial); 14-9 (editorial); 15-6 (editorial); 15-8 (editorial); 16-3.b; 16-3.e.6 and renumber; 16-6.c.1 (editorial); 16-11; 17-3 and renumber; *OMSJC* 6.2; 7.2.c; 7.4.d & e; 10.1; 10.2; 16.1.e; 17.5; 18.12.b(4); 19.3.b

2026 – *BCO* 12-3; 18-2; 24-1; 29-1 (editorial); 31-10; 35-9; 36-4; 36-5; 36-8; 41-3; 42-2; *RAO* 4-21 (new); 4-22.d;14-11.a

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They are not part of the Constitution of the PCA.]

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PREFACE TO
THE BOOK OF CHURCH ORDER

I. THE KING AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government rests, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; who sits upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth, even forever (Isaiah 9:6-7); having all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth by the Father, who raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23); He, being ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, received gifts for His Church, and gave all offices necessary for the edification of His Church and the perfecting of His saints (Ephesians 4:10-13).

Jesus, the Mediator, the sole Priest, Prophet, King, Saviour, and Head of the Church, contains in Himself, by way of eminency, all the offices in His Church, and has many of their names attributed to Him in the Scriptures. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister, Bishop and the only Lawgiver in Zion.

It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry of men; thus mediately exercising His own authority and enforcing His own laws, unto the edification and establishment of His Kingdom.

Christ, as King, has given to His Church officers, oracles and ordinances; and especially has He ordained therein His system of doctrine, government, discipline and worship, all of which are either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced therefrom; and to which things He commands that nothing be added, and that from them naught be taken away.

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, He is present with the Church by His Word and Spirit, and the benefits of all His offices are effectually applied by the Holy Ghost.

II. PRELIMINARY PRINCIPLES

The Presbyterian Church in America, in setting forth the form of government founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God, reiterates the following great principles which have governed the formation of the plan:

1. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from any doctrines or commandments of men (a) which are in any respect contrary to the Word of God, or (b) which, in regard to matters of faith and worship, are not governed by the Word of God. Therefore, the rights of private judgment in all matters that respect religion are universal and inalienable. No religious constitution should be supported by the civil power further than may be necessary for protection and security equal and common to all others.
2. In perfect consistency with the above principle, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ has appointed. In the exercise of this right it may, notwithstanding, err in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet even in this case, it does not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only makes an improper use of its own.
3. Our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible Church, which is His body, has appointed officers not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline for the preservation both of truth and duty. It is incumbent upon these officers and upon the whole Church in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing in all cases the rules contained in the Word of God.
4. Godliness is founded on truth. A test of truth is its power to promote holiness according to our Saviour's rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). No opinion can be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon the same level.

   On the contrary, there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it.

5. While, under the conviction of the above principle, it is necessary to make effective provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principles may differ. In all these it is the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.
6. Though the character, qualifications and authority of church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of officer investiture, the power to elect persons to the exercise of authority in any particular society resides in that society.
7. All church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or by representation, is only ministerial and declarative since the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice. No church judicatory may make laws to bind the conscience. All church courts may err through human frailty, yet it rests upon them to uphold the laws of Scripture though this obligation be lodged with fallible men.
8. Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church.

If the preceding scriptural principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of government and discipline, applied with pastoral prudence and Christian love, will contribute to the glory and well-being of the Church.

III. THE CONSTITUTION DEFINED

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word Of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, together with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.

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PART I
FORM OF GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 1

The Doctrine of Church Government

1-1. The scriptural form of church government, which is representative or presbyterian, is comprehended under five heads: a. The Church; b. Its members; c. Its officers; d. Its courts; e. Its orders.

1-2. The Church which the Lord Jesus Christ has erected in this world for the gathering and perfecting of the saints is His visible kingdom of grace, and is one and the same in all ages.

1-3. The members of this visible Church catholic are all those persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and promise submission to His laws.

1-4. The officers of the Church, by whom all its powers are administered, are, according to the Scriptures, teaching and ruling elders and deacons.

1-5. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction is not a several, but a joint power, to be exercised by presbyters in courts. These courts may have jurisdiction over one or many churches, but they sustain such mutual relations as to realize the idea of the unity of the Church.

1-6. The ordination of officers is ordinarily by a court, except in the case of ordination by a presbytery's evangelist (see *BCO* 8-6).

1-7. This scriptural doctrine of Presbytery is necessary to the perfection of the order of the visible Church, but is not essential to its existence.

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CHAPTER 2

The Visible Church Defined

2-1. The Visible Church before the law, under the law, and now under the Gospel, is one and the same and consists of all those who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with their children.

2-2. This visible unity of the body of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; but all of these which maintain the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ.

2-3. It is according to scriptural example that the Church should be divided into many individual churches.

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CHAPTER 3

The Nature and Extent of Church Power

3-1. The power which Christ has committed to His Church vests in the whole body, the rulers and those ruled, constituting it a spiritual commonwealth. This power, as exercised by the people, extends to the choice of those officers whom He has appointed in His Church.

3-2. Ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is twofold. The officers exercise it sometimes severally, as in preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, reproving the erring, visiting the sick, and comforting the afflicted, which is the power of order; and they exercise it sometimes jointly in Church courts, after the form of judgment, which is the power of jurisdiction.

3-3. The sole functions of the Church, as a kingdom and government distinct from the civil commonwealth, are to proclaim, to administer, and to enforce the law of Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

3-4. The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual; that of the State includes the exercise of force. The constitution of the Church derives from divine revelation; the constitution of the State must be determined by human reason and the course of providential events. The Church has no right to construct or modify a government for the State, and the State has no right to frame a creed or polity for the Church. They are as planets moving in concentric orbits: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

3-5. The Church, with its ordinances, officers and courts, is the agency which Christ has ordained for the edification and government of His people, for the propagation of the faith, and for the evangelization of the world.

3-6. The exercise of ecclesiastical power, whether joint or several, has the divine sanction when in conformity with the statutes enacted by Christ, the Lawgiver, and when put forth by courts or by officers appointed thereunto in His Word.

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CHAPTER 4

The Particular Church

4-1. A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, with their children, associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeable to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom.

4-2. Its officers are its teaching and ruling elders and its deacons.

4-3. Its jurisdiction, being a joint power, is lodged in the church Session, which consists of its pastor, pastors, its associate pastor(s) and its ruling elders.

4-4. The ordinances established by Christ, the Head, in His Church are prayer; singing praises; reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God; administering the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; public solemn fasting and thanksgiving; catechizing; making offerings for the relief of the poor and for other pious uses; and exercising discipline; the taking of solemn vows, and the ordination to sacred office.

4-5. Churches without teaching elders ought not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, but should be convened by the Session on the Lord's Day, and at other suitable times, for prayer, praise, the presenting and expounding of the Holy Scriptures, and exhortation, or the reading of a sermon of some approved minister. In like manner, Christians whose lot is cast in destitute regions ought to meet regularly for the worship of God.

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CHAPTER 5

The Organization of a Particular Church

A. Mission Churches

5-1. A mission church may be properly described in the same manner as the particular church is described in *BCO* 4-1. It is distinguished from a particular church in that it has no permanent governing body, and thus must be governed or supervised by others. However, its goal is to mature and be organized as a particular church as soon as this can be done decently and in good order.

5-2. Ordinarily, mission churches are established by Presbyteries within their boundaries.

a. Initiatives to which the Presbytery may respond in establishing a mission church include, but are not limited to, the following:
   i. The Presbytery establishes a mission church at its own initiative.
   ii. The Presbytery responds to the initiative of a Session of a particular church.
   iii. The Presbytery responds to the petition of an independent gathering of believers who have expressed their desire to become a congregation by submitting to the Presbytery a written request.
b. In the event an existing non-PCA church is interested in coming into the PCA, the Presbytery shall work with the church leadership to determine whether the church should come into the PCA as a mission church or seek Presbytery approval to be received under the provisions of *BCO* 13-8.
c. Should it become necessary, the Presbytery may dissolve the mission church. Church members enrolled should be cared for according to the procedures of 13-10.
d. If the mission church is located outside the bounds of a Presbytery, the responsibility may be exercised through the General Assembly's Committee on Mission to North America or Committee on Mission to the World, as the case may be, according to the *Rules of Assembly Operations*. In such a case the powers of the Presbytery in the following provisions shall be exercised by the General Assembly through its appropriate committee.

5-3. The mission church, because of its transitional condition, requires a temporary system of government. Depending on the circumstances and at its own discretion, Presbytery may provide for such government in one of several ways:

a. Appoint an evangelist as prescribed in *BCO* 8-6.
b. Cooperate with the Session of a particular church in arranging a mother-daughter relationship with a mission church. The Session may then serve as the temporary governing body of the mission church.
c. Appoint a *BCO* 15-1 commission to serve as a temporary Session of the mission church. When a minister of the Presbytery has been approved to serve as pastor of the mission church, he shall be included as a member of the commission and serve as its moderator.

The temporary system of government shall record and submit its records to Presbytery for annual review in the same manner as Sessions of particular churches.

5-4. Pastoral ministry for the mission church may be provided:
a. by a minister of the Presbytery called by Presbytery to serve as pastor, or
b. by stated, student, or ruling elder supply (*BCO* 22-5, -6), or
c. by a series of qualified preachers approved by the temporary government (*BCO* 12-5.e).

5-5. The temporary government shall receive members (*BCO* 12-5.a) into the mission church according to the provisions of *BCO* 57 so far as they may be applicable. As members of the mission church those received are communing or non-communing members of the Presbyterian Church in America.
a. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its pastor (*BCO* 5-4.a), each member so received shall be understood to assent to the call of that minister and to affirm the promises made to the pastor in *BCO* 21-10.
b. Meetings of the members of the mission church shall be governed according to the provisions of *BCO* 25 so far as they may be applicable.

5-6. Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the court having oversight of their temporary governing body.

5-7. Mission churches shall maintain a roll of communicant and non-communicant members, in the same manner as, but separate from, other particular churches.

5-8. It is the intention of the Presbyterian Church in America that mission churches enjoy the same status as particular churches in relation to civil government.

B. The Organization of a Particular Church

5-9. A new church can be organized only by the authority of Presbytery.

a. A Presbytery should establish standing rules setting forth the prerequisites that qualify a mission church to begin the organization process, e.g., the minimum number of petitioners and the level of financial support to be provided by the congregation. The number of officers sufficient to constitute the quorum for a session shall be necessary to complete the organization process.

b. The temporary government of the mission church shall oversee the steps necessary for organization.

c. When the temporary government determines that among the members of the mission congregation there are men who appear qualified as officers, the nomination process shall begin and the election conclude following the procedures of *BCO* 24 so far as they may be applicable.

d. The election of officers shall normally take place at least two weeks prior to the date of the organization service. However, the effective date of service for the newly elected officers shall be upon the completion of the organization service.

e. If deacons are not elected, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the Session, until deacons can be secured.

f. If there is a minister approved by Presbytery to serve the mission church as its pastor, and members of the mission church have been received according to *BCO* 5-5, the temporary session shall call a congregational meeting at which the congregation may, by majority vote, call the organizing pastor to be their pastor without the steps of *BCO* 20. If no such minister has been appointed, or the minister or congregation choose not to continue the pastoral relationship of the newly organized church, a pastor shall be called as follows:

   (1) The temporary government shall oversee the election of a pastor according the provisions of *BCO* 20 so far as they are applicable. If a candidate is to be proposed before the organization, the congregational meeting to elect a pastor shall take place early enough for Presbytery to consider and approve the pastor's call prior to the service of organization. This may be the same meeting called for the election of other officers.

   (2) The ordination and/or installation shall be according to the provisions of *BCO* 21 so far as they are applicable. The service may take place at the service of organization.

g. In order to proceed to organization as a particular church the members of the mission church shall sign a petition to Presbytery requesting the same.

h. Upon Presbytery's approval of the petition, Presbytery shall appoint an organizing commission and shall set the date and time of the organization service.

i. At the service of organization the following elements shall be included in the order deemed by the organizing commission to be appropriate:

(1) The organizing commission shall ordain and/or install ruling elders and/or deacons according to the provisions of *BCO* 24-6 so far as they may be applicable.

(2) If a pastor is being ordained and/or installed at the service, the organizing commission shall act according to the provisions of *BCO* 21 so far as they may be applicable.

(3) A member of the organizing commission shall require communicant members of the mission church present to enter into covenant, by answering the following question affirmatively, with uplifted hand:

> **Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as a particular church, on the principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the purity and peace of the whole body?**

(4) A member of the organizing commission shall then say:

> **I now pronounce and declare that you are constituted a church according to the Word of God and the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in America. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

5-10. Upon organization, the newly elected Session should meet as soon as is practicable to elect a stated clerk and formulate a budget. If there is no pastor, the session may elect as moderator one of their own number or any teaching elder of the Presbytery with Presbytery's approval. Further, if there is no pastor, action shall be taken to secure, as soon as practicable, the regular administration of Word and Sacraments.

CHAPTER 6

Church Members

6-1. The children of believers are, through the covenant and by right of birth, non-communing members of the church. Hence they are entitled to Baptism, and to the pastoral oversight, instruction and government of the church, with a view to their embracing Christ and thus possessing personally all benefits of the covenant.

6-2. Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table. (See *BCO* 46-4 for associate members).

6-3. All baptized persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the church, even though they are adults and have made no profession of their faith in Christ.

6-4. Those only who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table, are entitled to all the rights and privileges of the church. (See *BCO* 57-4 and 58-4)

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CHAPTER 7

Church Officers—General Classification

7-1. Under the New Testament, our Lord at first collected His people out of different nations, and united them to the household of faith by the ministry of extraordinary officers who received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and who were agents by whom God completed His revelation to His Church. Such officers and gifts related to new revelation have no successors since God completed His revelation at the conclusion of the Apostolic Age.

7-2. The ordinary and perpetual classes of office in the Church are elders and deacons. Within the class of elder are the two orders of teaching elders and ruling elders. The elders jointly have the government and spiritual oversight of the Church, including teaching. Only those elders who are specially gifted, called and trained by God to preach may serve as teaching elders. The office of deacon is not one of rule, but rather of service both to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. In accord with Scripture, these offices are open to men only.

7-3. No one who holds office in the Church ought to usurp authority therein, or receive any official titles of spiritual preeminence, except such as are employed in the Scriptures. Furthermore, unordained people shall not be referred to as, or given the titles of, the ordained offices of pastor/elder, or deacon.

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CHAPTER 8

The Elder

8-1. This office is one of dignity and usefulness. The man who fills it has in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed *bishop* or *pastor*. As it is his duty to be spiritually fruitful, dignified, and prudent, an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he is termed *presbyter* or *elder*. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed *teacher*. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same office.

8-2. He that fills this office should possess a competency of human learning and be blameless in life, sound in the faith and apt to teach. He should exhibit a sobriety and holiness of life becoming the Gospel. He should conform to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in his descriptions of himself, and in his convictions, character, and conduct. He should rule his own house well and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

8-3. It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, 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, make disciples, and demonstrate hospitality. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them 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.

8-4. As the Lord has given different gifts to men and has committed to some special gifts and callings, the Church is authorized to call and appoint some to labor as teaching elders in such works as may be needful to the Church. When a teaching elder is called to such needful work, it shall be incumbent upon him to make full proof of his ministry by disseminating the Gospel for the edification of the Church. He shall make a report to the Presbytery at least once each year.

8-5. When a man is called to labor as a teaching elder, it belongs to his order, in addition to those functions he shares with all other elders, to feed the flock by reading, expounding and preaching the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments. 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*. As he bears glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing, he is termed *evangelist*. As he stands to proclaim the Gospel, he is termed *preacher*. As he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed *steward* of the mysteries of God.

8-6. When a teaching elder is appointed to the work of an evangelist in foreign countries or where there are no other PCA churches within a reasonable distance, he is commissioned for a renewable term of twelve months to preach the Word, to administer the Sacraments, to receive and dismiss members of mission churches, and to train potential officers. By separate actions the Presbytery may in extraordinary situations commission him to examine, ordain and install ruling elders and deacons and organize churches.

8-7. A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a teaching elder to work with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work. As far as possible, such a teaching elder shall be a member of the Presbytery within whose bounds he labors. (See *BCO* 20-1.)

8-8. A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a teaching elder to work as a Chaplain whether military or civilian, with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he reports at least annually on his work. The Chaplain may be appointed to the work of an evangelist when serving as a Chaplain. Teaching elders ministering as paid or volunteer chaplains are strongly encouraged to seek and obtain their Ecclesiastical Endorsement from the endorsing agency authorized by the General Assembly for such purpose.

8-9. As there were in the Church under the law, elders of the people for the government thereof, so in the Gospel Church, Christ has furnished others besides ministers of the Word with gifts and commission to govern when called thereunto, who are called *ruling elders*.

8-10. Elders being of one class of office, ruling elders possess the same authority and eligibility to office in the courts of the Church as teaching elders. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their own aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so.

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CHAPTER 9

The Deacon

9-1. The office of deacon is set forth in the Scriptures as ordinary and perpetual in the Church. The office is one of sympathy and service, after the example of the Lord Jesus; it expresses also the communion of saints, especially in their helping one another in time of need.

9-2. 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 gifts of the people, and to distribute these gifts among the objects to which they are contributed. They shall have the care of the property of the congregation, both real and personal, and shall keep in proper repair the church edifice and other buildings belonging to the congregation. In matters of special importance affecting the property of the church, they cannot take final action without the approval of the Session and consent of the congregation.

In the discharge of their duties the deacons are under the supervision and authority of the Session. In a church in which it is impossible for any reason to secure deacons, the duties of the office shall devolve upon the ruling elders.

9-3. To the office of deacon, which is spiritual in nature, shall be chosen men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment, conforming to the biblical requirement of chastity and sexual purity in their descriptions of themselves and in their convictions, character, and conduct.

9-4. The deacons of a particular church shall be organized as a Board, of which the pastor shall be an advisory member. The Board shall elect a chairman and a secretary from their number and a treasurer to whom shall be entrusted the funds for the current expenses of the church. It shall meet separately at least once a quarter, and whenever requested by the Session. The Board of each church shall determine the number necessary for a quorum.

The Board shall keep a record of its proceedings, and of all funds and their distribution, and shall submit its minutes to the Session regularly, and at other times upon request of the Session.

It is desirable that the Session and the Board of Deacons meet in joint session once a quarter to confer on matters of common interest.

9-5. Deacons may properly be appointed by the higher courts to serve on committees, especially as treasurers. It is suitable also that they be appointed trustees of any fund held by any of the Church courts. It may also be helpful for the Church courts, when devising plans of church finance, to invite wise and consecrated deacons to their councils.

9-6. The deacons may, with much advantage, hold conference from time to time for the discussion of the interests committed to them. Such conferences may include representatives of churches covering areas of smaller or larger extent. Any actions taken by these conferences shall have only an advisory character.

9-7. It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need. These assistants to the deacons are not officers of the church (*BCO* 7-2) and, as such, are not subjects for ordination (*BCO* 17).

CHAPTER 10

Church Courts in General

10-1. The Church is governed by various courts, in regular gradation, which are all, nevertheless, Presbyteries, as being composed exclusively of presbyters.

10-2. These courts are church Sessions, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly.

10-3. The pastor is, for prudential reasons, moderator of the Session. The moderator of the Presbytery may be elected at each stated meeting of the court, or for a period of time up to one year. The moderator of the General Assembly shall be chosen at each stated meeting; he, or in case of his absence the last moderator present or the oldest minister longest a member of the court, shall open the next meeting with a sermon unless it is impracticable, and shall hold the chair until a new moderator be chosen.

The moderator has all authority necessary for the preservation of order and for the proper and expeditious conduct of all business before the court, and for convening and adjourning the court according to its own ruling. In any emergency, he may by circular letter change the time or place, or both, of meeting to which the court stands adjourned, giving reasonable notice thereof.

10-4. A clerk or clerks shall be elected by the Session, Presbytery, and General Assembly to serve for a definite period as determined by the court.

It is the duty of the clerk, besides recording the transactions, to preserve the records carefully, and to grant extracts from them whenever properly required. Such extracts under the hand of the clerk shall be evidence to any ecclesiastical court, and to every part of the Church.

10-5. Every meeting of the Session, Presbytery and General Assembly shall be opened and closed with prayer, and in closing the final session a psalm or hymn may be sung and the benediction pronounced.

10-6. The expenses of ministers and ruling elders in their attendance on the courts shall be defrayed by the bodies which they respectively represent.

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CHAPTER 11

Jurisdiction of Church Courts

11-1. These assemblies are altogether distinct from the civil magistracy, and have no jurisdiction in political or civil affairs. They have no power to inflict temporal pains and penalties, but their authority is in all respects moral or spiritual.

11-2. The jurisdiction of Church courts is only ministerial and declarative, and relates to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, to the order of the Church, and to the exercise of discipline.

First, they can make no laws binding the conscience; but may frame symbols of faith, bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, within or without the Church, and decide cases of conscience.

Secondly, they have power to establish rules for the government, discipline, worship, and extension of the Church, which must be agreeable to the doctrines relating thereto contained in the Scriptures, the circumstantial details only of these matters being left to the Christian prudence and wisdom of Church officers and courts.

Thirdly, they possess the right to require obedience to the laws of Christ. Hence, they admit those qualified to sealing ordinances and to their respective offices, and they exclude the disobedient and disorderly from such offices or from sacramental privileges. The highest censure to which their authority extends is to cut off the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers. Moreover, they possess all the administrative authority necessary to give effect to these powers.

11-3. All Church courts are one in nature, constituted of the same elements, possessed inherently of the same kinds of rights and powers, and differing only as the Constitution may provide. When, however, according to Scriptural example, and needful to the purity and harmony of the whole Church, disputed matters of doctrine and order arising in the lower courts are referred to the higher courts for decision, such referral shall not be so exercised as to impinge upon the authority of the lower court.

11-4. For the orderly and efficient dispatch of ecclesiastical business, it is necessary that the sphere of action of each court should be distinctly defined. The Session exercises jurisdiction over a single church, the Presbytery over what is common to the ministers, Sessions, and churches within a prescribed district, and the General Assembly over such matters as concern the whole Church. The jurisdiction of these courts is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution.

Every court has the right to resolve questions of doctrine and discipline seriously and reasonably proposed, and in general to maintain truth and righteousness, condemning erroneous opinions and practices which tend to the injury of the peace, purity, or progress of the Church. Although each court exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters especially belonging to it, the lower courts are subject to the review and control of the higher courts, in regular gradation. These courts are not separate and independent tribunals, but they have a mutual relation, and every act of jurisdiction is the act of the whole Church performed by it through the appropriate organ.

CHAPTER 12

The Church Session

12-1. The church Session consists of the pastor, associate pastor(s), if there be any, and the ruling elders of a church. If there are four or more ruling elders, the pastor and two ruling elders shall constitute a quorum. If there are fewer than four ruling elders, the pastor and one ruling elder shall constitute a quorum. Assistant pastors, although not members of the Session, may be invited to attend and participate in discussion without vote.

When a church has no pastor and there are five or more ruling elders, three shall constitute a quorum; if there are less than five ruling elders, two shall constitute a quorum; if there is only one ruling elder, he does not constitute a Session, but he should take spiritual oversight of the church, should represent it at Presbytery, should grant letters of dismission, and should report to the Presbytery any matter needing the action of a Church court.

Any Session, by a majority vote of its members, may fix its own quorum, provided that it is not smaller than the quorum stated in these paragraphs.

12-2. The pastor is, by virtue of his office, the moderator of the Session. In the pastor's absence, if any emergency should arise requiring immediate action, the Session may elect one of its members to preside, the quorum for such emergency meeting being as in the case of a church with no pastor in 12-1. Should prudential reasons at any time make it advisable for a minister other than the pastor to preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the Session, invite a minister of the same Presbytery to perform this service.

12-3. When a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery, with consent of the Session, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion, or one of its own members elected to preside. In judicial cases, whether the church is with or without a pastor, the Session may elect one of its members to preside as moderator or invite a minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs to preside as moderator.

12-4. Associate or assistant pastors may substitute for the pastor as moderator of the Session at the discretion of the pastor and Session.

12-5. The church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has power:

a. To inquire into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the church members 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 Church; to remove them for just cause; to grant letters of dismissal to other churches, 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 on their election by the church, and to require these officers to devote themselves to their work; to examine the records of the proceedings of the deacons; to approve and adopt the budget;
c. To approve actions of special importance affecting church property;
d. To call congregational meetings when necessary; to establish and control Sunday schools and Bible classes with special reference to the children of the church; to establish and control all special groups in the church such as Men in the Church, Women in the Church and special Bible study groups; to promote world missions; to promote obedience to the Great Commission in its totality at home and abroad; to order collections for pious uses;
e. To exercise, in accordance with the Directory for Worship, 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 take the oversight of the singing in the public worship of God; to ensure that the Word of God is preached only by such men as are sufficiently qualified (*BCO* 4-4, 53-2, 1 Timothy 2:11-12); to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to determine the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the church and congregation;
f. To observe and carry out the lawful injunctions of the higher courts; and to appoint representatives to the higher courts, who shall, on their return, make report of their diligence.

12-6. The Session shall hold stated meetings at least quarterly. Moreover, the pastor has power to convene the Session when he may judge it requisite; and he shall always convene it when requested to do so by any two of the ruling elders. When there is no pastor, it may be convened by two ruling elders. The Session shall also convene when directed so to do by the Presbytery. The Session, in its discretion, may for itself and its subordinate committees,

commissions, adopt rules determining when videoconference or tele-communication arrangements may be used for meetings and regulating how meetings using telecommunications arrangements shall be conducted.

12-7. Every Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings, which record shall be submitted at least once in every year to the inspection of the Presbytery.

12-8. Every Session shall keep an accurate record of baptisms, of communing members, of non-communing members, and of the deaths and dismissions of church members**.**

12-9. Meetings of the Sessions shall be opened and closed with prayer.

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CHAPTER 13

The Presbytery

13-1. The Presbytery consists of all the teaching elders and churches within its bounds that have been accepted by the Presbytery. When the Presbytery meets as a court it shall comprise all teaching elders and ruling elders as elected by their Session. Each congregation is entitled to two (2) ruling elder representatives for the first 350 communing members or fraction thereof, and one additional ruling elder for each additional 500 communing members or fraction thereof.

13-2. A minister shall be required to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he resides, unless there are reasons which are satisfactory to his Presbytery why he should not do so. When a minister labors outside the geographical bounds of, or in a work not under the jurisdiction of his Presbytery, at home or abroad, it shall be only with the full concurrence of and under circumstances agreeable to his Presbytery, and to the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he labors, if one exists. When a minister shall continue on the rolls of his Presbytery without a call to a particular work for a prolonged period, not exceeding three years, the procedure as set forth in *BCO* 34-10 shall be followed. A minister without call shall make or file a report to his Presbytery at least once each year.

[EDITORIAL COMMENT: The provision for a minister to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose geographical bounds he resides does not apply to the non-geographical Korean Language Presbyteries as long as the General Assembly mandates their existence.]

13-3. Every ruling elder not known to the Presbytery shall produce a certificate of his regular appointment from the Session of the church which he represents.

13-4. Any three ministers belonging to the Presbytery, together with at least three ruling elders, being met at the time and place appointed (which may include a teleconference or videoconference place), shall be a quorum competent to proceed to business. However, any Presbytery, by a majority vote of those present at a stated meeting, may fix its own quorum provided it is not smaller than the quorum stated in this paragraph.

The Presbytery, in its discretion, may for itself and its subordinate committees, commissions, adopt rules determining when videoconference or telecommunication arrangements may be used for meetings and regulating how meetings using telecommunications arrangements shall be conducted.

13-5. Ordinarily, only a minister who receives a call to a definite ecclesiastical work within the bounds of a particular Presbytery may be received as a member of that Presbytery except in cases where the minister is already honorably retired, or in those cases deemed necessary by the Presbytery, subject to the review of the General Assembly. In such cases deemed necessary, which may include the case of a minister without call whose circumstances appear to require relocation within the bounds of that Presbytery, the time allotment of *BCO* 13-2 shall be counted from the day the minister was first continued on the roll without call in any Presbytery.

13-6. Ministers Transferring into the Presbytery

a. A Minister seeking admission to a Presbytery from another Presbytery in the Presbyterian Church in America shall be examined on Christian experience (including personal character and family management), and also as to his views in theology, the Sacraments, and church government. If the examining Presbytery does not accept the Minister seeking admission, it shall record this fact along with its rationale, if one is adopted, in the minutes, and shall communicate its rationale to his current Presbytery.
b. If an applicant comes from another denomination, the Presbytery shall examine him thoroughly as required by the trials listed in *BCO* 21-4 and require him to answer in the affirmative the questions put to candidates at their ordination. Ordained ministers from other denominations being considered by Presbyteries for reception may come under the extraordinary provisions set forth in *BCO* 21-4.
c. In every case, Presbyteries shall require each ordained minister entering the Presbytery to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions, which differences the court shall judge in accordance with *BCO* 21-4.f-g (see also *RAO* 16-3.e.7.a-d).

13-7. The Presbytery shall cause to be transcribed, in some convenient part of the book of records, the obligations required of ministers at their ordination, which shall be subscribed by all admitted to membership, in the following form:

> **I, _____, do sincerely receive and subscribe to the above obligation as a just and true exhibition of my faith and principles, and do resolve and promise to exercise my ministry in conformity thereunto.**

13-8. The Presbytery, before receiving into its membership any church, shall designate a commission to meet with the church's ruling elders to make certain that the elders understand and can sincerely adopt the doctrines and polity of the Presbyterian Church in America as contained in its Constitution. In the presence of the commission, the ruling elders shall be required to answer affirmatively the questions required of officers at their ordination.

13-9. The Presbytery has power to receive and issue* appeals, complaints, and references brought before it in an orderly manner. In cases in which the Session cannot exercise its authority, it shall have power to assume original jurisdiction. It has power:

a. To receive under its care candidates for the ministry; to examine and license candidates for the holy ministry; to receive, dismiss, ordain, install, remove and judge ministers;
b. To review the records of church Sessions, redress whatever they may have done contrary to order and take effectual care that they observe the Constitution of the Church;
c. To establish the pastoral relation and to dissolve it at the request of one or both of the parties, or where the interest of religion imperatively demands it;
d. To set apart evangelists to their proper work; to require ministers to devote themselves diligently to their sacred calling and to censure the delinquent;
e. To see that the lawful injunctions of the higher courts are obeyed;
f. To condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church; to visit churches for the purpose of inquiring into and redressing the evils that may have arisen in them; to unite or divide churches, at the request of the members thereof; to form and receive new churches; to take special oversight of churches without pastors; to dissolve churches; to dismiss churches with their consent;
g. To devise measures for the enlargement of the Church within its bounds; in general, to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the churches under its care;
h. And, finally, to propose to the Assembly such measures as may be of common advantage to the Church at large.

13-10. When a Presbytery determines to dissolve a church, it shall give no less than sixty (60) days notice of such dissolution to the local church. With such notice, Presbytery shall communicate to the members their responsibility to transfer their membership to other particular or mission churches. In addition, Presbytery shall:

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* Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case."

1. transfer membership to existing churches, with the consent of the individuals and the Sessions of the receiving churches*; or*
2. grant a letter of dismissal to an individual so requesting, testifying that the individual was a member in good standing of the local church at the date of dissolution (see *BCO* 46-7). Until such time as the person is received by a church the Presbytery shall continue to provide pastoral oversight*; or*
3. place individuals under the oversight of a commission of Presbytery acting as a session *(BCO* 15-2), for up to one year, renewable, until such time as either a new congregation can be formed or such persons are dismissed to membership in another church.

13-11. The Presbytery shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings, and shall send it up to the General Assembly annually for review. It shall report to the General Assembly every year, all the important changes which may have taken place, such as licensures, ordinations, the receiving or dismissing of members, the removal of members by death, the union and the division of churches, and the formation of new ones.

13-12. The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on its own adjournment. The Moderator shall call a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of three teaching elders and three ruling elders from at least three different churches. Should the Moderator be for any reason unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall, under the same requirements, issue the call. If both Moderator and Stated Clerk are unable to act, any three teaching elders and three ruling elders of at least three different churches shall have power to call a meeting. However, any Presbytery may prescribe in its rules its own requirements for calling a special meeting, provided that those requirements are not less than those stated in this section. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than ten days in advance to each teaching elder and to the Clerk of Session of every church. In the notice, the purpose of the meeting shall be stated, and no business other than that named in the notice is to be transacted. The Presbytery also shall convene when directed to do so by the General Assembly, for the transaction of designated business only.

13-13. Ministers in good standing in other Presbyteries, or in any evangelical church, being present at any meeting of Presbytery, may be invited to sit as visiting brethren. It is proper for the moderator to introduce these brethren to the Presbytery. This provision shall also apply to the General Assembly.

CHAPTER 14

The General Assembly

14-1. The General Assembly is the highest court of this Church, and represents in one body all the churches thereof. It bears the title of The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, and constitutes the bond of union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts.

Principles for the Organization of the Assembly:

1. The Church is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission.
2. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the Church at every court level, and the Assembly is responsible to encourage and promote the fulfillment of this ministry by the various courts.
3. The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work, being implemented at the General Assembly level through equally essential committees.
4. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation to support the whole work of the denomination as they be led in their conscience held captive to the Word of God.
5. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to evaluate needs and resources, and to act on priorities for the most effective fulfillment of the Great Commission.
6. The Church recognizes the right of individuals and congregations to labor through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.
7. The Assembly's committees are to serve and not to direct any Church judicatories. They are not to establish policy, but rather execute policy established by the General Assembly.
8. The committees serve the Church through the duties assigned by the General Assembly.
9. The Assembly's committees are to include proportionate representation of all presbyteries, wherever possible.
10. The committees are to be established on the basis of an equal number between teaching and ruling elders.

11. A Nominating Committee shall be comprised of one representative elected by each Presbytery in the following manner. Each Presbytery shall be assigned to a class by the stated clerk based on its date of formation. The members shall serve in classes of three year terms, alternating between ruling and teaching elders. When necessary, unexpired terms shall be filled by an elder of the same class, teaching or ruling.

    This committee is to present all nominations for which it is responsible to the next meeting of the Assembly from a slate of men nominated by the Presbyteries. Presbyteries shall utilize the nominating forms provided by the stated clerk for their nominations. Each presbytery may present one teaching elder and one ruling elder for each committee or agency.

    In addition to nominees for expired terms, the Committee shall nominate for each permanent committee one ruling and one teaching elder as alternates to fill any vacancies that may occur during the year. Each alternate should attend each meeting and fill any vacancy necessary to meet a quorum. In addition to the new nominees from the Presbyteries, alternates not assuming any vacancies during a year will be automatically considered by the Nominating Committee as candidates for nomination to that same committee.

12. The Assembly permanent committees are the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, Committee on Discipleship Ministries, Committee on Mission to North America, Committee on Mission to the World, and Committee on Reformed University Fellowship.

    The Administrative Committee of General Assembly (AC) shall consist of twenty (20) members:

    a. Eleven members in classes elected through the standard nomination and election procedure,
    b. One member each from the following program committees or agencies:
        1. Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM);
        2. Covenant College (CC);
        3. Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS);
        4. Mission to North America (MNA);

5. Mission to the World (MTW);
6. PCA Foundation (PCAF);
7. Geneva Benefits Group, Inc. (Geneva);
8. Reformed University Fellowship (RUF);
9. Ridge Haven Conference Center (RH).

The eleven members at large shall serve a term of four years. The chairman of the Administrative Committee shall be one of its members at large.

Each program committee and agency shall designate its member each year at the last meeting of the committee or board before the meeting of General Assembly. The chief administrative officers of the program committees and agencies may attend any meeting of the Administrative Committee. They shall be entitled to the privilege of the floor but shall not have a vote and must be excluded when an executive session is called.

Committee on Discipleship Ministries, Committee on Mission to North America, Committee on Mission to the World, and Committee on Reformed University Fellowship shall consist of fifteen (15) men divided into five classes of three men each, with two men being TEs and one RE or two men being REs and one TE on alternate years, elected to serve five-year terms. Committees on Discipleship Ministries, Mission to North America, Mission to the World, and Reformed University Fellowship shall have one ruling and one teaching elder as alternates to fill any vacancy that may occur during the year.

Persons who have served for a full term, or for at least two years of a partial term, on one of the Assembly's permanent committees or agencies shall not be eligible for re-election to an Assembly committee until one year has elapsed. (Exceptions may be permitted in agency bylaws approved by the Assembly.)

13. The General Assembly establishes personnel salaries after hearing recommendations from the appropriate committee.
14. The Assembly shall elect a six-man Theological Examining Committee (three teaching elders and three ruling elders of three classes of two men each). Nominations for this Committee will be presented by the Assembly's Nominating Committee.

This committee shall examine all first and second level administrative officers of committees, boards and agencies, and those acting temporarily in these positions who are being recommended for first time employment. They are to be examined in the areas of:

a. Christian experience,
b. Theology,
c. The Sacraments,
d. Church government,
e. Bible content,
f. Church history, and the
g. History of the Presbyterian Church in America.

No person will begin work or move on the field without prior examination and approval by the General Assembly's Theological Examining Committee. No first level administrative officer will be presented to the Assembly for election who has not met the approval of this committee.

15. All business shall ordinarily come to the floor of the Assembly for final action through committees of commissioners, except reports of the Standing Judicial Commission, the Committee on Constitutional Business, the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records, the Nominating Committee and Ad Interim committees, which shall come directly to the Assembly.

14-2. The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least annually upon its own adjournment. It shall consist of all teaching elders in good standing with their Presbyteries, and ruling elders as elected by their Session. Each congregation is entitled to two ruling elder representatives for the first 350 communing members or fraction thereof, and one additional ruling elder for each additional 500 communing members or fraction thereof.

14-3. When an emergency shall require a meeting of the General Assembly earlier than the time to which it stands adjourned, the moderator shall issue a call for a special meeting at the request or with the concurrence of ten percent (10%) of the commissioners who had seats in the Assembly at its preceding meeting, of whom at least ten shall be teaching elders and at least ten ruling elders, representing at least one-third (1/3) of the Presbyteries. Should the moderator be for any reason unable to act, the stated clerk shall under the same requirements issue the call.

The members of the special meeting shall be the commissioners elected to the preceding meeting of the Assembly or their alternates. A Session, however, shall have the right to elect a commissioner or alternate in the stead of one who had died since the last meeting of the Assembly, or of one who has notified the moderator of the Session of his inability to serve. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than twenty (20) days in advance to each commissioner and to the moderator of each Presbytery. In the notice the purpose of the meeting is to be stated and no other business is to be transacted.

14-4. Each commissioner, before his name shall be enrolled as a member of the Assembly, shall produce appropriate credentials.

14-5. Any one hundred (100) of these commissioners, of whom half shall be teaching elders and half ruling elders, representing at least one-third (1/3) of the Presbyteries, being met on the day and at the place appointed, shall be a quorum for the transaction of business.

14-6. The General Assembly shall have power:

a. To receive and issue* all appeals, references, and complaints regularly brought before it from the lower courts; to bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church; to decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline;
b. To give its advice and instruction, in conformity with the Constitution, in all cases submitted to it;
c. To review the records of the Presbyteries, to take care that the lower courts observe the Constitution; to redress whatever they may have done contrary to order;
d. To devise measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the Church;
e. To erect new Presbyteries, and unite and divide those which were erected with their consent;
f. To institute and superintend the agencies necessary in the general work of evangelization; to appoint ministers of such labors as fall under its jurisdiction;
g. To suppress schismatical contentions and disputations, according to the rules provided therefor;

* Editor's note: "Issue" means "settling the issue of the case".

h. To receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of three-fourths (3/4) of the Presbyteries, other ecclesiastical bodies whose organization is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church; to authorize Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying within their geographical bounds respectively;
i. To superintend the affairs of the whole Church;
j. To correspond with other churches; to unite with other ecclesiastical bodies whose organization is conformed to the doctrines and order of this Church, such union to be effected by a mode of procedure defined in *BCO* 26; and
k. In general to recommend measures for the promotion of charity, truth and holiness through all the churches under its care.

14-7. Actions of the General Assembly pursuant to the provision of *BCO* 14-6 such as deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and judicial decisions are to be given due and serious consideration by the Church and its lower courts when deliberating matters related to such action. Judicial decisions shall be binding and conclusive on the parties who are directly involved in the matter being adjudicated, and may be appealed to in subsequent similar cases as to any principle which may have been decided. (See *BCO* 3-5 and 6, and *WCF* 31:3.)

14-8. The whole business of the Assembly being finished, and the vote taken for final adjournment, the moderator shall say from the chair:

> **By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, I do now declare that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America is adjourned, to convene at _____ on the _____ day of _____A. D.**

After which he shall pray and return thanks, and pronounce or cause to be pronounced on those present the apostolic benediction.

CHAPTER 15

Ecclesiastical Commissions

15-1. A commission differs from an ordinary committee in that while a committee is appointed to examine, consider, and report, a commission is authorized to deliberate upon and conclude the business referred to it. A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted to the court appointing it. Upon such submission this record shall be entered on the minutes of the court appointing, the date of the submission being the date of "the meeting of the court" for filing requirements under the rules of discipline, with exception of the "notification" dates of *BCO* 42-4 and 43-3. The effective date of dismissal of a commission of Session or Presbytery shall be not before the time allowed for the filing of a complaint or appeal against that commission's decision has expired. Any complaint or appeal so timely filed, shall be adjudicated by that commission until the matter is settled by that commission or a higher court. When a commission is appointed to serve as an interim Session, its actions are the actions of a Session, not a Presbytery. Every commission of a Presbytery or Session must submit complete minutes and a report of its activities at least once annually to the court which commissioned it.

15-2. Among the matters that may be properly executed by commissions are the taking of the testimony in judicial cases, the ordination of ministers, the installation of ministers, the visitation of portions of the church affected with disorder, and the organization of new churches.

Every commission appointed by Presbytery shall consist of at least two teaching elders and two ruling elders, and the quorum shall be one more than half its membership unless otherwise determined by the Presbytery. However, should a Presbytery clothe a commission with judicial powers and authority to conduct judicial process, or with power to ordain or install a teaching elder of the Gospel, the quorum of such commission shall not be less than two teaching elders and two ruling elders. The quorum for a commission appointed as an interim session need not conform to the requirements of a judicial commission, but only to those of a session (*BCO* 12-1). When the ordination of a minister is committed to a commission, the Presbytery itself shall conduct the previous examination.

15-3. Presbytery as a whole may hear a case, with or without process (*BCO* 31-38), a reference (*BCO* 41), an appeal (*BCO* 42), a complaint (*BCO* 43), a *BCO* 40-5 proceeding, or a request to assume original jurisdiction (*BCO* 33-1) properly before it, or it may of its own motion commit such a case to a commission. Such a commission shall be appointed by the Presbytery from its members other than members of the Session of the church from which the case comes up. The commission shall try the case in the manner presented by the Rules of Discipline and shall submit to the Presbytery a full statement of the case and the judgment rendered. The judgment of the commission shall be the decision of the Presbytery, and the statement of the case and judgment printed in its minutes.

15-4. The General Assembly shall elect a Standing Judicial Commission to which it shall commit all matters governed by the Rules of Discipline, except for the annual review of Presbytery records, which may come before the Assembly. This commission shall consist of twenty-four (24) members divided into four classes of three teaching elders and three ruling elders in each class. Each class shall serve a four-year term and each subsequent Assembly shall declare the Standing Judicial Commission as a whole to be its commission. Nominations and vacancies shall be filled according to *BCO* 14-1(11), with nominations allowed from the floor. No person may be elected if there is already a member of the commission from the same Presbytery; but if a person is elected and changes Presbytery, he may continue to serve his full term. No person may serve concurrently on the General Assembly's Standing Judicial Commission and any of the General Assembly's permanent committees.

15-5. a. In the cases committed to it, the Standing Judicial Commission shall have the judicial powers and be governed by the judicial procedures of the General Assembly. The decision of the Standing Judicial Commission shall be the final decision of the General Assembly except as set forth below, to which there may be no complaint or appeal. Members of the Standing Judicial Commission may file concurring or dissenting opinions, or a minority report as set forth in (c) below. The General Assembly may direct the Standing Judicial Commission to retry a case if upon the review of its minutes exceptions are taken with respect to that case.

b. In each case the Standing Judicial Commission shall issue a summary of the facts, a statement of the issues, its judgment and its reasoning, together with any concurring or dissenting opinions, all of which shall be entered on the minutes of the General Assembly and shall be reported by the Stated Clerk to the next General Assembly. The judgment shall be effective from the time of its announcement to the parties.

c. (1) If, within twenty-four (24) hours of the time of adjournment of a Standing Judicial Commission meeting at which a final decision was rendered in a case, at least one-third (1/3) of the voting members of the Standing Judicial Commission file written notice of their intention to file a minority decision with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, and within twenty (20) days from the adjournment do file such a minority decision, such minority decision shall be considered a minority report and shall be referred, with the report of the Standing Judicial Commission, to the General Assembly. In each instance "file" shall be understood as defined by the Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission.

(2) No such reference* from the Standing Judicial Commission shall be considered by the General Assembly unless the report of the Standing Judicial Commission and the minority report have been mailed to the clerk of Session of each church at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting of the General Assembly.

(3) The Assembly shall act upon such a reference* from the Standing Judicial Commission, in each case without question, discussion, debate, or amendment, as follows:

(a) The Standing Judicial Commission shall have 30 minutes to present its decision to the Assembly.

*NOTE: It was the opinion of the 26th General Assembly that "reference" is NOT to be understood as the technical term "reference" in *BCO* 41-1.

(b) The minority shall have 30 minutes to present its decision to the Assembly.
(c) The Standing Judicial Commission shall have 10 minutes to reply to the minority report.
(d) The decision of the minority shall be proposed and the General Assembly shall, without question, discussion, debate, or amendment approve or disapprove of the minority report.
(e) If the General Assembly disapproves the minority report, the General Assembly shall take up the decision of the Standing Judicial Commission and without question, discussion, debate, or amendment, approve or disapprove of the decision of the Standing Judicial Commission.

(4) If the General Assembly approves of a proposed decision, it shall be the decision of the General Assembly, and printed in its minutes. There may be no complaint or appeal from such a final decision of the General Assembly. If the General Assembly finally disapproves of both proposed decisions, it must set the case for hearing before the General Assembly or a special commission appointed by it, and in either instance the case shall be tried on the record as delivered to the Stated Clerk. Any such special commission shall then proceed to consider the case and shall report its decision, in like manner, to the General Assembly for its approval or disapproval. In any event, the full record of the case, including written testimony of witnesses, all documents, exhibits and papers shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk for permanent preservation.

15-6. The General Assembly shall have power to commit to a commission, consisting of not less than three elders, the task of forming a provisional Presbytery in a foreign country where there exists no compatible indigenous presbyterian and reformed Church. Such a commission shall have authority to act as the Presbytery in all matters pertaining to the establishment and ordering of a national Church and shall report annually to the General Assembly. The commission shall be dissolved when there are at least three national teaching elders and three organized churches under its care, and these shall then constitute a separate national Church.

CHAPTER 16

Church Orders – The Doctrine of Vocation

16-1. Ordinary vocation to office in the Church is the calling of God by the Spirit, through the inward testimony of a good conscience, the manifest approbation of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a lawful court of the Church.

16-2. The government of the Church is by officers gifted to represent Christ, and the right of God's people to recognize by election to office those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the election, or at least the consent of that church.

16-3. Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by which he is to be ordained.

16-4. Officers in the Presbyterian Church in America must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. While office bearers will see spiritual perfection only in glory, they will continue in this life to confess and to mortify remaining sins in light of God's work of progressive sanctification. Therefore, to be qualified for office, they must affirm the sinfulness of fallen desires, the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, and be committed to the pursuit of Spirit-empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions.

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CHAPTER 17

Doctrine of Ordination

17-1. Those who have been called to office in the Church are to be inducted by the ordination of a court.

17-2. Ordination is the authoritative admission of one duly called to an office in the Church of God, accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands, to which it is proper to add the giving of the right hand of fellowship.

17-3. As every ecclesiastical office, according to the Scriptures, is a special charge, no man shall be ordained unless it be to the performance of a definite work.

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CHAPTER 18

Candidates for the Gospel Ministry

18-1. A candidate for the ministry is a member of the Church in full communion who, believing himself to be called to preach the Gospel, submits himself to the care and guidance of the Presbytery in his course of study and of practical training to prepare himself for this office.

18-2. Every applicant for the ministry must put himself under the care of Presbytery, which should ordinarily be the Presbytery that has jurisdiction of the church of which he is a member. The endorsement of his Session must be given to the Presbytery, consisting of testimonials regarding his Christian character and promise of usefulness in the ministry. The endorsement should also describe the activities of ministry the applicant has participated in with brief evaluation.

Every applicant for care shall be a member of the congregation whose Session provides an endorsement for at least six months before filing his application, except in those cases deemed extraordinary by the Presbytery.

Every applicant must file his application with the clerk of the Presbytery. An applicant for care may not be received under care and ● examined for ordination at the same meeting of the Presbytery, since he must serve a period of at least one year of internship prior to ordination (see *BCO* 19-7 and 21-4). An applicant for internship is obliged to be under care and may be licensed to preach the Gospel; further, one who is not already under care may be taken under care, be licensed to preach the Gospel, and become an intern at the same meeting of Presbytery.

18-3. The applicant shall appear before the Presbytery in person, and shall be examined by the Presbytery on experiential religion and on his motives for seeking the ministry.

If the testimonials and the examination prove satisfactory, the Presbytery shall receive him under its care after the following manner:

The moderator shall propose to the applicant these questions:

1. **Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a becoming Christian character, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for the sacred ministry?**
2. **Do you promise to submit yourself to the proper supervision of the Presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for the ministry?**

If these questions be answered in the affirmative, the moderator, or someone appointed by him, shall give the candidate a brief charge; and the proceeding shall close with prayer.

The name of the applicant is then to be recorded on the Presbytery's roll of candidates for the ministry.

18-4. The candidate continues to be a private member of the church and subject to the jurisdiction of the Session, but as respects his preparatory training for the ministry he is under the oversight of the Presbytery. It shall be the duty of the Presbytery to show a kindly and sympathetic interest in him, and to give him counsel and guidance in regard to his studies, his practical training, and the institutions of learning he should attend. In no case may a candidate omit from his course of study any of the subjects prescribed in the Form of Government as tests for ordination without obtaining the consent of Presbytery (see *BCO* 21-4); and where such consent is given the Presbytery shall record the fact and the reasons therefore.

18-5. For the development of his Christian character, for the service he can render, and for his more effective training, the candidate, when entering on his theological studies, should be authorized and encouraged by the Presbytery to conduct public worship, to expound the Scriptures to the people, and to engage in other forms of Christian work. These forms of service should be rendered under the direction of Presbytery, and also with the sanction and under the guidance of the candidate's instructors during the time of his being under their instruction. A candidate should not undertake to serve a church which is without a pastor as regular supply unless he has been licensed and approved for that supply by the Presbytery having jurisdiction of the church (see *BCO* 19-1).

18-6. The Presbytery shall require every candidate for the ministry under its care to make a report to it at least once a year; and it shall secure from his instructors an annual report upon his deportment, diligence, and progress in study.

18-7. The Presbytery may, upon application of the candidate, give a certificate of dismission to another Presbytery. The candidate may be allowed to retain membership in his home church upon the request of his Session and the approval of both Presbyteries involved. A candidate shall, at his request or at the request of his Session, be allowed to withdraw from the care of the Presbytery. But in such a case sufficient reasons (and any actions taken) must be reported to the Presbytery. The Presbytery may also, for sufficient reasons, remove the name of the candidate from its roll of candidates; but in such a case it shall report its actions and the reasons therefore to the candidate and to the Session of his church. In all cases of a removal or withdrawal of a candidate, the sufficient reason for the action shall be recorded in the minutes of Presbytery.

18-8. An applicant coming as a candidate from another denomination must present testimonials of his standing in that body and must become a member of a congregation in the Presbyterian Church in America. He shall then fulfill the requirements of applicants listed under *BCO* 18-2, as well as requirements placed upon those desiring to be licensed or to become an intern as set forth in *BCO* 19.

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CHAPTER 19

Licensure and Internship

A. Licensure

19-1. To preserve the purity of the preaching of the Gospel, no man is permitted to preach in the pulpits of the Presbyterian Church in America on a regular basis without proper licensure from the Presbytery having jurisdiction where he will preach. An ordained teaching elder who is a member in good standing of another Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America may be licensed after being examined as to his views, according to the provision of *BCO* 13-6. This license shall immediately become void if the minister's own Presbytery administers against him a censure of suspension from office or the sacraments, or deposition from office, or of excommunication (in the event of such censures, the Presbytery with jurisdiction shall always notify the licensing Presbytery). A ruling elder, a candidate for the ministry, a minister from some other denomination, or some other man may be licensed for the purpose of regularly providing the preaching of the Word upon his giving satisfaction to the Presbytery of his gifts and passing the licensure examination. (See also *BCO* 22-5 and 22-6.)

19-2. Examination for Licensure.

The examination for licensure shall be as follows:

a. Give a statement of his Christian experience and inward call to preach the Gospel in written form and/or orally before the Presbytery (at the discretion of the Presbytery):
b. Be tested with a written and/or oral examination by the Presbytery (at the discretion of the Presbytery) for his:
    1. basic knowledge of Biblical doctrine as outlined in the *Confession of Faith* and *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* of the Presbyterian Church in America.
    2. practical knowledge of Bible content.
    3. basic knowledge of the government of the Presbyterian Church in America as defined in *The Book of Church Order*.
c. Be examined orally before Presbytery for his views in the areas outlined in part b above.
d. Provide his written sermon on an assigned passage of Scripture embodying both explanation and application, and present orally his sermon or exhortation before Presbytery or before a committee of Presbytery.

e. While our Constitution does not require the applicant's affirmation of every statement and/or proposition of doctrine in our *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*, it is the right and responsibility of the Presbytery to determine if the applicant is out of accord with any of the fundamentals of these doctrinal standards and, as a consequence, may not be able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith and Catechisms* of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures (cf. *BCO* 19-3, Q.2).

f. Therefore, in examining an applicant for licensure, the Presbytery shall inquire not only into the candidate's knowledge and views in the areas specified above, but also shall require the candidate to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions. The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court's judgment the applicant's declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor strikes at the vitals of religion.

No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of examination except in extraordinary cases; and whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these parts, it shall always make a record of the reasons therefor, and of the trial parts omitted.

19-3. Questions for Licensure.

If the Presbytery be satisfied with the trials of the applicant, it shall then proceed to license him in the following manner:

The moderator shall propose to him the following questions, namely:

1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scripture?**
3. **Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?**
4. **Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this Presbytery, or of any other into the bounds of which you may be called?**

19-4. The applicant having answered these questions in the affirmative, the moderator shall offer a prayer suitable for the occasion, and shall address the applicant as follows:

> **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 in this Presbytery 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.**

Record shall be made of the licensure in the following or like form:

> **At_____, the _____day of_____, the _____Presbytery, having received testimonials commending _____, proceeded to submit him to the prescribed examination for licensure, which was met to the approval of the Presbytery. Having satisfactorily answered the questions for licensure, _____ was licensed by the Presbytery to preach the Gospel within the bounds of this Presbytery.**

19-5. When any licentiate shall have occasion to remove from the bounds of his Presbytery into those of another, the latter Presbytery may, at its discretion, on his producing proper testimonials from the former, repeat any portion of the previous Presbytery's examination it desires. The Presbytery into whose bounds the licentiate is moving, however, must at least examine the man concerning:

a. his Christian experience,
b. his call to preach the Gospel,
c. his views in theology,
d. Bible content,
e. church government.

This Presbytery then may license him to preach within its bounds.

19-6. The license to preach the Gospel shall expire at the end of four years. The Presbytery may, if it thinks proper, renew it without further examination. The licentiate must apply for renewal prior to expiration. If the license expires, the stated clerk shall report the expiration to the Presbytery and to the individual's Session, and such action shall be recorded in the minutes. The procedures of *BCO* 19-2 must be followed for re-licensure and such fact shall be recorded in the minutes. The license may be terminated at any time by a simple majority vote of the issuing Presbytery. The Presbytery shall always record its reasons for this action in its minutes.

B. Internship

19-7. The Holy Scriptures require that some trial be previously made of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Word, both concerning their gifts and concerning their ability to rule as teaching elders, in order that this sacred office may not be degraded by being committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the Church may have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those to whom this sacred office is to be committed.

To provide for such a period of trial, a candidate for ordination must serve an internship. This period of internship shall be at least one year in length, and may be longer at the discretion of the Presbytery so as to give sufficient time for the Presbytery to judge the candidate's qualifications and service. This period of internship may occur during or after the candidate's formal theological education. When it occurs during his formal theological education, it may include an intern year in addition to his time of academic training or it may run concurrent with his academic training.

The nature of the internship shall be determined by the Presbytery, but it should involve the candidate in full scope of the duties of any regular ministerial calling approved by the Presbytery. It is to be both a time of practical instruction and testing by the Presbytery, and may be in any work which the Presbytery deems to be a suitable ministry to test the intern's gifts. The intern should be closely supervised by the Presbytery throughout this trial period.

19-8. An applicant for internship must be a candidate and may be a licentiate in the Presbytery in which he is seeking to become an intern. He may, however, become a candidate, and an intern at the same meeting of Presbytery. If an applicant for internship is already a candidate in another Presbytery, that Presbytery should dismiss him as a candidate to the Presbytery in which he is seeking to become an intern.

19-9. Examination for Internship.

Before the applicant begins his period of internship, he shall give to the Presbytery a written and/or an oral statement (at the discretion of the Presbytery) of his inward call to the ministry of the Word.

19-10. When an applicant is approved for internship, the moderator of the Presbytery shall offer a prayer suitable for the occasion, and shall address the applicant, if present, as follows:

> **In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by that authority which He has given to the Church for its edification, we do declare you to be an intern of this Presbytery as a means of testing your gifts for the holy ministry 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.**

Record shall be made of the internship in the following or like form, namely:

> **At _____, the _____ day of _____, the _____ Presbytery, having received testimonials commending _____, having received him as a candidate for the ministry, has placed him under internship at his request in order to test his gifts for the holy ministry.**

19-11. When any intern shall have occasion, while his internship is in progress, to remove from the bounds of his own Presbytery into those of another, the latter Presbytery may, at its discretion, on his producing proper testimonials from the former, take up his internship at the point at which it was left, and conduct it to a conclusion in the same manner as if it had been commenced by itself. Presbytery may repeat any portion of the previous Presbytery's examination it desires.

When God gives the intern the providential opportunity to serve the Church and to receive part of his training within the bounds of a Presbytery other than the one in which he has been declared an intern, the Presbyteries involved may develop a cooperative agreement to assure the proper training of the intern. In such cases the home Presbytery retains the final responsibility for and authority over the internship, but may rely to any extent considered necessary and proper in the circumstances, on the assistance of the sister Presbytery. When regular preaching of the Word is involved, care must be taken to comply with *BCO* 19-1.

19-12. Presbyteries should require interns to devote themselves diligently to the trial of their gifts; and no one should be ordained to the work of the ministry of the Word until he has demonstrated the ability both to edify and to rule in the Church. Reports on every intern in the Presbytery should be presented at each stated meeting of the Presbytery by the committee of Presbytery charged with the oversight of interns, and these reports shall become a part of the minutes of Presbytery. The Presbytery shall also require every intern himself to make a report to it at least once a year describing his ministerial experiences. If the intern is still in school, the Presbytery shall secure from his instructors an annual report upon his deportment, diligence, and progress in study.

19-13. At the end of the period of time set by the Presbytery for his internship, an intern shall have his internship either approved or disapproved. Even if it is approved, he cannot be ordained without a call to some specific work. If the internship is disapproved, the Presbytery may either extend it for another definite period of time or it may completely rescind his intern status and may revoke his internship. If the intern shall devote himself unnecessarily to such pursuits as interfere with a full trial of his gifts, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery to rescind his intern status, and to record its reasons therefor in the minutes of Presbytery.

19-14. An intern, who, during his internship, is to serve a congregation in the capacity of the minister of the Word must be called by the congregation in the same way that a regular minister is called. A congregation may later call such a man as its pastor. This call must be approved by Presbytery prior to the time of ordination. In the event a congregation does not desire to call such a man as its pastor as determined by a congregational vote, notice should be given as early as possible. Interns may be called to serve as assistants to ministers during their internship, by the Session of a church with approval of the call by Presbytery.

19-15. Restrictions.

The intern may be asked by the moderator of a Session temporarily to chair the meeting of the Session. In such cases the moderator shall supervise this activity and may overrule the intern or re-assume the chair at will. The intern is not a member of Session and may not vote in the meetings unless he has previously been ordained a Ruling Elder and elected to the Session by the congregation. Normally, he shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Session and Diaconate when he has been called to work out his internship by a congregation. He shall have the right to conduct funerals. An intern may not administer the Sacraments. He may serve on committees of the church he serves.

19-16. Where circumstances warrant, a Presbytery may approve previous experience which is equivalent to internship. This equivalency shall be decided by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of Presbytery at any of its regular meetings. Such equivalent experience shall be decided only after the Presbytery's internship committee has determined and reported that the candidate has met the following requirements:

a. he has had at least one (1) year of experience in comparable ministry;
b. he has satisfactorily performed the full scope of ministerial duties;
c. he has the manifest approbation of God's people in a local church as having the requisite gifts for the pastoral ministry.

CHAPTER 20

The Election of Pastors

20-1. Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. (See also *BCO* 8-7 and 21-1).

A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the *BCO* 8.

20-2. Every church should be under the pastoral oversight of a minister, and when a church has no pastor it should seek to secure one without delay.

A church shall proceed to elect a pastor in the following manner: The Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pulpit committee which may be composed of members from the congregation at large or the Session, as designated by the congregation (see *BCO* 25). The pulpit committee shall, after consultation and deliberation, recommend to the congregation a pastoral candidate who, in its judgment, fulfills the Constitutional requirements of that office (e.g., *BCO* 8, 13-6 and 21) and is most suited to be profitable to the spiritual interests of the congregation (cf. *BCO* 20-6).

The Session shall order a congregational meeting to convene at the regular place of worship. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of this meeting shall be given at least one week prior to the time of the meeting.

20-3. When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it is important that they should elect a minister or ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in America to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer. All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the churches to which they are respectively attached.

20-4. Method of voting: The voters being convened, and prayer for divine guidance having been offered, the moderator shall put the question:

Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor?

If they declare themselves ready, the moderator shall call for nominations, or the election may proceed by ballot without nominations. In every case a majority of all the votes cast (excluding blanks and abstentions) shall be required to elect.

20-5. On the election of a pastor, if it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to the candidate who has received a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from prosecuting it further; but if the electors be nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a pastor, the moderator shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by them, certifying at the same time in writing the number of those who do not concur in the call, and any facts of importance, all of which proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the call.

20-6. Form of call: The terms of the call shall be approved by the congregation in the following or like form:

The _____ Church being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, _____, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call 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. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of $_____ a year in regular monthly (or quarterly) payments, and other benefits, such as, manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses etc., during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.

In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this _____day of_____, A.D._____.

Attest: I, having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to _____ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the *Book of Church Order*, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

_____

Moderator of the Meeting

20-7. If any church shall choose to designate its ruling elders and deacons, or a committee to sign its call, it shall be at liberty to do so. But it shall, in such case, be fully certified to the Presbytery by the minister or other person who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the church, and that the call has been in all other respects prepared as above directed.

20-8. Prosecution of call: One or more commissioners shall be appointed by the church to present and prosecute the call before their Presbytery.

20-9. When a pastor desires to accept a call to another Presbytery, he must be examined and approved by the Presbytery for the pastorate to which he is being called, and must be released for transfer by his present Presbytery from his pastorate.

20-10. A congregation desiring to call a pastor from his charge, shall, by its commissioners to the Presbytery, prosecute the call before its Presbytery. The Presbytery, having heard all the parties, may, upon viewing the whole case, either recommend them to desist from prosecuting the call; or may order it to be delivered to the minister to whom it is addressed, with or without advice; or may decline to place the call in his hands; as it shall appear most beneficial for the peace and edification of the Church at large.

No pastor shall be transferred without his own consent, if the parties are not ready to have the matter decided at the meeting then in progress, a written citation shall be given the minister and his church to appear before the Presbytery at its next meeting, which citation shall be read from the pulpit during a regular service, at least two weeks before the intended meeting.

20-11. If the congregation or other field of labor to which a minister, licentiate, or candidate is called, be under the jurisdiction of a different Presbytery, on his acceptance of a call he shall be furnished with the proper testimonials, and required to repair immediately to the Presbytery, in order that he may be regularly inducted into his office. (See *BCO* 21).

20-12. A candidate or licentiate found fit and called (in accordance with *BCO* 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for ordination. If approved the Presbytery shall proceed to his ordination.

20-13. A missionary who is an ordained teaching elder in another denomination found fit and called (in accordance with *BCO* 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for admission to Presbytery in accordance with *BCO* 13-6. If approved he shall be enrolled as a member of Presbytery.

CHAPTER 21

The Ordination and Installation of Ministers

21-1. No minister, licentiate or candidate shall receive a call from a church but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if found in order and the Presbytery deems it for the good of the Church, they shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed.

Ordinarily a candidate or licentiate may not be granted permission by the Presbytery to move on to the field to which he has been called, prior to his examination for licensure or ordination. Likewise an ordained minister from another Presbyterian Church in America Presbytery or another denomination, ordinarily shall not move on to the field to which he has been called until examined and received by Presbytery.

21-2. When an intern has completed his internship to the satisfaction of the Presbytery, and has accepted a call, the Presbytery shall take immediate steps for his ordination.

21-3. No Presbytery shall ordain any intern to the office of minister of the Word with reference to his laboring within the bounds of another Presbytery, but shall furnish him with the necessary testimonials, and require him to repair to the Presbytery within whose bounds he expects to labor, that he may submit himself to its authority, according to the Constitution of the Church.

21-4. Ordination Requirements and Procedures

a. An intern applying for ordination shall be required to present a diploma of Bachelor or Master from some approved college or university, and also a diploma of Bachelor or Master from some approved theological seminary or authentic testimonials of having completed a regular course of theological studies, or a certificate of completion of and endorsement from a theological study program as approved by the General Assembly and one of the Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America. No Presbytery shall omit any of these educational requirements except in extraordinary cases, and then only with a three-fourths (3/4) approval of the Presbytery. Whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these educational requirements, it shall always make a record of the reasons for such omission and the parts omitted. The intern shall also present satisfactory testimonials as to the completion and approval of his internship in the practice of the ministry.

b. Every candidate for ordination shall ordinarily have met the requirements of the Assembly's approved curriculum. Ordinarily, the intern shall have been examined in most of the following trials when he was licensed. If the Presbytery previously approved all parts of the licensure examination, it need not re-examine the intern in those areas at this time. If there were areas of weakness, which the Presbytery noted, or if any member of the Presbytery desires to do so, the intern may be examined on particular points again. Additionally, the intern shall be examined on any parts required for ordination which were not covered in his examination for licensure. In all cases, he should be asked to indicate whether he has changed his previous views concerning any points in the *Confession of Faith, Catechisms,* and *Book of Church Order* of the Presbyterian Church in America.

c. Trials for ordination shall consist of:
   (1) A careful examination as to:
      (a) his acquaintance with experiential religion, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:6-9),
      (b) his knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages,
      (c) Bible content,
      (d) theology,
      (e) the Sacraments,
      (f) Church history,
      (g) the history of the Presbyterian Church in America, and
      (h) the principles and rules of the government and discipline of the church.

      A Presbytery may accept a seminary degree which includes study in the original languages in lieu of an oral examination in the original languages.
   (2) He shall prepare a thesis on some theological topic assigned by Presbytery.
   (3) The candidate shall prepare an exegesis on an assigned portion of Scripture, requiring the use of the original language or languages.
   (4) He shall further be required to preach a sermon before the Presbytery or committee thereof, upon three-fourths (3/4) vote.

   No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of trial for ordination except in extraordinary cases, and then only with three-fourths (3/4) approval of Presbytery.
d. Whenever a Presbytery shall omit any of these parts, it shall always make a record of the reasons for such omissions and of the trial parts omitted.
e. In the examination of the candidate’s personal character, the presbytery shall give specific attention to potential notorious concerns.

Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The candidate must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, when confessing sins and sinful temptations publicly, the candidate must exercise great care not to diminish the seriousness of those sins in the eyes of the congregation, as though they were matters of little consequence, but rather should testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in his progress in holiness (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

f. While our Constitution does not require the candidate's affirmation of every statement and/or proposition of doctrine in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*, it is the right and responsibility of the Presbytery to determine if the candidate is out of accord with any of the fundamentals of these doctrinal standards and, as a consequence, may not be able in good faith sincerely to receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures (cf. *BCO* 21-5, Q.2; 24-6, Q.2).

g. Therefore, in examining a candidate for ordination, the Presbytery shall inquire not only into the candidate's knowledge and views in the areas specified above, but also shall require the candidate to state the specific instances in which he may differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions. The court may grant an exception to any difference of doctrine only if in the court's judgment the candidate's declared difference is not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine because the difference is neither hostile to the system nor strikes at the vitals of religion.

h. The Presbytery, being fully satisfied of his qualifications for the sacred office, shall appoint a day for his ordination, which ought, if practicable, to be in that church of which he is to be the pastor.

i. The extraordinary clauses should be limited to extraordinary circumstances of the church or proven extraordinary gifts of the man. Presbyteries should exercise diligence and care in the use of these provisions in order that they not prevent the ordination of a candidate for whom there are truly exceptional circumstances, nor ordain (nor receive from other denominations *BCO* 13-6) a person who is inadequately prepared for the ministry.

21-5. The day appointed for the ordination having come, and the Presbytery being convened, a sermon suitable for the occasion shall be preached by a

person appointed or invited by the Presbytery. The Presbytery member appointed to preside shall afterwards briefly recite from the pulpit the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination; he shall point out the nature and importance of the ordinance, and endeavor to impress the audience with a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction.

Questions for Ordination[1]

Then, addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions:

1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* 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 of the fundamentals 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 ordination vow?**
3. **Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of Biblical polity?**
4. **Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?**
5. **Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?**
6. **Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace and unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?**
7. **Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relational, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?**
8. **Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a pastor?**

[1]For an assistant minister, only questions 1-7 shall be used.

Questions to Congregation[2]

21-6. The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall propose to the church the following questions:

1. **Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive_____, whom you have called to be your pastor?**
2. **Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?**
3. **Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
4. **Do you engage to continue to him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you?**

21-7. The people having answered these questions in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall kneel, and the presiding minister shall, with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, solemnly set him apart to the holy office of the Gospel ministry. Prayer being ended, he shall rise from his knees; and the minister who presides shall first, followed by all members of the Presbytery, take him by the right hand, saying, in words to this effect:

We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this ministry with us.

The presiding minister shall then say:

I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed pastor of this congregation, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

[2]For assistant minister, address the Session omitting the last phrase of questions 1 and 2.

After which the minister presiding, or some other teaching or ruling elder appointed for the purpose, shall give a solemn charge to the pastor and to the congregation, to persevere in the discharge of their reciprocal duties, and then after prayer and the singing of a psalm, or hymn, the congregation shall be dismissed with the benediction. The Presbytery shall duly record its proceedings.[3]

21-8. After the installation, the heads of families of the congregation then present, or at least the ruling elders and deacons, should come forward to their pastor, and give him their right hand, in token of cordial reception and affectionate regard.

Questions for Installation[4]

21-9. In the installation of an ordained minister, the following questions are to be substituted for those addressed to a candidate for ordination, namely:

1. **Are you now willing to take charge of this congregation as their pastor, agreeable to your declaration in accepting its call?**
2. **Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that, in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the Church?**
3. **Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of a pastor to this congregation, and will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeable to your ordination engagements?**

Questions to Congregation[5]

21-10. The candidate having answered these question in the affirmative, the presiding minister shall propose to the church the following questions:

1. **Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive _____, whom you have called to be your pastor?**

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[3]For assistant minister, add the word 'assistant' before 'pastor', and charge the Session rather than the congregation.

[4]For assistant minister, substitute the word 'serve' for 'take charge of', and add the word 'assistant' before 'pastor'.

[5]For assistant minister, address the Session omitting the last phrase of questions 1 and 2.

2. **Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline?**
3. **Do you promise to encourage him in his labors, and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification?**
4. **Do you engage to continue to him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised, and to furnish him with whatever you may see needful for the honor of religion and for his comfort among you?**

21-11. In the ordination of interns as evangelists the same questions are to be propounded as in the ordination of pastors, with the exception of the eighth, for which the following shall be substituted:

> **Do you now undertake the work of an evangelist, and do you promise, in reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties incumbent on you as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

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CHAPTER 22

The Pastoral Relations

22-1. The various pastoral relations are pastor, associate pastor, and assistant pastor.

22-2. The pastor and associate pastor are elected by the congregation using the form of call in *BCO* 20-6. An existing assistant pastor may be elected by the congregation as an associate pastor at the recommendation of the Session without the election of a pulpit committee. Being elected by the congregation, they become members of the Session.

22-3. An assistant pastor is called by the Session, by the permission and approval of Presbytery, under the provisions of *BCO* 20-1 and 13-2, with Presbytery membership being governed by the same provisions that apply to pastors. He is not a member of the Session, but may be appointed on special occasions to moderate the Session under the provisions of *BCO* 12-4.

22-4. The relationship of the associate pastor to the church is determined by the congregation. The relationship of the assistant pastor to the church is determined by the Session. The dissolution of the relationship of both is governed by the provision of *BCO* 23.

22-5. In order to provide necessary changes in pastorates, a temporary relation may be established between a church and a minister called Stated Supply. If a church is unable to secure a regular pastor or a Stated Supply, then the Session with approval of Presbytery may establish a temporary relation between the church and a licentiate called Student Supply or Ruling Elder Supply.

22-6. Such temporary relationships can take place at the invitation of the church Session to the minister of the Word, the licentiate, or the ruling elder. The length of the relationship will be determined by the Session and the minister, the licentiate, or the ruling elder, with the approval of the Presbytery. Stated supply, student supply, or ruling elder supply relationships will be for no longer than one year, renewable at the request of the Session and at the review of the Presbytery. (See also *BCO* 19-1).

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CHAPTER 23

The Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation and
The Procedure for Honorable Retirement

23-1. When any minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the church to appear by its commissioners, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation. If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation dissolved.

If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

The associate or assistant pastors may continue to serve a congregation when the pastoral relation of the senior pastor is dissolved, but they may not normally succeed the senior pastor without an intervening term of service in a different field of labor. However a congregation by a secret ballot with four-fifths (4/5) majority vote may petition Presbytery for an exception which by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote Presbytery may grant. Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the senior pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned.

23-2. The Presbytery may designate a minister as honorably retired when the minister by reason of age wishes to be retired, or as medically disabled when by reason of infirmity is no longer able to serve the church in the active ministry of the Gospel. A minister medically disabled or honorably retired shall continue to hold membership in his Presbytery. He may serve on committees or commissions if so elected or appointed.

23-3. A minister, being medically disabled or honorably retired, may be elected pastor emeritus by a congregation which seeks to honor his past earnest labors among them.

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CHAPTER 24

Election, Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons

Election

24-1. Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session, keeping in mind that each prospective officer should be an active male member who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Nominees for the office of ruling elder and/or deacon shall receive instruction in the qualifications and work of the office. Each nominee shall be examined in:

a. his Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
b. his knowledge of Bible content,
c. his knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, The Constitution Defined),
d. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
e. his willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO* 24-6).

In the examination of the nominee's personal character, the Session shall give specific attention to potential notorious concerns. Careful attention must be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as to persistent sinful desires. The nominee must give clear testimony of reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over sin (Psalm 103:2-5, Romans 8:29) and to bear fruit (Psalm 1:3, Gal. 5:22-23). While imperfection will remain, when confessing sins and sinful temptations publicly, the nominee must exercise great care not to diminish the seriousness of those sins in the eyes of the congregation, as though they were matters of little consequence, but rather should testify to the work of the Holy Spirit in his progress in holiness (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Notwithstanding the above, the Session may render a decision on Christian experience at any point in the process, and based on that decision, may judge him, whether previously ordained or not, ineligible for that election. ●

If there are candidates eligible for the election, the Session shall report to the congregation those eligible, giving at least thirty (30) days prior notice of the time and place of a congregational meeting for elections.

If one-fourth (1/4) of the persons entitled to vote shall at any time request the Session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing additional officers, it shall be the duty of the Session to call such a meeting on the above procedure. The number of officers to be elected shall be determined by the congregation after hearing the Session's recommendation.

24-2. The pastor is, by virtue of his office, moderator of congregational meetings. If there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a minister or ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in America or any male member of that particular church.

24-3. All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the election of church officers in the churches to which they respectively belong. A majority vote of votes cast (excluding blanks and abstentions) is required for election.

24-4. The voters being convened, the moderator shall explain the purpose of the meeting and then put the question:

> **Are you now ready to proceed to the election of additional ruling elders (or deacons) from the slate presented?**

If they declare themselves ready, the election may proceed by private ballot without nomination. In every case a majority of all the votes cast (excluding blanks and abstentions) shall be required to elect.

24-5. On the election of a ruling elder or deacon, if it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to a candidate, and cannot be induced to concur in the choice, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from prosecuting it further; but if the electors are nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority insist upon their right to choose their officers, the election shall stand.

Ordination and Installation

24-6. The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the presence of the congregation, a sermon shall be preached after which the presiding minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the office of ruling elder, or deacon, together with the character proper to be sustained and the duties to be fulfilled. Having done this, he shall propose to the candidate, in the presence of the church, the following questions, namely:

1. **Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
2. **Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* 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 of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine, you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?**
3. **Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?**
4. **Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?**
5. **Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?**
6. **Do you promise to strive for the purity, peace, unity and edification of the Church?**

The ruling elder or deacon elect having answered in the affirmative, the minister shall address to the members of the church the following question:

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

The members of the church having answered this question in the affirmative, by holding up their right hands, the candidate shall then be set apart, with prayer by the minister or any other Session member and the laying on of the hands of the Session, to the office of ruling elder (or deacon). Prayer being ended, the members of the Session (and the deacons, if the case be that of a deacon) shall take the newly ordained officer by the hand, saying in words to this effect:

> **We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us.**

The minister shall then say:

I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been regularly elected, ordained and installed a ruling elder (or deacon) in this church, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such he is entitled to all encouragement, honor and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

After which the minister or any other member of the Session shall give to the ruling elder (or deacon) and to the church an exhortation suited to the occasion.

24-7. Ordination to the offices of ruling elder or deacon is perpetual; nor can such offices be laid aside at pleasure; nor can any person be degraded from either office but by deposition after regular trial; yet a ruling elder or deacon may have reasons which he deems valid for being released from the active duties of his office. In such a case the Session, after conference with him and careful consideration of the matter, may, if it thinks proper, accept his resignation and dissolve the official relationship which exists between him and the church.

The ruling elder or deacon, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, may become unacceptable in his official capacity to a majority of the church which he serves. In such a case the church may take the initiative by a majority vote at a regularly called congregational meeting, and request the Session to dissolve the official relationship between the church and the officer without censure. The Session, after conference with the ruling elder or deacon, and after careful consideration, may use its discretion as to dissolving the official relationship. In either case the Session shall report its action to the congregation. If the Session fails or refuses to report to the congregation within sixty (60) days from the date of the congregational meeting or if the Session reports to the congregation that it declined to dissolve such relationship, then any member or members in good standing may file a complaint against the Session in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 43.

24-8. When a ruling elder or deacon who has been released from his official relation is again elected to his office in the same or another church, he shall be installed after the above form with the omission of ordination.

24-9. When a ruling elder or deacon cannot or does not for a period of one year perform the duties of his office, his official relationship shall be dissolved by the Session and the action reported to the congregation.

24-10. When a deacon or ruling elder by reason of age or infirmity desires to be released from the active duties of the office, he may at his request and with the approval of the Session be designated deacon or elder emeritus. When so designated, he is no longer required to perform the regular duties of his office, but may continue to perform certain of these duties on a voluntary basis, if requested by the Session or a higher court. He may attend Diaconate or Session meetings, if he so desires, and may participate fully in the discussion of any issues, but may not vote.

Editorial Comment: The General Assembly explicitly provided that those Elders and Deacons granted emeritus status prior to June 22, 1984, retain the privilege of vote. (By order of the Fifteenth General Assembly 15-83, III, 31).

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CHAPTER 25

Congregational Meetings

25-1. The congregation consists of all the communing members of a particular church, and they only are entitled to vote.

25-2. Whenever it may seem for the best interests of the church that a congregational meeting should be held, the Session shall call such meeting and give public notice of at least one week. No business shall be transacted at such meeting except what is stated in the notice. The Session shall always call a congregational meeting when requested in writing to do so:

a. by one-fourth (1/4) of the communing members of a church of not more than one hundred (100) such members,
b. by one-fifth (1/5) of the communing members of a church of more than one hundred (100) and not more than three hundred (300) such members,
c. by one-sixth (1/6) of the communing members of a church of more than three hundred (300) and not more than five hundred (500) such members,
d. by one-seventh (1/7) of the communing members of a church of more than five hundred (500) members but not more than seven hundred (700) such members,
e. by one hundred (100) of the communing members of a church of more than seven hundred (700) such members.

Upon such a proper request, if the Session cannot act, fails to act or refuses to act, to call such a congregational meeting within thirty (30) days from the receipt of such a request, then any member or members in good standing may file a complaint in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 43.

25-3. The quorum of the congregational meeting shall consist of one-fourth (1/4) of the resident communing members, if the church has not more than one hundred (100) such members, and of one-sixth (1/6) of the resident communing members if a church has more than one hundred (100) such members.

25-4. The pastor shall be the moderator of congregational meetings by virtue of his office. If it should be impracticable or inexpedient for him to preside, or if there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a minister or ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in America, or any male member of that particular church.

25-5. A clerk shall be elected by the congregation to serve at that meeting or for a definite period, whose duty shall be to keep correct minutes of the proceedings and of all business transacted and to preserve these minutes in a permanent form, after they have been attested by the moderator and the clerk of the meeting. He shall also send a copy of these minutes to the Session of the church.

25-6. A particular church which is not incorporated, desiring to elect trustees, may select from among its membership trustees or officers of like nature who shall have the power and authority:

a. to buy, sell, or mortgage property for the church,
b. to accept and execute deeds as such trustees,
c. to hold and defend titles to the same, and
d. to manage any permanent special funds entrusted to them for the furtherance of the purposes of the church.

In the fulfillment of their duties, such trustees shall be subject always to the authority, and shall act solely under the instructions of the congregation which they serve as trustees. The powers or duties of such trustees must not infringe upon the powers or duties of the Session or of the Board of Deacons. Such trustees shall be elected in regularly constituted congregational meetings.

25-7. If a particular church is incorporated, the provisions of its charter and bylaws must always be in accord with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America. All the communing members on the roll of that church shall be members of the corporation. The officers of the corporation, whether they be given the title *trustee* or some other title, shall be elected from among the members of the corporation in a regularly constituted congregational meeting. The powers and duties of such officers must not infringe upon the powers and duties of the Session or the Board of Deacons.

All funds collected for the support and expense of the church and for the benevolent purposes of the church shall be controlled and disbursed by the Session and the Board of Deacons as their relative authorities may from time to time be established and defined.

To the officers of the corporation may be given by the charter and bylaws of the corporation any or all of the following responsibilities:

a. the buying, selling and mortgaging of property for the church,
b. the acquiring and conveying title to such property, the holding and defending title to the same,
c. the managing of any permanent special funds entrusted to them for the furtherance of the purposes of the church, provided that such duties do not infringe upon the powers and duties of the Session or of the Board of Deacons.

In buying, selling, and mortgaging real property such officers shall act solely under the authority of the corporation, granted in a duly constituted meeting of the corporation.

25-8. The corporation of a particular church, through its duly elected trustees or corporation officers, (or, if unincorporated, through those who are entitled to represent the particular church in matters related to real property) shall have sole title to its property, real, personal, or mixed, tangible or intangible, and shall be sole owner of any equity in any real estate, or any fund or property of any kind held by or belonging to any particular church, or any board, society, committee, Sunday school class or branch thereof. The superior courts of the Church may receive monies or properties from a local church only by free and voluntary action of the latter.

25-9. All particular churches shall be entitled to hold, own and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of reversion whatsoever to any Presbytery, General Assembly or any other courts hereafter created, trustees or other officers of such courts.

25-10. The provisions of this *BCO* 25 are to be construed as a solemn covenant whereby the Church as a whole promises never to attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation against its will, whether or not such congregation remains within or chooses to withdraw from this body. All officers and courts of the Church are hereby prohibited from making any such attempt.

25-11. While a congregation consists of all the communing members of a particular church, and in matters ecclesiastical the actions of such local congregation or church shall be in conformity with the provisions of this *Book of Church Order*, nevertheless, in matters pertaining to the subject matters referred to in this *BCO* 25, including specifically the right to affiliate with or become a member of this body or a Presbytery hereof and the right to withdraw from or to sever any affiliation of connection with this body or any Presbytery hereof, action may be taken by such local congregation or local church in accordance with the civil laws applicable to such local congregation or local church; and as long as such action is taken in compliance with such applicable civil laws, then such shall be the action of the local congregation or local church.

It is expressly recognized that each local congregation or local church shall be competent to function and to take actions covering the matters set forth herein as long as such action is in compliance with the civil laws with which said local congregation or local church must comply, and this right shall never be taken from said local congregation or local church without the express consent of and affirmative action of such local church or congregation.

Particular churches need remain in association with any court of this body only so long as they themselves so desire. The relationship is voluntary, based upon mutual love and confidence, and is in no sense to be maintained by the exercise of any force or coercion whatsoever. A particular church may withdraw from any court of this body at any time for reasons which seem to it sufficient, provided, however, the congregation is given at least thirty-days' notice of any meeting where the congregation is to vote on a proposed withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church in America.

25-12. If a church is dissolved by the Presbytery at the request of the congregation and no disposition has been made of its property by those who hold the title to the property within six months after such dissolution, then those who held the title to the property at the time of such dissolution shall deliver, convey and transfer to the Presbytery of which the church was a member, or to the authorized agents of the Presbytery, all property of the church; and the receipt and acquittance of the Presbytery, or its proper representatives, shall be a full and complete discharge of all liabilities of such persons holding the property of the church. The Presbytery receiving such property shall apply the same or the proceeds thereof at its discretion.

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CHAPTER 26

Amending the Constitution of the Church

26-1. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, which is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God, consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, together with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Book of Church Order*, comprising the Form of Government, the Rules of Discipline and the Directory for Worship; all as adopted by the Church.

26-2. Amendments to the *Book of Church Order* may be made only in the following manner:

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by majority of those present and voting in the General Assembly, and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The advice and consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the Presbyteries.
3. The approval and enactment by a subsequent General Assembly by a majority of those present and voting.

26-3. Amendments to the *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* may be made only in the following manner:

1. Approval of the proposed amendment by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting in the General Assembly, and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The advice and consent of three-fourths (3/4) of the Presbyteries.
3. The approval and enactment by a subsequent General Assembly by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting.

This paragraph (*BCO* 26-3) can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of the church.

26-4. In voting upon an amendment to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, the Presbyteries may not divide the parts of the amendment except as directed by the General Assembly which has recommended its adoption.

26-5. Full organic union and consolidation of the Presbyterian Church in America with any other ecclesiastical body can be effected only in the following manner:

1. The approval of the proposed union by three-fourths (3/4) of those present and voting in the General Assembly and its recommendation to the Presbyteries.
2. The advice and consent of three-fourths (3/4) of the Presbyteries.
3. The approval and consummation by a subsequent General Assembly by three-fourths (3/4) vote of those present and voting.

This paragraph (*BCO* 26-5) can be amended only by the same method prescribed for the amendment of the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* of the church.

26-6. If by reason of the failure of a number of Presbyteries to act, or to report action, on any proposed amendment to the Standards and the response of the Presbyteries is not satisfactory to the succeeding General Assembly, it may defer action for one year. In that event the General Assembly shall urge the delinquent Presbyteries to report their judgment to the next Assembly, which shall take final action on the proposed amendment.

PART II
THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER 27

Discipline – Its Nature, Subjects and Ends

27-1. Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare.

The term has two senses:

a. the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts;
b. the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial process.

27-2. All baptized persons, being members of the Church are subject to its discipline and entitled to the benefits thereof.

27-3. The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

a. the glory of God,
b. the purity of His Church,
c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

27-4. The power which Christ has given the Church is for building up, and not for destruction. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. Discipline is systematic training under the authority of God's Scripture. No communing or non-communing member of the Church should be allowed to stray from the Scripture's discipline. Therefore, teaching elders must:

a. instruct the officers in discipline,
b. instruct the congregation in discipline,
c. jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and church courts.

27-5. Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will.

Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are:

a. Instruction in the Word;
b. Individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1);
c. If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16);
d. If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition (See *BCO* 29 and 30 for further explanation).

Steps (a) through (d) must be followed in proper order for the exercise of discipline.

CHAPTER 28

Disciplining of Non-communing Members

28-1. The spiritual nurture, instruction and training of the children of the Church are committed by God primarily to their parents. They are responsible to the Church for the faithful discharge of their obligations. It is a principal duty of the Church to promote true religion in the home. True discipleship involves learning the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit both at home and in the Church. Without learning there is no growth and without growth there is no discipline and without discipline there is sin and iniquity (1 Timothy 4:7).

28-2. The home and the Church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and in the church Catechisms. To this end Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the Church to guide their children in the catechising and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.

28-3. The Church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

28-4. Adult non-communing members, who receive with meekness and appreciation the oversight and instruction of the Church, are entitled to special attention. Their rights and privileges under the covenant should be frequently and fully explained, and they should be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant obligations.

28-5. All non-communing members shall be deemed under the care of the church to which their parents belong, if they live under the parental roof and are minors; otherwise, under that of the church where they reside, or with which they ordinarily worship.

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CHAPTER 29

Offenses

29-1. An offense, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the doctrines or practice of a Church member professing faith in Christ which is contrary to the Word of God. The *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, together with the formularies of government, discipline, and worship are accepted by the Presbyterian Church in America as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice. Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture as interpreted in these *Standards*.

29-2. Offenses are either personal or general, private or public; but all of them being sins against God, are therefore grounds of discipline.

29-3. Personal offenses are violations of the divine law, considered in the special relation of wrongs or injuries to particular individuals. General offenses are heresies or immoralities having no such relation, or considered apart from it.

29-4. Private offenses are those which are known only to a few persons. Public offenses are those which are notorious.

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CHAPTER 30

Church Censures

30-1. The censures, which may be inflicted by church courts, are admonition, suspension from the Sacraments, excommunication, suspension from office, and deposition from office. The censures of admonition or definite suspension from office shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, satisfies the court as to his repentance and makes such restitution as is appropriate. Such censure concludes the judicial process. The censures of indefinite suspension or excommunication shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, remains impenitent.

30-2. Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

30-3. Suspension from Sacraments is the temporary exclusion from those ordinances, and is indefinite as to its duration. There is no definite suspension from the Sacraments.

Suspension from office is the exclusion of a church officer from his office. This may be definite or indefinite as to its duration. With respect to church officers, suspension from Sacraments shall always be accompanied by suspension from office. But suspension from office is not always necessarily accompanied with suspension from Sacraments.

Definite suspension from office is administered when the credit of religion, the honor of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it, even though the delinquent has given satisfaction to the court.

Indefinite suspension is administered to the impenitent offender until he exhibits signs of repentance, or until by his conduct, the necessity of the greatest censure be made manifest. In the case of indefinite suspension from office imposed due to scandalous conduct, the procedure outlined in *BCO* 34-8 shall be followed.

30-4. Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church. This censure is to be inflicted only on account of gross crime or heresy and when the offender shows himself incorrigible and contumacious. The design of this censure is to operate on the offender as a means of reclaiming him, to deliver the church from the scandal of his offense, and to inspire all with fear by the example of his discipline.

30-5. Deposition is the degradation of an officer from his office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure.

CHAPTER 31

The Parties in Cases of Process

31-1. Original jurisdiction (the right first or initially to hear and determine) in relation to ministers of the Gospel shall be in the Presbytery of which the minister is a member, except in cases as provided in *BCO* 34-1. Such original jurisdiction in relation to church members shall be in the Session of the church of which he/she is a member, except in cases as provided in *BCO* 33-1.

31-2. It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session, he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.

31-3. The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Presbyterian Church in America, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor, whether voluntary or appointed, is always the representative of the Church, and as such has all its rights in the case. In appellate courts the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

31-4. Every indictment shall begin: **"In the name of the Presbyterian Church in America,"** and shall conclude, **"against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof."** In every case the Church is the injured and accusing party, against the accused.

31-5. An injured party shall not become a prosecutor of personal offenses without having tried the means of reconciliation and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ.

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:15-16).

A church court, however, may judicially investigate personal offenses as if general when the interest of religion seem to demand it. So, also, those to whom private offenses are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavored to remove the scandal by private means.

31-6. When the offense is general, the case may be conducted either by any person appearing as prosecutor or by a prosecutor appointed by the court.

31-7. When the prosecution is instituted by the court, the previous steps required by our Lord in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will promote the interests of religion to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the offender, and endeavor to bring him to a sense of his guilt, before instituting actual process.

31-8. Great caution ought to be exercised in receiving accusations from any person who is known to indulge a malignant spirit towards the accused; who is not of good character; who is himself under censure or process; who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or who is known to be litigious, rash or highly imprudent.

31-9. Every voluntary prosecutor shall be previously warned, that if he fail to show probable cause of the charges, he may himself be censured as a slanderer of the brethren.

31-10. When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions may be administratively suspended at the court's discretion; but this shall never be done in the way of censure, and this requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members present and voting (not counting abstentions) at the meeting of the Session or Presbytery, even if the process is being conducted by a commission.

31-11. In the discussion of all questions arising in his own case, the accused shall exercise the rights of defendant only, not of judge.

CHAPTER 32

General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process

32-1. It is incumbent on every member of a court of Jesus Christ engaged in a trial of offenders, to bear in mind the inspired injunction:

> "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

32-2. Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or unless the court finds it necessary, for the honor of religion, itself to take the step provided for in *BCO* 31-2.

32-3. It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (*BCO* 27 through 46) and assist the parties to obtain access to them. When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court, unless by consent of parties, except:

1. to appoint a prosecutor,
2. to order the indictment drawn and a copy, along with names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, and
3. to cite the accused to appear and be heard at another meeting which shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation.

At the second meeting of the court the charges shall be read to the accused, if present, and he shall be called upon to say whether he be guilty or not.

If the accused confesses, the court may deal with him according to its discretion; if he plead and take issue, the trial shall be scheduled and all parties and their witnesses cited to appear. The trial shall not be sooner than fourteen (14) days after such citation.

Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Parties necessarily absent should have counsel assigned to them.

32-4. The citation shall be issued and signed by the moderator or clerk by order and in the name of the court. He shall also issue citations to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf. Indictments and citations shall be delivered in person or in another manner providing verification of the date of receipt. Compliance with these requirements shall be deemed to have been fulfilled if a party cannot be located after diligent inquiry or if a party refuses to accept delivery.

32-5. In drawing the indictment, the times, places and circumstances should, if possible, be particularly stated, that the accused may have an opportunity to make his defense.

32-6. a. When an accused person shall refuse to obey a citation, he shall be cited a second time. This second citation shall be accompanied with a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court) he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. *BCO* 33-2; 34-4).

b. When an accused person shall appear and refuse to plead, or otherwise refuse to cooperate with lawful proceedings, he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. *BCO* 33-2; 34-4).

32-7. The time which must elapse between the serving of the first citation on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear, shall be at least ten (10) days. The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent citation shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it be quite sufficient for a seasonable and convenient compliance with the citation.

32-8. When the offense with which an accused person stands charged took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either (a) appoint a commission of its body, or (b) request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it, or (c) have the testimony taken by videoconference, which shall employ technical means that ensure that all persons participating in the meeting can see and hear each other at the same time, and which allows for live cross-examination by both parties. The accused shall always have reasonable notice of the time and place of the meeting of this commission or coordinate court.

32-9. When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely otherwise to become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself that there is probable ground for accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be remitted for trial to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.

32-10. Before proceeding to trial, courts ought to ascertain that their citations have been duly served.

32-11. In every process, if deemed expedient there may be a committee appointed, which shall be called the Judicial Committee, and whose duty it shall be to digest and arrange all the papers, and to prescribe, under the direction of the court, the whole order of the proceedings. The members of this committee shall be entitled, notwithstanding their performance of this duty, to sit and vote in the case as members of the court.

32-12. When the trial is about to begin, it shall be the duty of the moderator solemnly to announce from the chair that the court is about to pass to the consideration of the case, and to enjoin on the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to engage.

32-13. In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused (as permitted by *BCO* 32-8), or at least after he shall have received due citation to attend. Witnesses may be cross-examined by both parties, and any questions asked must be pertinent to the issue.

32-14. On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the parties; and when they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the point.

32-15. When a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

1. The moderator shall charge the court.
2. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard.
3. The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.
4. The parties shall be heard: first, the prosecutor, and then the accused, and the prosecutor shall close.
5. The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinion in the case.
6. The vote shall be taken, the verdict announced and judgment entered on the records.

32-16. Either party may, for cause, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case, which question shall be decided by the other members of the court.

32-17. Pending the trial of a case, any member of the court who shall express his opinion of its merits to either party, or to any person not a member of the court; or who shall absent himself from any sitting without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered, shall be thereby disqualified from taking part in the subsequent proceedings.

32-18. Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the clerk, which shall exhibit the charges, the answer, record of the testimony, as defined by *BCO* 35-9, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the court relating to the case, as either party may desire, and also the judgment.

The clerk shall without delay assemble the Record of the Case which shall consist of the charges, the answer, the citations and returns thereto, and the minutes herein required to be kept.

The parties shall be allowed copies of the Record of the Case at their own expense if they demand them.

When a case is removed by appeal or complaint, the lower court shall transmit “the Record” thus prepared to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint, and the reasons therefor, if any shall have been filed.

Nothing which is not contained in this “Record” shall be taken into consideration by the higher court. On the final decision of a case in a higher court, the judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the case originated.

32-19. No professional counsel shall be permitted as such to appear and plead in cases of process in any court; but an accused person may, if he desires it, be represented before the Session or the Presbytery by any member in good standing of a church in the same Presbytery or by any Teaching Elder member of that Presbytery, or before the General Assembly by any member in good standing in the PCA. A member of the court so employed shall not be allowed to sit in judgment in the case. Courts are encouraged to suggest to the accused/appellant the names of potential representatives and potential advisors he might contact.

32-20. The accused or a member of the court may object to the consideration of a charge, for example, if he thinks the passage of time since the alleged offense makes fair adjudication unachievable. The court should consider factors such as the gravity of the alleged offense as well as what degradations of evidence and memory may have occurred in the intervening period.

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CHAPTER 33

Special Rules Pertaining to Process Before Sessions

33-1. Process against all church members, other than ministers of the Gospel, shall be entered before the Session of the church to which such members belong, except in cases of appeal. However, if the Session refuses to act in doctrinal cases or instances of public scandal and two other Sessions of churches in the same Presbytery request the Presbytery of which the church is a member to initiate proper or appropriate action in a case of process and thus assume jurisdiction and authority, the Presbytery shall do so.

33-2. When an accused person is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments (and if an officer from his office) for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure may be made public, should this be deemed expedient by the Session. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

33-3. If after further endeavor by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be excommunicated from the Church.

33-4. When it is impracticable immediately to commence process against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the Church requires it, prevent the accused from approaching the Lord's Table until the charges against him can be examined, but this requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority.

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CHAPTER 34

Special Rules Pertaining to Process Against a Minister

(Teaching Elder)

34-1. Process against a minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member. However, if the Presbytery refuses to act in doctrinal cases or cases of public scandal and two other Presbyteries request the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction (to first receive and initially hear and determine), the General Assembly shall do so.

34-2. As no minister ought, on account of his office, to be screened in his sin, or slightly censured, so scandalous charges ought not to be received against him on slight grounds.

34-3. If any one knows a minister to be guilty of a private offense, he should warn him in private. But if the offense be persisted in, or become public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other minister of the Presbytery.

34-4. a. When a minister accused of an offense is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments and his office for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure shall be made public. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

b. If after further endeavor by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be deposed and excommunicated from the Church.

34-5. Heresy and schism may be of such a nature as to warrant deposition; but errors ought to be carefully considered, whether they strike at the vitals of religion and are industriously spread, or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding and are not likely to do much injury.

34-6. If the Presbytery find on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the minister's usefulness, it shall take all prudent measures to remove the scandal.

34-7. When a minister, pending a trial, shall make confession, if the matter be base and flagitious, such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a greater nature, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court shall without delay impose definite suspension or depose him from the ministry.

34-8. A minister under indefinite suspension from his office or deposed for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he shall exhibit for a considerable time such an eminently exemplary, humble and edifying life and testimony as shall heal the wound made by his scandal. A deposed minister shall in no case be restored until it shall appear that the general sentiment of the Church is strongly in his favor, and demands his restoration; and then only by the court inflicting the censure, or with that court's consent. The removal of deposition requires a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the court inflicting the censure, or a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the court to which the majority of the original court delegates that authority.

34-9. When a minister is deposed, his pastoral relation shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended from office it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the censure shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relation.

34-10. Whenever a minister of the Gospel shall habitually fail to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the cause of such dereliction and, if necessary, to institute judicial proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. If it shall appear that his neglect proceeds only from his lack of acceptance to the Church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it withdraws license from a licentiate for lack of evidence of the divine call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds (2/3) being necessary for this purpose.

In such a case, the clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery forthwith deliver to the minister concerned a written note that, at the next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defense; and if the decision pass against him he may appeal, as if he had been tried after the usual forms. This principle may apply, with any necessary changes, to ruling elders and deacons.

CHAPTER 35

Evidence

35-1. All persons of proper age and intelligence are competent witnesses, except such as do not believe in the existence of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments. Either party has the right to challenge a witness whom he believes to be incompetent, and the court shall examine and decide upon his competency.

35-2. The accused party is allowed, but shall not be compelled, to testify; but the accuser shall be required to testify, on the demand of the accused. A husband or wife shall not be compelled to bear testimony against one another in any court.

35-3. A court may, at the request of either party, or at its own initiative, make reasonable accommodation to prevent in-person contact with the accused:

a. The court may have testimony taken by videoconference. The videoconference shall employ technical means that ensure that all persons participating in the meeting can see and hear each other at the same time, and which allows for live cross-examination by both parties.
b. The court may restrict the accused from appearing on the videoconference screen, and when the accused is represented by counsel (*BCO* 32-19), cross-examination shall be conducted by that counsel.
c. In all cases where such accommodation has been made, videoconference testimony by witnesses under the age of 18 shall be taken by written interrogatory to be read to the witness by a person appointed by the court in accordance with the applicable provisions of *BCO* 35-11.
d. The court shall include in the record of the proceedings its reasons for this accommodation and any objection from either party.

35-4. The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to establish any charge; yet if, in addition to the testimony of one witness, corroborative evidence be produced, the offense may be considered to be proved.

35-5. It belongs to the court to judge the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence.

35-6. No witness afterwards to be examined, unless a member of the court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case, if either party object.

35-7. Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party; after which any member of the court, or either party, may put additional interrogatories. No question shall be put or answered except by permission of the moderator, subject to an appeal to the court. The court shall not permit questions frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

35-8. The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms:

> **Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?**

If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court, who for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so.

35-9. All parts of a trial other than deliberations shall be recorded (transcription, audiotape, videotape, or some other electronic means) and witnesses informed of such prior to testifying. Such recording becomes part of the Record of the Case. However, in order to be referenced in written or oral briefs, such recording must be transcribed and the transcription authenticated by the trial court. The court of final appeal may assess the cost of transcription equitably among the parties. ●

35-10. The records of a court or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the moderator and clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in every other court.

35-11. In like manner, testimony taken by one court and regularly certified shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

35-12. When it is not convenient for a court to have the whole or perhaps any part of the testimony in any particular case taken in its presence, a commission

shall be appointed, or coordinate court requested, to take the testimony in question, which shall be considered as if taken in the presence of the court.

Due notice of the commission or coordinate court or videoconference, and of the time and place of its meeting, shall be given to the opposite party, that he may have an opportunity of attending. If the accused shall desire on his part to take testimony at a distance for his own exculpation, he shall give notice to the court of the time and place at which it shall be taken, in order that a commission or coordinate court, as in the former case, may be appointed for the purpose. Testimony may be taken on written interrogatories by filing the same with the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the case, and giving two weeks' notice thereof to the adverse party, during which time he may file cross-interrogatories, if he desire it. Testimony shall then be taken by the commission or coordinate court in answer to the direct and cross-interrogatories, if such are filed, and no notice need be given of the time and place of taking the testimony.

35-13. A member of the court shall not be disqualified from sitting as a judge by having given testimony in the case, unless a party makes an objection, and the court subsequently determines that such member should be disqualified. The elder against whom the objection has been made shall retain the right to vote in the determination of qualification. A member of the court who is the prosecutor in the case (*BCO* 31-2) is disqualified from sitting as a judge.

35-14. An officer or private member of the church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.

35-15. If after trial before any court new testimony be discovered, which the accused believes important, it shall be his right to ask a new trial and it shall be within the power of the court to grant his request.

35-16. If, in the prosecution of an appeal, new evidence be offered which, in the judgment of the appellate court, has an important bearing on the case, it shall be competent for that court to refer the case to the lower court for a new trial; or, with the consent of parties, to admit the evidence and proceed with the case.

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CHAPTER 36

The Infliction of Church Censures

36-1. When any member or officer of the Church shall be found guilty of an offense the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother in the spirit of meekness, the members considering themselves lest they also be tempted.

36-2. Church censures and the modes of administering them should be suited to the nature of the offenses. For private offenses, censure should be administered in the presence of the court alone, or in private by one or more members of the court. In the case of public offenses, the degree of censure and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular censures.

36-3. The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

36-4. Definite suspension from office should be administered in the presence of the court alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's discretion. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

Whereas, you, _____ (here describe the brother as a teaching elder, ruling elder, or deacon) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of _____ (here insert the offense), and have satisfied the court as to your repentance by the grace of God; yet for the credit of religion, the honor of Christ, and your own good we the _____ (Presbytery ~~(~~or Church Session) in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the exercise of your office, and all the functions thereof, for _____ (here state the dates on which the suspension begins and ends).

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

36-5. Indefinite suspension from office or the Sacraments should be administered after the manner prescribed for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that the indefinite suspension may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger. Indefinite suspension should also be administered under the blessing of God of leading him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

> **Whereas, you, _____ (here describe the person as a teaching elder, ruling elder, deacon, or private member of the church) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of _____ (here insert the offense), we the _____ (Presbytery or Church Session) in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance.**

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

36-6. Excommunication is to be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or to be inflicted in public as the court may decide. In administering this censure the moderator of the Session shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending brother, and of the decision to cut him off from the communion of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use and consequences of this censure. He shall then administer the censure in the words following:

> **Whereas, _____, a member of this church has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of _____, and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church, and has**

manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of _____ church do pronounce him to be excluded from the Sacraments, and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.

Prayer shall then be made that by God's blessing this solemn action of the court may issue in the repentance and restoration of the offender, and in the establishment of all true believers.

36-7. The censure of deposition shall be administered by the moderator in the words following:

Whereas, _____, a teaching elder of this Presbytery (or ruling elder or deacon of this church), has been proved, by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of _____, we, the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session), do adjudge him disqualified for the office of the Christian ministry (or ruling eldership, or deaconship), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the office of a teaching elder (or ruling elder or deacon) the said _____, and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof.

If the censure includes suspension or excommunication, the moderator shall proceed to say:

We do moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said _____ from the Sacraments of the Church, until he shall exhibit satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance,

or

We do moreover, by the same authority, exclude the said _____ from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the fellowship of the Church.

The sentence of deposition ought to be inflicted with solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

36-8. When members of a court wish to consider the elevation of an indefinite suspension, whether from office or from the Sacraments (*BCO* 36-5) to the censure of deposition or excommunication respectively, it shall not be required to initiate process *de novo* according to *BCO* 31-2 or *BCO* 32-2. The indefinitely suspended person is not in good standing and has already been found impenitent, resulting in indefinite suspension (*BCO* 30-3). However, the indefinitely suspended person has a right to a hearing in the matter. The court supervising the indefinite suspension may consider a motion to find him "incorrigible and contumacious" (*cf. BCO* 30-4) and present evidence to that effect. The court shall give at least thirty (30) days' notice of such a motion to the indefinitely suspended person and permit him the privilege of the floor to plead and give evidence of his repentance before the court having jurisdiction (*BCO* 33-1, 34-1) and not any trial commission. The court, upon completing its hearing, shall vote to determine whether or not to elevate the indefinite suspension to deposition or excommunication. A person whose suspension is so elevated has the right of Appeal (*BCO* 42-2).

CHAPTER 37

The Removal of Censure

37-1. A person who has been definitely suspended from office shall be restored by the court at the end of the term of his suspension by declaring words of the following import to him:

> **Whereas, you _____ have been debarred from the office of teaching elder, (or ruling elder, or deacon), but have now fulfilled the time of your censure, we, of the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session) do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the sentence of suspension and do restore you to the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof.**

37-2. After any person has been indefinitely suspended from the Sacraments, it is proper that the rulers of the church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him and for him, that it would please God to give him repentance.

37-3. When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of an indefinitely suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance, either in the presence of the court alone or publicly. At this time the offender shall be restored to the Sacraments of the Church, and/or to his office, if such shall be the judgment of the court. The restoration shall be declared to the penitent in the words of the following import:

> **Whereas, you, _____, have been debarred from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the office of teaching elder, or ruling elder, or deacon), but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the _____ Church Session (or Presbytery), do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the said sentence of suspension from the Sacraments (and/or your office) and do restore you to the full communion of the Church (and/or the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).**
>
> After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

37-4. When an excommunicated person shall be so affected with his state as to be brought to repentance, and to desire to be readmitted to the communion of the church, the Session, having obtained sufficient evidence of his sincere penitence, shall proceed to restore him. This may be done in the presence of the court, or of the congregation as seems best to the Session.

On the day appointed for his restoration, the minister shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him in the presence of the court or the congregation the following questions:

1. **Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God, and in refusing to hear His Church; and do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the Church?**

   Answer, **I do.**

2. **Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and contrition for your sin and obstinacy; and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?**

   Answer, **I do.**

3. **Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humbleness of mind and circumspection; and to endeavor to adorn by a holy life the doctrine of God our Saviour?**

   Answer, **I do.**

Here the minister shall give the penitent a suitable exhortation, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words:

> **Whereas, you _____, have been shut out from the communion of the church, but now have manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the Session of this church, do declare you absolved from the sentence of excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the communion of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.**

The whole shall be concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

37-5. The restoration of a deposed officer, after public confession has been made in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the removal of censure from an excommunicated person, shall be announced to him by the Moderator in the following form, namely:

> **Whereas, you, _____ , formerly a teaching elder of this Presbytery (or a ruling elder or deacon of this church), have been deposed from your office, but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session) do declare you absolved from the said sentence of deposition formerly pronounced against you; and we do furthermore restore you to your said office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be orderly called thereto.**

After this there shall be prayer and thanksgiving, and the members of the court shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

37-6. When a ruling elder or deacon has been absolved from the censure of deposition, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without re-election by the people. The removal of deposition requires a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the court inflicting the censure, or a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the court to which the majority of the original court delegates that authority.

37-7. When a person under censure shall reside at such a distance from the court by which he was sentenced as to make the continued exercise of spiritual oversight impractical (cf. *BCO* 37-2), it shall be lawful for the court, with the acquiescence of the offender and the concurrence of the receiving court, to transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the court where the delinquent resides, which shall assume jurisdiction, take up the case, and proceed with it as though it had originated with itself.

37-8. In the restoration of a minister who is under indefinite suspension from the Sacraments, and/or his office, or has been deposed, it is the duty of the Presbytery to proceed with great caution. It should first admit him to the Sacraments, if he has been debarred from them. Afterwards it should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time, so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and prospect of his usefulness. When satisfied in these respects, the Presbytery shall take steps to restore him to his office. But the case shall always be under judicial consideration until the declaration of restoration has been pronounced.

37-9. In the case of the removal of censures from, or the restoration of, a minister, jurisdiction shall be as follows:

a. If the censure(s) does not include excommunication, the presbytery inflicting the censure(s) shall retain the authority to remove the censure(s) and, at its discretion, restore him to office. This authority is retained by the presbytery even when a divested or deposed minister is assigned, under the provisions of *BCO* 46-8, to a session.
b. If the censure includes excommunication, the penitent may only be restored to the communion of the church through a session (*BCO* 1-3; 6-4; 57-4; 57-5; 57-6). Once the penitent is restored, and therefore a member of a local church, the authority to remove any other censure(s) in respect to office, concurrently imposed with that of excommunication shall belong to the court originally imposing such censure(s).

CHAPTER 38

Cases Without Process

38-1. When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process. In handling a confession of guilt, it is essential that the person intends to confess and permit the court to render judgment without process. Statements made by him in the presence of the court must not be taken as a basis of a judgment without process except by his consent. In the event a confession is intended, a written Confession (i.e., a sufficient summary of the facts, the person's specific confession, and any expression or evidence of repentance) must be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment, and the co-signed document shall be appended to the minutes (regular or executive session). No other information may be presented without written consent from the accused and the court, and this prohibition includes individuals, prosecutors, committees, and commissions. A censured person has the right to appeal (*BCO* 42). The person has the right to be assisted by counsel at any point, in accord with the stipulations of *BCO* 32-19.

In any instances involving a personal offense (*BCO* 29-3), the court shall attempt to inform the offended person(s) of that part of the Confession the court deems pertinent to the offense against him or her. The court shall invite the offended person to provide the court comment on the Confession prior to final approval of the Confession by the confessor and the court. The court shall encourage the offended person to enlist the help of an advisor in preparing any such comments. In all instances, the court shall report the way such offended persons were informed of the parts of the Confession pertinent to them.

38-2. A minister of the Gospel against whom there are no charges, if fully satisfied in his own conscience that God has not called him to the ministry, or if he has satisfactory evidence of his inability to serve the Church with acceptance, may report these facts at a stated meeting of Presbytery. At the next stated meeting, if after full deliberation the Presbytery shall concur with him in judgment, it may divest him of his office without censure. This provision shall in like manner apply with any necessary changes to the case of ruling elders and deacons; but in all such cases the Session of the church to which the ruling elder or the deacon who seeks demission belongs shall act as the Presbytery acts in similar cases where a minister is concerned.

38-3. a. When a member or officer in the Presbyterian Church in America shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by affiliating with some other branch (*BCO* 2-2), if at the time of the attempt to withdraw he is in good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, his new membership acknowledged, and his name removed from the roll. But if at the time of the attempt to withdraw there is a record of an investigation in process (*BCO* 31-2), or there are charges (*BCO* 32-3) concerning the member or minister, the court of original jurisdiction may retain his name on the roll and conduct the case, communicating the outcome upon completion of the proceedings to that member or minister. If the court does not conduct the case, his new membership shall be acknowledged, his name removed from the roll, and, at the request of the receiving branch, the matters under investigation or the charges shall be communicated to them.

b. When a member or minister of the Presbyterian Church in America shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by affiliating with a body judged by the court of original jurisdiction as failing to maintain the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity (*BCO* 2-2), that member or minister shall be warned of his danger, and if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll, thereby, so far as the Presbyterian Church in America is concerned, he is deemed no longer to be a member in any body which rightly maintains the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity, and if an officer, thereby withdrawing from him all authority to exercise his office as derived from this Church. When so acting the court shall make full record of the matter and shall notify the offender of its action.

38-4. When a member of a particular church has willfully neglected the church for a period of one year, or has made it known that he has no intention of fulfilling the church vows, then the Session, continuing to exercise pastoral discipline (*BCO* 27-1a and 27-4) in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, shall remind the member, if possible both in person and in writing, of the declarations and promises by which he entered into a solemn covenant with God and His Church (*BCO* 57-5, nos. 3-5), and warn him that, if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll.

If after diligently pursuing such pastoral discipline, and after further inquiry and due delay, the Session is of the judgment that the member will not fulfill his membership obligations in this or any other branch of the Visible Church (cf. *BCO* 2-2), then the Session shall erase his name from the roll. This erasure is an act of pastoral discipline (*BCO* 27-1a) without process. The Session shall notify the person, if possible, whose name has been removed.

Notwithstanding the above, if a member thus warned makes a written request for process (i.e., *BCO* Chapters 31-33, 35-36), the Session shall grant such a request. Further, if the Session determines that any offense of such a member is of the nature that process is necessary, the Session may institute such process.

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CHAPTER 39

Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision of Higher Courts

39-1. The acts and decisions of a lower court are brought under the supervision of a higher court in one or another of the following modes:

1. Review and Control;
2. Reference;
3. Appeal; and
4. Complaint.

39-2. When the proceedings of a lower court are before a higher court, the members of the lower court shall not lose the right to sit, deliberate and vote in the higher court, except in cases of appeal or complaint.

39-3. While affirming that the Scripture is "the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined" (*WCF* 1.10), and that the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America is "subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God" *(BCO* Preface, III), and while affirming also that this Constitution is fallible (*WCF* 31.3), the Presbyterian Church in America affirms that this subordinate and fallible Constitution has been "adopted by the church" (*BCO* Preface, III) "as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice" (*BCO* 29-1) and as setting forth a form of government and discipline "in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity" (*BCO* 21-5.3). To insure that this Constitution is not amended, violated or disregarded in judicial process, any review of the judicial proceedings of a lower court by a higher court shall be guided by the following principles:

1. A higher court, reviewing a lower court, should limit itself to the issues raised by the parties to the case in the original (lower) court. Further, the higher court should resolve such issues by applying the Constitution of the church, as previously established through the constitutional process.

2. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those factual matters which the lower court is more competent to determine, because of its proximity to the events in question, and because of its personal knowledge and observations of the parties and witnesses involved. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse a factual finding of a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.
3. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those matters of discretion and judgment which can only be addressed by a court with familiar acquaintance of the events and parties. Such matters of discretion and judgment would include, but not be limited to: the moral character of candidates for sacred office, the appropriate censure to impose after a disciplinary trial, or judgment about the comparative credibility of conflicting witnesses. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse such a judgment by a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.
4. The higher court does have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by always deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should not consider itself obliged to exhibit the same deference to a lower court when the issues being reviewed involve the interpretation of the Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court.

CHAPTER 40

General Review and Control

40-1. It is the right and duty of every court above the Session to review, at least once a year, the records of the court next below, and if any lower court fails to present its records for this purpose, the higher court may require them to be produced immediately, or at any time fixed by this higher court.

40-2. In reviewing records of a lower court the higher court is to examine:

1. Whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded;
2. Whether they have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;
3. Whether they have been wise, equitable and suited to promote the welfare of the Church;
4. Whether the lawful injunctions of the higher court have been obeyed.

40-3. It is ordinarily sufficient for the higher court merely to record in its own minutes and in the records reviewed whether it approves, disapproves or corrects the records in any particular; but should any serious irregularity be discovered the higher court may require its review and correction by the lower. Proceedings in judicial cases, however, shall not be dealt with under review and control when notice of appeal or complaint has been given the lower court; and no judgment of a lower court in a judicial case shall be reversed except by appeal or complaint.

40-4. Courts may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground; or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings of very great irregularity may not be distinctly recorded by them. In any of these cases their records will by no means exhibit to the higher court a full view of their proceedings. If, therefore, the next higher court be well advised that any such neglect or irregularity has occurred on the part of the lower court, it is incumbent on it to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by review of its records.

40-5. When any court having appellate jurisdiction shall receive a credible report with respect to the court next below of any important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceedings of such court, the first step shall be to cite the court alleged to have offended to appear before the court having appellate jurisdiction, or its commission, by representative or in writing, at a specified time and place, and to show what the lower court has done or failed to do in the case in question.

The court thus issuing the citation may reverse or redress the proceedings of the court below in other than judicial cases; or it may censure the delinquent court; or it may remit the whole matter to the delinquent court with an injunction to take it up and dispose of it in a constitutional manner; or it may stay all further proceedings in the case; as circumstances may require.

40-6. In process against a lower court, the trial shall be conducted according to the rules provided for process against individuals, so far as they may be applicable.

CHAPTER 41

References

41-1. A reference is a written representation and application made by a lower court to a higher for advice or other action on a matter pending before the lower court, and is ordinarily to be made to the next higher court.

41-2. Among proper subjects for reference are matters that are new, delicate or difficult; or on which the members of the lower court are very seriously divided; or which relate to questions involving the Constitution and legal procedures respecting which the lower court feels the need of guidance.

41-3. In making a reference the lower court may ask for advice only, or for final disposition of the matter referred; and in particular it may refer a judicial case with request:

a. That the higher court take original jurisdiction of the case, its trial, judgment, and whatever censure it deems warranted; or

b. That the higher court provide additional teaching and/or ruling elders to serve with the lower court in a judicial case, as may seem prudent to the lower court, which additional elders, during their term of service on the case, shall have all the rights and responsibilities of judges in the lower court, subject to the rights of the parties under *BCO* 32-16.

41-4. A reference may be presented to the higher court by one or more representatives appointed by the lower court for this purpose. It should be accompanied with so much of the record as shall be necessary for proper understanding and consideration of the matter referred.

41-5. Although references are sometimes proper, in general it is better that every court should discharge the duty assigned it under the law of the Church.

A higher court is not required to accede to the request of the lower, but it should ordinarily give advice when so requested.

41-6. When a court makes a reference, it ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced and in perfect readiness, so that the higher court may be able to fully consider and handle the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

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CHAPTER 42

Appeals

42-1. An appeal is the transfer to a higher court of a judicial case on which judgment has been rendered in a lower court, and is allowable only to the party against whom the decision has been rendered. The parties shall be known as the appellant and appellee. An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher, except with its consent.

42-2. The only parties entitled to an appeal are those who have submitted to a regular trial, those appealing a censure in a *BCO* 38-1 case without process, those appealing the elevation of a censure under *BCO* 36-8, and those ● appealing a *BCO* 34-10 divestiture without censure.

42-3. The grounds of appeal are such as the following: any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court; refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; receiving improper or declining to receive proper evidence; hurrying to a decision before all the testimony is taken; manifestation of prejudice in the case; and mistake or injustice in the judgment and censure.

42-4. Notice of appeal may be given the court before its adjournment. Written notice of appeal, with supporting reasons, shall be filed by the appellant with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court, within thirty (30) days of notification of the last court's decision.

Notification of the last court's decision shall be deemed to have occurred on the day of mailing (if certified, registered or express mail of a national postal service or any private service where verifying receipt is utilized), the day of hand delivery, or the day of confirmed receipt in the case of e-mail or facsimile. Furthermore, compliance with such requirements shall be deemed to have been fulfilled if a party cannot be located after diligent inquiry or if a party refuses to accept delivery. No attempt should be made to circularize the courts to which appeal is being made by either party before the case is heard.

42-5. It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of appeal, a copy of all proceedings in connection with the case, including the notice of appeal and reasons therefor, the response of the lower court, the evidence, and any papers bearing on the case, which together shall be known as "the Record of the Case", and the higher court shall not admit or consider anything not found in this "Record" without the consent of the parties in the case. Should new evidence come to light the case shall be remanded to the lower court from which the appeal was made, unless both parties consent to admit the new evidence and proceed with the case.

42-6. Notice of appeal shall have the effect of suspending the judgment of the lower court until the case has been finally decided in the higher court. However, the court of original jurisdiction may, for sufficient reasons duly recorded, prevent the appellant from approaching the Lord's Table, and if an officer, prevent him from exercising some or all his official functions, until the case is finally decided (cf. *BCO* 31-10; 33-4). This shall never be done in the way of censure, and shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority.

42-7. If a lower court shall neglect to send up "the Record of the Case" or any part of it, to the injury of the appellant, it shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher court, and the judgment from which the appeal has been taken shall be suspended until "the Record" is produced upon which the issue can be fairly tried.

42-8. After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be entertained by the court, the court shall hear the case, or in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. At the hearing, after the Record has been read, each side should be allotted not over thirty (30) minutes for oral argument, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or commission should go into closed session, and discuss the merits of the case.

The vote then should be taken, without further debate, on each specification in this form:

Shall this specification of error be sustained?

If the court or commission deem it wise, it may adopt a minute explanatory of its action, which shall become a part of its Record of the Case. The court or commission shall designate one of its members to write the opinion, which opinion shall be adopted by the court or commission as its opinion.

42-9. The decision of the higher court may be to affirm in whole or in part; to reverse in whole or in part; to render the decision that should have been rendered; or to remand the case to the lower court for a new trial. In every case a written opinion shall be prepared, and a copy of the opinion and judgment entered will be delivered personally or mailed to the lower court and the appellant, with a written receipt required.

42-10. An appellant may represent himself or be represented as provided in *BCO* 32-19.

42-11. An appellant shall be considered to have abandoned his appeal if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but an appellant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the appellant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

42-12. If an appellant manifests a litigious or otherwise un-Christian spirit in the prosecution of his appeal, he shall receive a suitable rebuke by the appellate court.

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CHAPTER 43

Complaints

43-1. A complaint is a written representation made against some act or decision of a court of the Church. It is the right of any communing member of the Church in good standing to make complaint against any action of a court to whose jurisdiction he is subject, except that no complaint is allowable in a judicial case after process has commenced. If, at any time after process has commenced, a *BCO* 43-1 complaint is timely filed, the court's adjudication shall be delayed until after the judicial case has been completed, or, if an appeal is filed, after it has been fully adjudicated or withdrawn. During judicial process, the accused may raise *BCO* 32-14 objections on a variety of matters and the original court shall decide each. Those decisions could be reviewable on appeal.

43-2. A complaint shall first be made to the court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error. Written notice of complaint, with supporting reasons, shall be filed with the clerk of the court within sixty (60) days following the meeting of the court. The court shall consider the complaint at its next stated meeting, or at a called meeting prior to its next stated meeting, provided that the complaint has been filed with the clerk at least ten (10) days in advance. If the complaint is filed with less than ten (10) days' notice, the court may consider the complaint at a later meeting not more than 60 days later. No attempt should be made to circularize the court to which complaint is being made by either party.

43-3. If, after considering a complaint, the court alleged to be delinquent or in error is of the opinion that it has not erred, and denies the complaint, the complainant may take that complaint to the next higher court. If the lower court fails to consider the complaint against it by or at its next stated meeting, provided that the complaint has been filed with the clerk at least ten (10) days in advance**,** the complainant may take that complaint to the next higher court. If the complaint is filed with less than ten (10) days' notice, the court may consider the complaint at a later meeting not more than 60 days later. Written notice thereof shall be filed with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court within thirty (30) days of notification of the last court's decision.

Notification of the last court's decision shall be deemed to have occurred on the day of mailing (if certified, registered or express mail of a national postal service or any private service where verifying receipt is

utilized), the day of hand delivery, or the day of confirmed receipt in the case of e-mail or facsimile. Furthermore, compliance with such requirements shall be deemed to have been fulfilled if a party cannot be located after diligent inquiry or if a party refuses to accept delivery.

43-4. Notice of complaint shall not have the effect of suspending the action against which the complaint is made, unless one-third (1/3) of the members present when the action was taken shall vote for its suspension, until the final decision in the higher court.

43-5. The court against which complaint is made shall appoint one or more representatives to defend its action before the higher court, and the parties in the case shall be known as complainant and respondent. The complainant himself may present his complaint, or he may obtain the assistance of a communing member of the Presbyterian Church in America, who is in good standing, in presenting his complaint.

43-6. It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of complaint, a copy of all its proceedings in connection with the complaint including the notice of complaint and supporting reasons, the response of the lower court, if any, and any papers bearing on the complaint. If the clerk of the lower court shall neglect to send up the proceedings on the complaint, he shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher court, and the act or decision complained against shall be suspended until the proceedings are produced so that the higher court can fairly consider the complaint.

43-7. The complainant shall be considered to have abandoned his complaint if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but a complainant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the complainant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

43-8. Subject to the provisions below, after the higher court has decided that the notice filed with its clerk was timely and that the complaint is otherwise in order for it to be heard by the higher court, it shall hear the complaint, or in accordance with the provision of *BCO* 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. Ordinarily the court or its commission shall schedule a hearing in a manner that reasonably accommodates the schedules of the respective parties and affords each party a prior opportunity to file a written brief upon such terms and in accord with a briefing schedule established by the court or its commission in the reasonable exercise of its discretion.

43-9. At the hearing, after all the papers bearing on the complaint have been read, the complainant and respondent will be given the opportunity to present argument, the complainant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or the commission should go into closed session, and discuss and consider the merits of the complaint. The vote should then or later be taken as to what disposition should be made of the complaint, and the complainant and respondent notified of the court's decision.

43-10. The higher court has power, in its discretion, to annul the whole or any part of the action of a lower court against which complaint has been made, or to send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for a new hearing. If the higher court rules a lower court erred by not indicting someone, and the lower court refers the matter back to the higher court, it shall accept the reference if it is a doctrinal case or case of public scandal (see *BCO* 41-3).

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CHAPTER 44

(Vacated)

CHAPTER 45

Dissents, Protests, and Objections

45-1. Any member of a court who had a right to vote on a question, and is not satisfied with the action taken by that court, is entitled to have a dissent or protest recorded.

None can join in a dissent or protest against an action of any court except those who had a right to vote in the case.

Any member who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint (see *BCO* 39-2), and is not satisfied with the action taken by the court, is entitled to have an objection recorded.

A dissent, protest or objection shall be filed with the clerk of the lower court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the lower court or with the clerk of the General Assembly before its adjournment.

45-2. A dissent is a declaration on the part of one or more members of a minority, expressing a different opinion from the majority in its action on any issue before the court, and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-3. A protest is a more solemn and formal declaration by members of a minority, bearing their testimony against what they deem an improper or erroneous action on any issue before the court, and is generally accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-4. An objection is a declaration by one or more members of a court who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint, expressing a different opinion from the decision of the court and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-5. If a dissent, protest, or objection be couched in temperate language, and be respectful to the court, it shall be recorded; and the court may, if deemed necessary, put an answer to the dissent, protest, or objection on the records along with it. Here the matter shall end, unless the parties obtain permission to withdraw their dissent, protest, or objection absolutely, or for the sake of amendment.

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CHAPTER 46

Jurisdiction

46-1. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the congregation of which he is a member, so that he can no longer regularly attend its services, it shall be his duty to transfer his membership by presenting a certificate of dismission from the Session of the church of which he is a member to the church with which he wishes to unite.

When the church of which he is a member has no Session, or for other good reasons it seems impossible for the member to secure a certificate of dismission, he may be received by the Session upon other satisfactory testimonials, in which case the church of which he was a member shall be duly notified.

46-2. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the church of which he is a member into the bounds of another, it shall be the duty of the teaching and ruling elders of the church of which he is a member, as far as possible, to continue pastoral oversight of him and to inform him that according to the teaching of our *Book of Church Order* it is his duty to transfer his membership as soon as practicable to the church in whose bounds he is living.

It shall also be the duty of the church from whose bounds the member moved to notify the teaching and ruling elders of a church into whose bounds he has moved and request them to take pastoral oversight of the member, with a view of having him transfer his membership, unless *BCO* 18-7 applies.

If a member, after having thus been advised, shall neglect for one (1) year to have his membership transferred, the Session shall then proceed, according to *BCO* 38-4, except in special cases such as: servicemen, students, etc.

The name of any member whose residence has been unknown for one year to the Session shall be removed from the roll and such names are not to be counted in the annual statistical reports, though act of removal should be recorded in the Session's minutes. If such a person at a later date should appear or desire transfer of his or her letter, the Session will inform the governing body of the inquiring church of their action in removing said person from their roll.

46-3. Members of one church dismissed to join another shall be held to be under the jurisdiction of the Session dismissing them until they form a regular connection with that to which they have been dismissed.

46-4. Associate members are those believers temporarily residing in a location other than their permanent homes. Such believers may become associate members of a particular church without ceasing to be communicant members of their home churches. An associate member shall have all the rights and privileges of that church, with the exception of voting in a congregational or corporation meeting, and holding an office in that church.

46-5. *(Vacated)* [see 38-4]

46-6. When a Presbytery shall dismiss a minister, licentiate or candidate, the name of the Presbytery to which he is dismissed shall be given in the certificate, and he shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery dismissing him until received by the other.

46-7. No certificate of dismission from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid testimony of good standing for a period longer than one (1) year, unless its earlier presentation be hindered by some providential cause; and such certificates given to persons who have left the bounds of the Session or Presbytery granting them shall certify the standing of such persons only to the time of their leaving those bounds.

46-8. When a Presbytery shall divest a minister of his office without censure, or depose him without excommunication, it shall assign him to membership in some particular church, subject to the approval of the Session of that church.

PART III
THE DIRECTORY FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Temporary statement adopted by the Third General Assembly to preface the Directory for Worship: The Directory for Worship is an approved guide and should be taken seriously as the mind of the Church agreeable to the Standards. However, it does not have the force of law and is not to be considered obligatory in all its parts. *BCO 56, 57 and 58 have been given full constitutional authority by the Eleventh General Assembly* after being submitted to the Presbyteries and receiving the necessary approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Presbyteries. *BCO 59-3, as amended, has been given full constitutional authority by the Forty-seventh General Assembly* after being submitted to the Presbyteries and receiving the necessary approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Presbyteries.

CHAPTER 47

The Principles and Elements of Public Worship

47-1. 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.

The Scriptures forbid the worshipping of God by images, or in any other way not appointed in His Word, and requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in His Word (*WSC* 51, 50).

47-2. 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 Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

47-3. 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 (1 Corinthians 10:31).

47-4. 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.

47-5. 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.

47-6. 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.

47-7. 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 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.

47-8. 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.

47-9. The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements of worship service: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms and hymns, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, confessing the faith and observing the Sacraments; and on special occasions taking oaths.

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CHAPTER 48

The Sanctification of the Lord's Day

48-1. "The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself." (*WSC* 58).

48-2. 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.

48-3. It is the duty of every person to remember the Lord's Day; and to prepare for it before its approach. All worldly business should be so ordered, and seasonably laid aside, as that they may not be hindered thereby from sanctifying the Sabbath, as the Holy Scriptures require.

48-4. The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord; and to be employed in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore, it is requisite, that there be a holy resting, all the day, from unnecessary labors; and an abstaining from those recreations which may be lawful on other days; and also, as much as possible, from worldly thoughts and conversation.

48-5. Let the provisions for the support of the family on that day be so ordered that others be not improperly detained from the public worship of God, nor hindered from sanctifying the Sabbath.

48-6. Let every person and family, in the morning, by secret and private prayer, for themselves and others, especially for the assistance of God to their minister, and for a blessing upon his ministry, by reading the Scriptures, and by holy meditation, prepare for communion with God in his public ordinances.

48-7. Let the time not used for public worship be spent in prayer, in devotional reading, and especially in the study of the Scriptures, meditation, catechising, religious conversation, the singing of psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs; visiting the sick, relieving the poor, teaching the ignorant, holy resting, and in performing such like duties of piety, charity, and mercy.

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CHAPTER 49

The Ordering of Public Worship

49-1. When the congregation is to meet for public worship, the people (having before prepared their hearts thereunto) ought all to come and join therein; not absenting themselves from the public ordinances through negligence, or upon pretence of private meetings.

49-2. Let the people assemble at the appointed time, that all being present at the beginning they may unite with one heart in all the parts of public worship. Let none unnecessarily depart until after the blessing be pronounced.

49-3. Let the people upon entering the church take their seats in a decent and reverent manner, and engage in a silent prayer for a blessing upon themselves, the minister, and all present, as well as upon those who are unable to attend worship.

49-4. All who attend public worship are expected to be present in a spirit of reverence and godly fear, forbearing to engage in any conduct unbecoming to the place and occasion. Since the family, as ordained by God, is the basic institution in society, and God in the Covenant graciously deals with us, not just as individuals but also as families, it is important and desirable that families worship together.

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CHAPTER 50

The Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures

50-1. 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 sermon. 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.

50-2. The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the congregation is a part of the public worship of God and should be done by the minister or some other person.

50-3. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be read from a good translation, not a paraphrase, in the language of the people, that all may hear and understand.

50-4. How large a portion shall be read at once is left to the discretion of every minister; and he may, when he thinks it expedient, expound any part of what is read; always having regard to the time, that neither reading, singing, praying, preaching, nor any other ordinance, be disproportionate the one to the other; nor the whole rendered too short, or too tedious.

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CHAPTER 51

The Singing of Psalms and Hymns

51-1. Praising God through the medium of music is a duty and a privilege. Therefore, the singing of hymns and psalms and the use of musical instruments should have an important part in public worship.

51-2. In singing the praises of God, we are to sing in the spirit of worship, with understanding in our hearts.

51-3. It is recommended that Psalms be sung along with the hymns of the Church, but that caution be observed in the selection of hymns, that they be true to the Word. Hymns should have the note of praise, or be in accord with the spirit of the sermon.

51-4. The leadership in song is left to the judgment of the Session, who should give careful thought to the character of those asked to lead in this part of worship, and the singing of a choir should not be allowed to displace congregational singing.

51-5. The proportion of the time of public worship given to praise is left to the judgment of the minister, and the singing of psalms and hymns by the congregation should be encouraged.

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CHAPTER 52

Public Prayer

52-1. It is proper to begin the public worship in the sanctuary with the Doxology followed by a short prayer, in which the minister shall lead the people, humbly adoring the infinite majesty of the living God, expressing a sense of our distance from Him as creatures, and our unworthiness as sinners; and humbly imploring His gracious presence, the assistance of His Holy Spirit in the duties of His worship, and His acceptance of us through the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is appropriate that this prayer conclude with the Lord's Prayer in which all may unite.

52-2. Then, after singing a psalm, or hymn, it is proper that, before the sermon, there should be a full and comprehensive prayer:

a. Adoring the glory and perfections of God, as they are made known to us in the works of creation, in the conduct of Providence, and in the clear and full revelation He has made of Himself in His written words;
b. Giving thanks to Him for all His mercies of every kind, general and particular, spiritual and temporal, common and special; above all, for Christ Jesus, His unspeakable gift, the hope of eternal life through Him, and for the mission and work of the Holy Spirit;
c. Making humble confession of sin, both original and actual, acknowledging, and endeavoring to lead the heart of every worshipper with a deep sense of the evil of all sin, as such, as being a departure from the living God; and also taking a particular and affecting view of the various fruits which proceed from this root of bitterness; as sins against God, our neighbor and ourselves; sins in thought, in word, and in deed; sins secret and presumptuous; sins accidental and habitual. Also, the aggravations of sin, arising from knowledge, or the means of it; from distinguishing mercies; from valuable privileges; from breach of vows, etc.;
d. Making earnest supplication for the pardon of sin, and peace with God, through the blood of the atonement, with all its important and happy fruits; for the Spirit of sanctification, and abundant supplies of the grace that is necessary to the discharge of our duty; for support and comfort, under all the trials to which we are liable, as we are sinful and mortal; and for all temporal mercies that may be necessary in our passage through this valley of tears; always remembering to view them as flowing in the channel of covenant love, and intended to be subservient to the preservation and progress of the spiritual life;

e. Pleading from every principle warranted in Scripture; from our own necessity; the all-sufficiency of God; the merit and intercession of our Saviour; and the glory of God in the comfort and happiness of His people;

f. Intercession and petition for others, including the whole world for mankind; for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh; for the peace, purity, and extension of the Church of God; for ministers and missionaries in all lands; for all who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for the particular church then assembled, and all other churches associated in one body with it; for the sick, dying, and bereaved; for the poor and destitute; for strangers, for prisoners, the aged and the young; for those who travel; for the community in which the church is situated; for civil rulers; and for whatever else may seem to be necessary or suitable to the occasion.

The prominence given each of these topics must be left to the discretion of the minister.

52-3. Ordinarily there should be prayer after the sermon having relation to the subject that has been treated in the discourse; and all other public prayers should be appropriate to the occasion.

52-4. Ministers are not to be confined to fixed forms of prayer for public worship, yet it is the duty of the minister, previous to entering upon his office, to prepare and qualify himself for this part of his work, as well as for preaching. He should, by a thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, by the study of the best writers on prayer, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God, endeavor to acquire both the spirit and the gift of prayer. Moreover, when he is to offer prayer in public worship, he should compose his spirit, and so order his thoughts, that he may perform this duty with dignity and propriety, and with profit to the worshippers, lest he disgrace this important service by coarse, undignified, careless, irregular or extravagant expressions.

52-5. All prayer is to be offered in the language of the people.

CHAPTER 53

The Preaching of the Word

53-1. The preaching of the Word is an ordinance of God for the salvation of men. Serious attention should be paid to the manner in which it is done. The minister should apply himself to it with diligence and prove himself a "worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

53-2. The subject of a sermon should be some verse or verses of Scripture, and its object, to explain, defend and apply some part of the system of divine truth; or to point out the nature, and state the bounds and obligation, of some duty. A text should not be merely a motto, but should fairly contain the doctrine proposed to be handled. It is proper also that large portions of Scripture be sometimes expounded, and particularly improved, for the instruction of the people in the meaning and use of the sacred Scriptures.

53-3. Preaching requires much study, meditation, and prayer, and ministers should prepare their sermons with care, and not indulge themselves in loose, extemporary harangues, nor serve God with that which costs them naught. They should, however, keep to the simplicity of the Gospel, and express themselves in language that can be understood by all. They should also by their lives adorn the Gospel which they preach, and be examples to believers in word and deed.

53-4. As a primary design of public ordinances is to unite the people in acts of common worship of the most high God, ministers should be careful not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with or exclude the important duties of prayer and praise, but should preserve a just proportion in the several parts of public worship.

53-5. By way of application of the sermon the minister may urge his hearers by commandment or invitation to repent of their sins, to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, and to confess him publicly before men.

53-6. No person should be invited to preach in any of the churches under our care without the consent of the Session.

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CHAPTER 54

The Worship of God by Offerings

54-1. The Holy Scriptures teach that God is the owner of all persons and all things and that we are but stewards of both life and possessions; that God's ownership and our stewardship should be acknowledged; that this acknowledgement should take the form, in part, of giving at least a tithe of our income and other offerings to the work of the Lord through the Church of Jesus Christ, thus worshipping the Lord with our possessions; and that the remainder should be used as becomes Christians.

54-2. It is both a privilege and a duty, plainly enjoined in the Bible, to make regular, weekly, systematic and proportionate offerings for the support of religion and for the propagation of the Gospel in our own and foreign lands, and for the relief of the poor. This should be done as an exercise of grace and an act of worship, and at such time during the service as may be deemed expedient by the Session.

54-3. It is appropriate that the offerings be dedicated by prayer.

CHAPTER 55

Confessing the Faith

55-1. It is proper for the congregation of God's people publicly to confess their faith, using creeds or confessions that are true to the Word, such as, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the *Westminster Standards*.

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CHAPTER 56

The Administration of Baptism
The Baptism of Infants and Children

56-1. Baptism is not to be unnecessarily delayed; not to be administered, in any case, by any private person; but by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.

56-2. It is not to be privately administered, but in the presence of the congregation under the supervision of the Session.

56-3. After previous notice is given to the minister, the child to be baptized is to be presented, by one or both the parents, or some other responsible person, signifying the desire that the child be baptized.

56-4. Before baptism, the minister is to use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this sacrament, showing:

a. That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ;
b. That it is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our ingrafting into Christ, and of our union with Him, of remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal;
c. That the water, in baptism, represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which taketh away all guilt of sin, original and actual; and the sanctifying virtue of the Spirit of Christ against the dominion of sin, and the corruption of our sinful nature;
d. That baptizing, or sprinkling and washing with water, signifies the cleansing from sin by the blood and for the merit of Christ, together with the mortification of sin, and rising from sin to newness of life, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ;
e. That the promise is made to believers and their children; and that the children of believers have an interest in the covenant, and right to the seal of it, and to the outward privileges of the Church, under the Gospel, no less than the children of Abraham in the time of the Old Testament; the Covenant of Grace, for substance, being the same; and the grace of God, and the consolation of believers, more plentiful than before;
f. That the Son of God admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, “For of such is the kingdom of God”;

g. That children by Baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the Visible Church, distinguished from the world, and them that are without, and united with believers; and that all who are baptized in the name of Christ, do renounce, and by their Baptism are bound to fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh;
h. That they are federally holy before Baptism, and therefore are they baptized;
i. That the inward grace and virtue of Baptism is not tied to that very moment of time wherein it is administered; and that the fruit and power thereof reaches to the whole course of our life; and that outward baptism is not so necessary, that through the want thereof, the infant is in danger of damnation;
j. By virtue of being children of believing parents they are, because of God's covenant ordinance, made members of the Church, but this is not sufficient to make them continue members of the Church. When they have reached the age of discretion, they become subject to obligations of the covenant: faith, repentance and obedience. They then make public confession of their faith in Christ, or become covenant breakers, and subject to the discipline of the Church.

In these or the like instructions, the minister is to use his own liberty and godly wisdom, as the ignorance or errors in the doctrine of Baptism, and the edification of the people, shall require.

He is also to admonish all that are present to look back to their Baptism, to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make right use of their Baptism, and of the covenant sealed between God and their soul.

He is to exhort the parent to consider the great mercy of God to him and his child; to bring up the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to let him know the danger of God's wrath to himself and child, if he be negligent; requiring his solemn promise for the performance of his duty.

The minister is also to exhort the parents to the careful performance of their duty, requiring:

a. That they teach the child to read the Word of God;
b. that they instruct him in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, an excellent summary of which we have in the *Confession of Faith*, and in the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, which are to be recommended to them as adopted by the Church, for their direction and assistance, in the discharge of this important duty;
c. that they pray with and for him;
d. that they set an example of piety and godliness before him; and endeavor, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

56-5. The minister shall then read the covenant promises:

> **For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. (Acts 2:39; Gen. 17:7; Acts 16:31)**

The minister shall then propose the following questions:

1. **Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?**
2. **Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?**
3. **Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him), that you will teach (him) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?**

To the congregation (optional):

Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?

56-6 Then the minister is to pray for a blessing to attend this ordinance, after which, calling the child by name, he shall say:

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As he pronounces these words, he is to baptize the child with water, by pouring or sprinkling it on the head of the child, without adding any other ceremony; and the whole shall be concluded with prayer.

CHAPTER 57

The Admission of Persons to Sealing Ordinances

57-1. Believers' children within the Visible Church, and especially those dedicated to God in Baptism, are non-communing members under the care of the Church. They are to be taught to love God, and to obey and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. When they are able to understand the Gospel, they should be earnestly reminded that they are members of the Church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, to confess Him before men, and to seek admission to the Lord's Supper.

57-2. The time when young persons come to understand the Gospel cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the Session, whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for admission to sealing ordinances.

57-3. When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the Church, they shall, ordinarily, after giving satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation, and thereupon be baptized.

57-4. It is recommended, as edifying and proper, that baptized persons, when admitted by the Session to the Lord's Supper, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation. But in all cases, there should be a clear recognition of their previous relation to the church as baptized members.

57-5. The time having come for the making of a public profession, and those who have been approved by the Session having taken their places in the presence of the congregation, the minister may state that:

> **Of the number of those who were baptized in infancy as members of the Church of God by birthright, and as heirs of the covenant promises, the Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who come now to assume for themselves the full privileges and responsibilities of their inheritance in the household of faith.**

If there be present any candidates for Baptism, the minister may state that:

As applicants for admission into the Church of God by Baptism, which is a sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, and of our engagement to be the Lord's, the Session has examined and approved (call them by name), who are cordially welcomed into the fellowship of the household of faith.

The minister may then address those making a profession in the following terms:

(All of) you being here present to make a public profession of faith, are to assent to the following declarations and promises, by which you enter into a solemn covenant with God and His Church.

1. **Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?**
2. **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?**
3. **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?**
4. **Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**
5. **Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?**

The minister may now briefly admonish those making a profession of faith as to the importance of the solemn obligations they have assumed; then baptism may be administered, if there be present any candidates for the ordinance, and the whole concluded with prayer.

57-6. Persons received from other churches by letters of dismissal as well as those being received by reaffirmation of faith should give a testimony of their Christian experience to the Session. Their names are to be announced to the congregation with a recommendation of them to its Christian confidence and affection.

CHAPTER 58

The Administration of the Lord's Supper

58-1. The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be observed frequently; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most for edification.

58-2. The ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper.

58-3. It is proper that public notice should be given to the congregation, at least the Sabbath before the administration of this ordinance, and that, either then, or on some day of the week, the people be instructed in its nature, and a due preparation for it, that all may come in a suitable manner to this holy feast.

58-4. On the day of the observance of the Lord's Supper, when the sermon is ended, the minister shall show:

a. That this is an ordinance of Christ; by reading the words of institution, either from one of the Evangelists, or from 1 Corinthians 11, which, as to him may appear expedient, he may explain and apply;

b. That it is to be observed in remembrance of Christ, to show forth His death till He come; that it is of inestimable benefit, to strengthen His people against sin; to support them under troubles; to encourage and quicken them in duty; to inspire them with love and zeal; to increase their faith, and holy resolution; and to beget peace of conscience, and comfortable hopes of eternal life.

Since, by our Lord's appointment, this Sacrament sets forth the Communion of Saints, the minister, at the discretion of the Session, before the observance begins, may either invite all those who profess the true religion, and are communicants in good standing in any evangelical church, to participate in the ordinance; or may invite those who have been approved by the Session, after having given indication of their desire to participate. It is proper also to give a special invitation to non-communicants to remain during the service.

58-5. The table, on which the elements are placed, being decently covered, and furnished with bread and wine, and the communicants orderly and gravely sitting around it (or in their seats before it), the elders in a convenient place together, the minister should then set the elements apart by prayer and thanksgiving.

The bread and wine being thus set apart by prayer and thanksgiving, the minister is to take the bread, and break it, in the view of the people, saying:

> **That the Lord Jesus Christ on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, gave it to His disciples, as I, ministering in His name, give this bread to you, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** (Some other biblical account of the institution of this part of the Supper may be substituted here.)

Here the bread is to be distributed. After having given the bread, he shall take the cup, and say:

> **In the same manner, He also took the cup, and having given thanks as has been done in His name, He gave it to the disciples, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink from it, all of you."**

While the minister is repeating these words, let him give the cup.

58-6. Since believers are to act personally in all their covenanting with the Lord, it is proper that a part of the time occupied in the distribution of the elements should be spent by all in silent communion, thanksgiving, intercession and prayer.

58-7. The minister may, in a few words, put the communicants in mind:

> **Of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, held forth in this sacrament; and of their obligation to be the Lord's; and may exhort them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called; and, as they have professedly received Christ Jesus the Lord, that they be careful so to walk in him, and to maintain good works.**

It may not be improper for the minister to give a word of exhortation also to those who have been only spectators, reminding them:

> **Of their duty, stating their sin and danger, by living in disobedience to Christ, in neglecting this holy ordinance; and calling upon them to be earnest in making preparation for attending upon it at the next time of its celebration.**

Then the minister is to pray and give thanks to God,

> **For His rich mercy, and invaluable goodness, vouchsafed to them in that Sacred Communion; to implore pardon for the defects of the whole service; and to pray for the acceptance of their persons and performances; for the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable them, as they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so to walk in Him; that they may hold fast that which they have received, that no man take their crown; that their conversation may be as becomes the Gospel; that they may bear about with them, continually, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in their mortal body; that their light may so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven.**

An offering for the poor or other sacred purpose is appropriate in connection with this service, and may be made at such time as shall be ordered by the Session.

Now let a psalm or hymn be sung, and the congregation dismissed, with the following or some other Gospel benediction:

> **Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

58-8. As past custom has been found in many parts of the Presbyterian Church, our congregations are urged to have a service of spiritual preparation for the Lord's Supper during the week previous to the celebration of the Sacrament.

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CHAPTER 59

The Solemnization of Marriage

59-1. Marriage is a divine institution though not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the Church of Christ. It is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey insofar as they do not transgress the laws of God (Acts 5:29).

59-2. Christians should marry in the Lord; therefore it is fit that their marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister, that special instruction be given them, and suitable prayers offered, when they enter into this relation.

59-3. Marriage is only to be between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24, 25; Matt. 19:4-6, 1 Cor. 7:2), in accordance with the Word of God. Therefore, ministers in the Presbyterian Church in America who solemnize marriages shall only solemnize marriages between one man and one woman.

59-4. The parties should be of such years of discretion as to be capable of making their own choice; and if they be under age, or live with their parents, the consent of the parents or others, under whose care they are, should be previously obtained, and well certified to the minister before he proceeds to solemnize the marriage.

59-5. Parents should neither compel their children to marry contrary to their inclinations, nor deny their consent without just and important reasons.

59-6. Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the credit of Christianity, are deeply interested in it. Therefore, the purpose of marriage should be sufficiently published a proper time previously to the solemnization to it. It is enjoined on all ministers to be careful that, in this matter, they obey the laws of the community to the extent that those laws do not transgress the laws of God as interpreted by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that they may not destroy the peace and comfort of families, ministers should be assured that, with respect to the parties applying to them, no just objections lie against their marriage.

59-7. The minister should keep a proper register of the names of all persons whom he marries, and of the time of their marriage, for the perusal of all whom it may concern.

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CHAPTER 60

The Visitation of the Sick

60-1. The power of the prayer of faith is great, and Christians therefore should make entreaty for the sick at the throne of heavenly grace, and should also seek God's blessing upon all proper means which are being employed for their recovery. Moreover, when persons are sick, their minister, or some officer of the church, should be notified, that the minister, officers and members may unite their prayers in behalf of the sick. It is the privilege and duty of the pastor to visit the sick and to minister to their physical, mental, and spiritual welfare. In view of the varying circumstances of the sick, the minister should use discretion in the performance of this duty.

CHAPTER 61

The Burial of the Dead

61-1. The services proper for such an occasion are:

a. The singing of appropriate psalms or hymns;
b. The reading of some suitable portion or portions of Scripture, with such remarks as it may seem proper to the minister to make;
c. Prayer, in which the bereaved shall be especially remembered, and God's grace sought on their behalf, that they may be sustained and comforted in their sorrow, and that their affliction may be blessed to their spiritual good.

61-2. The funeral services are to be left largely to the discretion of the minister performing them, but he should always remember that the proper object of the service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living.

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CHAPTER 62

Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving

62-1. The observance of days of fasting and of thanksgiving, as the dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, is both scriptural and rational.

62-2. Fasting and thanksgiving may be observed by individual Christians; by families; by particular congregations; by a number of congregations contiguous to each other; by the congregations under the care of a Presbytery; or by all the congregations of our Church.

62-3. It should be left to the judgment and discretion of every Christian and family to determine when it is proper to observe a private fast or thanksgiving; and to the church Sessions to determine for particular congregations; and to the Presbyteries, to determine for larger districts. When it is deemed expedient that a fast or thanksgiving should be general, the call for it should be issued by the General Assembly. If at any time the civil power should appoint a fast or thanksgiving, in keeping with the Christian faith, it is the duty of the ministers and people of our communion to pay all due respect to it.

62-4. Public notice should be given a sufficient time before the appointed day of fasting or thanksgiving, that persons may so order their affairs as to allow them to attend properly to the duties of the day.

62-5. There should be public worship upon all such days; and the prayers, psalms or hymns, the selection of Scripture, and sermons, should all be in a special manner adapted to the occasion.

62-6. On days of fasting, the minister should point out the authority and providences calling for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in solemn prayer, particular confession of sin, especially for the sins of the day and place; and the whole day should be spent in prayer and meditation.

62-7. On days of thanksgiving, he should give information respecting the authority and providences which call for the observance; and he should spend more than the usual time in giving thanks, agreeably to the occasion, and in singing psalms or hymns of praise. On these days, the people should rejoice with holy gladness of heart; but their joy should be tempered with reverence, that they indulge in no excess or unbecoming levity.

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CHAPTER 63

Christian Life in the Home

63-1. In addition to public worship, it is the duty of each person in secret, and of every family in private, to worship God.

63-2. Secret worship is most plainly enjoined by our Lord. In this duty everyone, apart, should spend some time in prayer, reading the Scriptures, holy meditation, and serious self-examination. The many advantages arising from a conscientious performance of these duties are best known to those who are found in the faithful discharge of them.

63-3. Family worship, which should be observed by every family, consists in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and singing praises; or in some briefer form of outspoken recognition of God.

63-4. Parents should instruct their children in the Word of God, and in the principles of our holy religion. The reading of devotional literature should be encouraged and every proper opportunity should be embraced for religious instruction.

63-5. Parents should set an example of piety and consistent living before the family. Unnecessary private visits on the Lord's Day and indulgence in practices injurious to the spiritual life of the family, should be avoided.

63-6. In the supreme task of religious education, parents should co-operate with the Church by setting their children an example in regular and punctual attendance upon the sessions of the church school and the services of the sanctuary, by assisting them in the preparation of their lessons, and by leading them in the consistent application of the teachings of the Gospel in their daily activities.

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APPENDICES

Editorial Note: None of these Appendices have constitutional authority. They are provided for information.

OPTIONAL FORMS FOR PARTICULAR SERVICES

These forms were approved by the General Assembly, to be printed with the *Book of Church Order*, but not to be a part of the Constitution. They were derived from the PCUS Book as approved in 1893, and from the OPC Book as approved in 1940. Appendix G was adapted from forms used by the OPC and RPCNA.

APPENDIX A

MARRIAGE SERVICE

Whether the marriage is in the church or in a private house, the betrothed shall present themselves attended by witnesses, the man having the woman at his left hand, before the minister, who shall say:

The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

If any here present can show just cause why these persons may not lawfully be joined together in marriage, let them now speak, or hereafter forever hold their peace.

Marriage is a divine ordinance instituted for the promotion of man's happiness and the glory of God. The sacredness of the relation is revealed by the fact that the Holy Spirit has selected it as an apt emblem of the union existing between our Lord and His bride, the Church. Hence, beloved friends, take heed to the exhortation of the inspired apostle, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:26). "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). The happiness contemplated by this union is realized only by those who fully appreciate its sacredness and are faithful in the performance of the mutual obligations growing out of it, and seek daily God's blessing.

And now as you enter into this new relation, consecrated by heaven's benediction and hallowed by all that is tenderest and truest in human affection, I entreat you both to join with me in the prayer that God may bless this union, and sanctify it to the furtherance of your good and to the glory of His most holy Name.

The Prayer

Most gracious God, fountain of life and love and joy, look with merciful favor upon these your servants now to be joined in holy wedlock, and enable them ever to remember and truly keep the vows which they make as they enter into covenant with one another and with you, in accordance with the Holy Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Covenant

Here the parties join their right hands, and the minister says:

Do you, M--, take N--, whom you now hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded wife, and do you promise in the presence of God and these witnesses to be to her a faithful, loving and devoted husband, so long as you both shall live?

The man answers:

I do.

The minister shall say:

Do you, N--, take M--, whom you now hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded husband and do you promise in the presence of God and these witnesses to be to him a faithful, loving and obedient wife, so long as you both shall live?

The woman answers:

I do.

If a ring is given and received, the minister shall say:

Let this ring be the token of your plighted faith, and the memorial of your mutual and unending love.

Then the minister, addressing himself to the company present, says:

> **Forasmuch as these persons have covenanted together in marriage in accordance with the laws of the commonwealth, I do now pronounce them husband and wife, after the ordinance of God. "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).**

The Prayer

> **Almighty and ever blessed God, our heavenly Father, place the seal of your loving approval upon the union of these two hearts and lives in the sacred bonds of matrimony. Enable your servants, by the gift of thy sufficient grace to be faithful in keeping the vows they have now assumed. Whether in prosperity or in adversity, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, may their love and sympathy for each other never fail. Into your holy keeping we now commit them, praying that they may ever live "as being heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). For Jesus' sake. Amen.**

Benediction

Then the married pair standing, or kneeling, the minister shall pronounce the benediction:

> **God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and so fill you with his grace that you may live faithfully together in this life and in the world to come may have life everlasting. Amen.**

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APPENDIX B

A SECOND 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 innocency and uprightness. The Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18). Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and brought her to 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, "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). Moreover, the apostle Paul set forth the sacred and exalted nature of marriage when he likened it to the mystical union that subsists 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 it; that He might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. ...So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies" (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 the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:22-23).

These two persons are come to be joined in this holy estate of marriage. If any man 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 right hand of the woman.

The minister shall then say:

M--, 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:

N--, 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, M--, take you, N--, 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, N--, take you, M--, 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, N--, receive this ring as a token of your pledge to keep this covenant and perform these vows?

The woman shall say:

I do.

The minister shall say:

Let us pray.

After prayer the minister shall say:

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

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APPENDIX C

A FUNERAL SERVICE

Let the service begin with the reading of the whole or a part of the following selections from Scripture:

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).

Man who is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and fades away; he flees like a shadow, and does not continue (Job 14:1-2).

For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and without hope (1 Chronicles 29:15).

We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out (1 Timothy 6:7).

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

Prayer of Invocation:

O God, You who are our God, and our fathers' God; You whose compassions fail not, but who are the same yesterday, today, and forever, grant us now your presence, we beseech you, that our souls may be strengthened, and that we faint not under your afflicting providence, but that through your condescension we may find all grace to help in this our time of need, which we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, to whom, with You and the Holy Ghost, we will ascribe all honor, majesty and might, world without end. Amen.

Hymn.

Then let the whole or a part of the following selections of Scripture be read:

Psalm 39:4-13:

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. Selah.

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. Selah

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 90:1-12:

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.

1 Corinthians 15:20-58:

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.

Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

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 beasts, 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.

Instead of the foregoing passage from 1 Corinthians 15, one or more of the following may be substituted as the occasion may require:

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7:

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them": While the sun and the light, the moon and the stars, are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow down; when the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim; when the doors are shut in the streets, and the sound of grinding is low; when one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low; also when they are afraid of height, and of terrors in the way; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is a burden, and desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets.

Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Psalm 27:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.

One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." Do not hide Your face from me; do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me.

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!

Revelation 22:1-5:

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. And 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. And 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.

Prayer:

Almighty and most merciful God, our heavenly Father, the consolation of the sorrowful and the support of the stricken, who does not willingly afflict the children of men, look in pity, we beseech you, on all upon whom You have laid your afflicting hand, and, in the multitude of Your tender mercies, be pleased to uphold and comfort them in the day of their trial and distress. Grant us all grace that we may lay to heart the lesson of this solemn providence, and work while the day lasts, knowing that the night comes, when no man can work; and that we may set our affections on things that are in heaven, and not on things that are on the earth. Enable us to live by faith in the Son of God, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also may appear with Him in glory.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, to whom shall we go but to You? You have the words of eternal life. You who were a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, have pity upon those who cry unto You. When our eyes grow dim in the shadows of death, and we pass through the deep waters, by Your agony and bloody sweat, and by Your death on Calvary, we beseech You to remember us. O You who have saved us forsake us not in the trying hour; You who has vanquished death, give us the victory, and bring us to Your own everlasting rest in the assembly of Your saints on high.

O God, the Holy Ghost, author of light and life and truth, inspire our souls with hope through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, imparting the benefits of His atonement, and the power of His all-sufficient grace. Release us from our sins; fill us with the fruits of Your own indwelling, and form us anew in the image of God. Help us now, O blessed Comforter; heal our wounded spirits and do not despise our broken and contrite hearts.

O God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Triune Jehovah, have mercy upon us, Your servants, as we wait before You: and hear our prayer. Be pleased graciously to attend to our humble requests, and to do for us all that we need, glorifying Yourself by us both in this present world, and in that which is to come: all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one: For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Benediction:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

After which the service may be concluded with a hymn. For service at the grave, see Appendix E.

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APPENDIX D

A CHILD'S FUNERAL

Let the service begin with the reading of the whole or a part of the following selections from Scripture:

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion (Psalm 20:1-1).

Man who is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue (Job 14:1).

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

Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Prayer:

Father of mercies, God of all grace, ever comforting us by the tender assurance of Your love for all those whom you chasten, be near to us now in this hour of sorrow, as we come to cast our care upon You, and seek the strength and consolation You only can impart.

As a father pities His children, so do You pity those who sit before You, smitten and afflicted. As one whom his mother comforts, do You comfort them, and so sanctify to them this sorrow that theirs may be everlasting consolation.

O You who leads Joseph like a flock, who knows Your own sheep by name as they follow You, carrying the lambs in Your arms and folding them in Your bosom, it is not Your will that one of these little ones should perish. When You do send your messenger, like a gentle shepherd, to lead them into the heavenly pastures, may bereaved parents hear the voice which says, "Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them" (Matthew 19:14). Fill them with resignation to Your will; give them the consolations of Your Spirit, and grant that, through Your grace, this chastening may be for their profit, that, being made partakers of Your holiness, they may be prepared for everlasting blessedness in that world where, after the separations and sorrows of this life, they may be forever with one another and with the Lord, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior. Amen.

Hymn.

The minister may read the whole or a part of the following selections:

Psalm 23:

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.

2 Samuel 12:16-23:

David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. So the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!" When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food?" So he said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' "But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Isaiah 51:12, 66:13:

I, even I, am He who comforts you. . . .As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you.

John 13:7:

What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.

Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-12:

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? . . . Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

Romans 8:15-18:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

John 14:1-2:

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.

Isaiah 40:1, 11:

Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. . . .He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.

Mark 10:13-16:

Then they brought young 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, put His hands on them, and blessed them.

Matthew 18:10-14:

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. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Revelation 7:15-17:

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.

Prayer:

O God, our heavenly Father, who through the blood of Your Son has provided redemption for all Your own, we would render to You most hearty thanks, in this our time of grief, for the sure confidence we have that the soul of this dear child whose loss we mourn is at rest in You. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, and those who are of more value than many sparrows cannot die until You, who regards with tender compassion the weakest of Your creatures, call them to Yourself. We would not sorrow as those who have no hope, but bow in humble submission to Your sovereign decree, and by divine grace would say, Your will be done.

Vouchsafe unto Your servants, we beseech You, the consolations of Your Spirit, giving us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. May this chastisement which now seems so grievous yield us the peaceable fruits of righteousness, by drawing us into closer fellowship with You, that we may not set our affections on the things of this world; but upon that blessed home above, where all who have departed in Christ await us beyond the reach of sorrow.

Shine upon our darkness, O Lord; pardon all our sins; build us up and strengthen us in our most holy faith; and at last give us the victory over death, bringing us in holiness and joy to Your own eternal rest.

Hear now our prayer, O God, and be pleased mercifully to bestow the blessings which we need, for the love of Jesus Christ, Your well-beloved Son, to whom, with You and the Holy Spirit, be all dominion, glory and praise, world without end. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

Hymn.

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APPENDIX E

GRAVESIDE SERVICE

After the body has been lowered into the grave (or to sea), the following words may be said:

Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God, in His wise providence, to take out of this world the soul of our deceased (brother), we therefore commit (his) body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: awaiting the hour when all who are in the graves will hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29).

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have not hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).

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" (Revelation 14:13).

Prayer:

Almighty God, who has sanctified the grave by Your Son's rest therein, and by His glorious resurrection has brought life and immortality to light, accept, we pray, our unfeigned thanks for the victory which He has obtained for us and for all who sleep in Him, and keep us who are still in the body, in everlasting fellowship with all that wait for You on earth, and with all that are around You in heaven, in union with Him who is the resurrection and the life, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

O Merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believes, shall live, though he die; and whosoever lives and believes in Him, shall not die eternally; who also has taught us, by His holy Apostle Paul, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for those who sleep in Him; we humbly beseech You, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Him; and that, at the general resurrection in the last day, we may be found acceptable in Your sight; and receive that blessing, which Your well-beloved Son shall then pronounce to all who love and fear You, saying, Come, blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Grant this, we beseech You O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.[*]

[*]This prayer is from John Knox's Liturgy.

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 (Hebrews 13:20-21).**

APPENDIX F

THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH BUILDING

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 court 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. Selah. Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! And lift them 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. Selah (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:

To You, God and Father of Jesus Christ, our Lord:
We dedicate this house.
To You, eternal Son of God, Redeemer of Your people and Head of Thy church:
We dedicate this house.
To You, Spirit of God, lord and giver of life, our teacher, sanctifier and comforter:
We dedicate this house.
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:
We dedicate this house.
For the diffusion of sacred knowledge;
For the promotion of righteousness;
For the extension of the kingdom of God:
We dedicate this house.
For release of the captives;
For recovering of sight to the blind;
For rest to the heavy laden:
We dedicate this house.
For comfort to those who mourn;
For strength to those who are tempted;
For assurance to those of little faith:
We dedicate this house.
For the sanctifying of the family;
For the nurture of the young;
For the perfection of believers:
We dedicate this house.
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:
We dedicate this house.

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 Your 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 surcease the extension of the kingdom of God. Teach us 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 to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen (1 Timothy 1:17).

An offering to the Lord may then be received.

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

APPENDIX G

SUGGESTED FORMS FOR USE IN CONNECTION WITH THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

I

CHARGE AND SPECIFICATIONS

In the name of the Presbyterian Church in America _____ (title of the trial judicatory) charges _____ with _____ (name the alleged offense): _____ (give references to applicable portions of the Word of God, and, where pertinent, to relevant provisions of the Constitution), against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.

Specifications: That on or about _____ the said _____ did _____ (set forth briefly the place and circumstances of the alleged offense).

Witnesses and/or Documents: _____ (set forth the names of witnesses and/or titles of documents to be produced in support of the charge and specifications).

_____(Moderator)

_____(Clerk)

Date: _____

II

CITATION OF ACCUSED

To_____:

You are hereby cited to appear before _____, meeting on _____ at _____ o'clock at _____, then and there to hear and receive certain charges and specifications which have been preferred against you by _____ (here insert the title of the trial judicatory) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

(In the case of a second citation, add the appropriate warning prescribed by *BCO* 32-6.)

By order of _____ (insert the title of the trial judicatory) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

_____(Moderator)

_____(Clerk)

Date: _____

III

CITATION OF WITNESS

To _____:

You are hereby cited to appear before _____, meeting on _____ at _____ o'clock, at _____, then and there to give evidence in the trial of _____ (here insert the name of the accused.)

(In the case of a second citation of a witness who has failed to appear after one citation, add the warning prescribed in *BCO* 32-6.)

By order of _____ (here insert the title of the trial judicatory) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

_____ (Moderator)

_____(Clerk)

Date: _____

IV

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL

To _____, Clerk of _____ (here insert the title of the judicatory form which the appeal is to be taken) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

And now, this _____ day of _____, A.D. _____, comes _____ and gives notice of intention to appeal to _____ from the judgment of _____ in the case of _____ (here insert the name of the accused).

_____Appellant

Date: _____

V

APPEAL

To _____, Clerk (or Moderator) of _____ (here insert the title of the judicatory to which the appeal is taken) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

And now, this _____ day of _____, A.D. _____, comes _____ and appeals from the judgment of _____ in the case of _____ (here insert the name of the accused), and in support of said appeal sets forth the following specifications of error:

_____ (Here insert the title of the judicatory from which the appeal is taken) of the Presbyterian Church in America erred in _____(here state concisely the error alleged to have been made).

(Additional specifications of error may be filed).

_____ Appellant

Date: _____

VI

COMPLAINT

To _____, Clerk of _____(here insert the title of the judicatory to which the complaint is taken) of the Presbyterian Church in America.

And now, this _____ day of _____, A.D. _____, comes _____ and complains against the action (or delinquency) of _____ in connection with _____ (here state briefly the matter of which complaint is made), and in support of said complaint sets forth the following reasons:

(Here set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs the reasons for the complaint).

_____, Complainant

Date: _____

APPENDIX H

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES FOR PRESBYTERY JUDICIAL COMMISSIONS ACTING AS APPELLATE COURTS

1. These procedures are suggested when a Presbytery, as an appellate court, decides that an appeal or complaint arising from a Session is in order, and in accordance with *BCO* 15, chooses to appoint a Judicial Commission to hear the case. The Presbytery Stated Clerk shall promptly notify the parties of the names of the Commission members and the initial contact information. (See flowchart.)

2. A hearing shall not be conducted until the Commission determines that the Record of the Case is complete (perfected), the parties have had opportunity to file briefs, and the members of the Commission have had adequate time to read the Record and all briefs.

3. The convener or chairman of the Commission shall convene the first meeting within 10 days of the Presbytery meeting at which the Commission was appointed. This meeting may be held the same day Presbytery appoints the Commission. At this convening meeting the Commission shall elect its chairman and secretary, unless Presbytery had previously appointed them. In addition to other preliminary matters, the Commission may discuss potential dates for a hearing and the current status of the Record. The chairman shall promptly notify the parties of all addresses necessary for filing purposes.

4. Conference calls are acceptable for all Commission meetings other than the hearing. This includes the meetings to: 1) convene the Commission, 2) resolve disputes on the Record, 3) adopt a Judgment, and 4) adopt a written decision and approve minutes.

5. At its discretion and with the consent of both parties, the Commission may decide to accept email, fax or similar means for filings after establishing procedures to confirm the date that a document is filed and received.

6. Record of the Case – After the Commission is appointed, the Presbytery Stated Clerk shall promptly ensure delivery of the Record to each Commission member and to all parties to the case. It shall be delivered to the appellant/ complainant in person or in some other manner providing verification of the date of receipt. If the appellant/complainant believes the Record is incomplete or incorrect,

he shall, within 14 days of receiving such Record, file written notice with the Commission and with the Session (clerk or respondent). Such notice shall specify the alleged defects and suggestions for corrections. Failure to file a timely objection will constitute acceptance of the Record. Within 14 days of receiving such written notice, the Session shall file a written response with the Commission and with the appellant/complainant. The chairman shall promptly send to the commissioners the notice of objection and the Session's response. If no objection is filed, the parties are considered to have received the perfected Record on the day they received the original Record.

7. Resolving Disputes on the Record – If the Session agrees to any suggested correction, the Record shall be revised accordingly. If the Session does not agree to a suggested correction, the Commission shall consider the written arguments of both parties and rule whether the change(s) should be made. This ruling shall be made within 14 days of when the Commission received the Session's response and the chairman shall promptly notify the parties of the ruling. If the original Record is revised, the chairman shall ensure both parties receive the perfected Record and the date of its receipt shall be recorded. In this event, the chairman shall also ensure the commissioners receive copies of the revision.

8. Filing Briefs – After the Record has been perfected, the parties may file briefs with the Commission. Such briefs are optional and additional to the notice of appeal/complaint (*BCO* 42-4, 43-3) and to the Session's initial response (*BCO* 42-5, 43-6).

1. The appellant/complainant's brief shall be filed no later than 14 days after he receives the perfected Record (or the original Record if undisputed.) The Commission will immediately send this brief to the Session and the delivery date shall be recorded. The chairman will promptly send this brief to the commissioners.
2. The Session's brief shall be filed no later than 28 days after it receives the perfected Record (or the original Record if undisputed) or 14 days after it receives the appellant/complainant's brief, whichever is later. The Commission will immediately send this brief to the appellant/complainant. The chairman will promptly send this brief to the commissioners.

3. The Commission should not schedule the hearing for sooner than 42 days after the date the parties receive the perfected Record (or the original Record if undisputed), unless both parties, in writing, waive their right to file briefs.
4. The briefs shall include the party's position with regard to: a summary of the facts, a summary of the proceedings before the Session, a proposed statement of the issue(s), the proposed judgment & relief, and the argument in favor of judgment & relief.
5. No brief shall make reference to any evidence not already part of the perfected Record. The Commission may, at its discretion, strike the part of any brief that makes such reference. Parties may petition the Commission to strike any alleged new evidence from a brief. At the same time, briefs may mention and the Commission may take judicial notice of facts not subject to reasonable dispute.
6. A brief is limited to 10 pages. It must be typewritten on 8½ x 11-inch paper, with 1-inch margins on all sides, and no smaller than 10-point type. Any brief that does not meet these standards of form shall be returned to the sending party with reasons. If this occurs, a revised brief may be submitted, provided such brief is filed with the Commission within 5 days of when the party received notification that the brief did not meet the standard of form.

9. Before the hearing begins, the chairman shall call the members of the Commission to order and he shall:

1. Open the meeting with prayer and certify a quorum is present.
2. Ask each member individually if he has read the Record and all briefs. Any member who cannot affirm such is disqualified from deliberating and voting.
3. Remind the members to disregard all evidence not in the Record, even though such evidence may be found in the briefs of the parties or in oral argument.
4. Read to the members the four principles adopted as Standards of Review in *BCO* 39-3.

10. During the hearing:
1. Before arguments begin, commissioners may question the parties on any matter before the court.

2. The arguments shall be heard in the following order: 1) the appellant/complainant opens, 2) the Session responds, and 3) the appellant/complainant closes. Each party should be present to hear the arguments of the other.
3. A party shall have a maximum of 30 minutes to argue his case. For the appellant/complainant, these 30 minutes are inclusive of both his opening and closing arguments. He may divide that time as he chooses.
4. At any time during which a party is presenting an argument, a commissioner may ask questions of that party. The time taken for such questions shall not form a part of the argument time of the party questioned.

11. Judgment – As soon as possible after hearing oral arguments, the Commission shall go into closed session and discuss the issues in the case. In that discussion, the Commission may frame the issues and vote on a Judgment. Or, the Commission may adjourn and reconvene within the next 10 days, as often as necessary, to do so.

12. Written Decision – After the Judgment is adopted, the chairman shall designate a member who voted with the majority to draft the written decision. If the chairman did not vote in the majority, the majority will select their own drafter. The decision shall contain four parts:

1. Summary of Facts (chronological summary of relevant history and facts bearing on case)
2. Statement of the Issue(s) (concise framing by the court of specific issue(s) being judged in case)
3. Judgment (definite conclusion rendered on the specific issue(s) being adjudged)
4. Reasoning and Opinion (reasons for judgment rendered and resolution of any disputed facts)

The drafter of the decision shall send it to the commissioners promptly enough so that within 21 days of adopting the Judgment, the Commission shall adopt a written decision and approve the minutes of its meetings. Any Commission member may file a concurring or dissenting opinion.

13. Reporting – Within 42 days after the hearing, the Commission shall file its report with the Presbytery Stated Clerk. In addition, any commissioner writing a concurring or dissenting opinion shall file it with the Presbytery Stated Clerk within 42 days after the hearing. The Commission's report shall include the following:

1. Commission's written decision, including the vote.
2. Minutes of the meetings of the Commission.
3. Briefs of the Parties
4. Record of the Case as perfected

14. Distribution – The Presbytery Stated Clerk shall promptly forward to both parties a copy of the Commission's decision and any concurring or dissenting opinions. The Stated Clerk shall send the same to the members of the Presbytery.

15. For the purposes of computing times, the day of the act or event from which a designated period of time begins shall not be included. The last day of the period shall be included, unless it is a Saturday, Sunday or postal holiday, in which case the period extends until the end of the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or postal holiday. "Filing" shall not be timely unless the documents are received by the appropriate party within the time fixed for such filing. "Received" shall be when the documents are actually delivered to the party.

16. The Commission may extend any of the deadline dates in this Appendix, or page limits for briefs, upon its determination that so doing is required in the interest of justice.

SUMMARY – This procedure would only apply to a Presbytery Judicial Commission acting as an appellate court. This procedure does not apply if a Presbytery chooses to hear any case as a whole body.

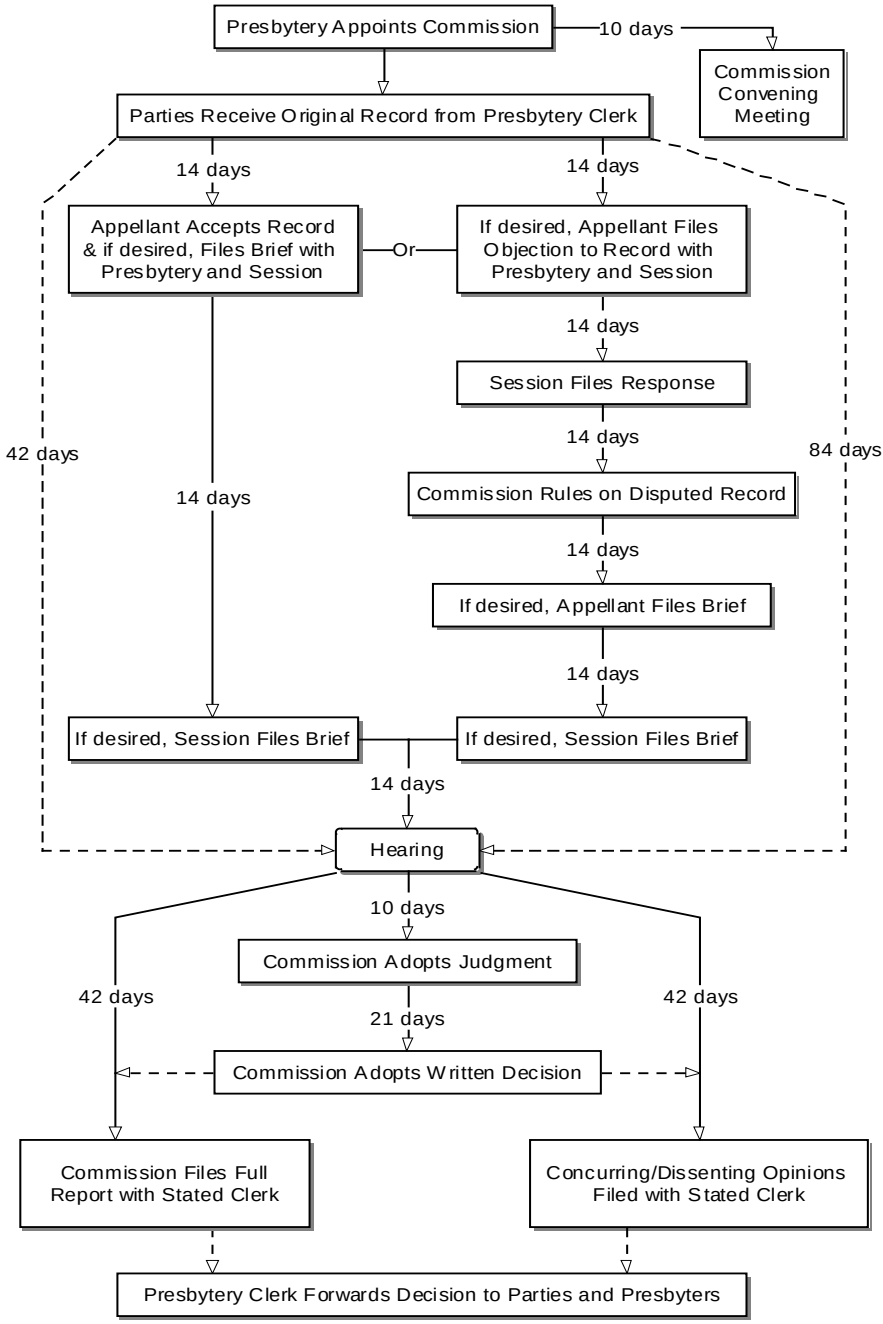
These procedures provide three distinct six-week (42 day) periods:

1. Resolving any disputes on the Record
2. Filing, distributing, and reading briefs
3. Conducting hearing, deliberating, and filing full report with Stated Clerk

Long Process – If the Record is disputed, and the parties choose to file briefs, and the full time is taken for all deadlines, the Commission might not file its final report with the Stated Clerk until four months (126 days) after the Presbytery meeting at which it was appointed. However, if the full time is not taken for all deadlines, the Commission may be able to file its report in time for the next Presbytery meeting, even if the Record is disputed and briefs are filed.

Medium Process – If either the Record is not disputed or the parties waive their right to file briefs, and the full time is taken for all deadlines, a Commission should file its final report within 84 days (12 weeks). In most Presbyteries, this should be in time for the next meeting.

Short Process – If the Record is not disputed, and the parties waive their right to file briefs, the Commission should file its report within 42 days of the hearing, which could be held as soon as the Commissioners have read the Record. This scenario would also result in Presbytery receiving the Commission's report at the next Presbytery meeting.


Presbytery Appoints Commission
10 days
Commission Convening Meeting
Parties Receive Original Record from Presbytery Clerk
14 days
14 days
Appellant Accepts Record & if desired, Files Brief with Presbytery and Session
Or
If desired, Appellant Files Objection to Record with Presbytery and Session
14 days
Session Files Response
14 days
42 days
84 days
14 days
Commission Rules on Disputed Record
14 days
If desired, Appellant Files Brief
14 days
If desired, Session Files Brief
If desired, Session Files Brief
14 days
Hearing
10 days
Commission Adopts Judgment
42 days
42 days
21 days
Commission Adopts Written Decision
Commission Files Full Report with Stated Clerk
Concurring/Dissenting Opinions Filed with Stated Clerk
Presbytery Clerk Forwards Decision to Parties and Presbyters

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APPENDIX I
BIBLICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PREFACE

When the 30th General Assembly approved including Appendix I, Biblical Conflict Resolution, in the *BCO*, it was approved "as a non-binding informational Appendix to the *BCO*" (*M30GA*, 2002, page 297, item 30-62, recommendation 14). Appendix I, has no binding constitutional authority.

As we continue to seek to become a church holy before God, the manner in which we respond to sin and conflicts in the body, and gently shepherd those caught in sin, will reflect our commitment to the authority of God's Word and the spirit of love, which should define all of our actions and relationships. Biblical peacemaking is one of God's highest priorities (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18; Gal. 6:1); therefore, it must be one of our highest priorities. The *Book of Church Order* (*BCO*) reflects our commitment to following God's procedure for reclaiming those going astray. It says, "Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will. Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed" (*BCO* 27-5). It also says, "An injured party shall not become a prosecutor of personal offenses without having tried the means of reconciliation and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ" (*BCO* 31-5). The purpose of this Appendix is to provide guidance through the steps of biblical peacemaking required as pre-conditions to judicial process in cases of personal offense (*BCO* 31-5), and for use whenever possible in cases of general offense (*BCO* 31-7).

Each presbytery should endeavor to have several elders trained in the methods of "Christian conciliation" (including mediation and arbitration), and available to serve as Christian conciliators in cases that could and should be resolved privately before judicial process is initiated. We would do well to follow the wisdom of those who have considered the importance of this matter. For example, Elder Edmund Clowney states, "Discipline...is not first an exercise of negative judgment, a matter of church courts and censures. It begins with the care of friends with whom we strive to follow Christ" (Clowney, E.P., *The Church*, IVP, 1995).

THE BIBLICAL STEPS OF DISCIPLINE AS THEY RELATE TO BIBLICAL PEACEMAKING

BCO 27-5 outlines the proper principles for the exercise of church discipline. This *BCO* section emphasizes that the steps indicated, (a) through (d), must be followed in proper order. The steps are:

a) Instruction in the Word;

b) An individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1);
c) If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matt. 18:16);
d) If rejection persists, then the church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition.

This Appendix addresses the first three steps, (a) through (c), by providing an expanded discussion of the implications raised by Scriptural direction for a complete process at each step. Step (d), formal church discipline, is addressed by Part II of the *Book of Church Order,* The Rules of Discipline.

1. The first step - <u>Instruction in the Word</u>.

Many Christians do not fully understand the emphasis God places on living at peace and in unity with others (Eph. 4:3). Preaching and teaching should regularly address this emphasis and the purposes for church discipline as set forth in *BCO* 27-3 and *BCO* 27-4. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the main procedural passage related to church discipline, Matthew 18:15-20, is set forth in the context of two powerful parables teaching the extent and depth of God's love in reclaiming those who have strayed (Matt. 18:10-14), and the vast measure of His forgiveness and the expansive forgiveness He expects from His children toward one another (Matt. 18:21-35). The extent of instruction on reconciliation provided to church members in "new member classes" and regular preaching from the pulpit will have a significant bearing on the extent to which a church member understands the benefits of church discipline and has consented to ecclesiastical jurisdiction (which is helpful for the church if it is to avoid legal liability for the proper exercise of church discipline).

Teaching God's Word concerning sin, and conflicts that result from it, and how Christians should respond biblically to conflict, will equip church members to become peacemakers themselves. Peacemaking has always been one of a Christian's most important ministries. As we are reminded in 2 Corinthians 5:18, God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." One of the most powerful ways that we can encourage reconciliation with God is to model reconciliation among people. When others see us resolve our differences in a loving and biblical manner, they are inclined to give more weight to what we say about the Lord (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23). On the other hand, when they see Christians embroiled in disputes, they tend to write God's people off as hypocrites and dismiss the claims of Christ (Rom. 2:21-24; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).

The Bible sets forth a process for resolving personal and substantive disputes in a constructive manner. This process is sometimes referred to as "Christian

conciliation" and it may be used to resolve everything from minor personal differences to church divisions or lawsuits involving church members. As indicated in passages such as Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 5:23-25 and 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, and Galatians 6:1, conciliation involves three basic steps: (1) when Christians are involved in a conflict that is too serious to overlook, the first thing that they should do is meet together privately and in person to try to resolve their differences; (2) if this effort is unsuccessful, they should ask one or more other Christians to meet with them and help them to seek reconciliation and a voluntary settlement of their differences (a process sometimes referred to as mediation); and (3) if they cannot arrive at a voluntary settlement, they should ask one or more other Christians to hear both sides of the matter and render a biblically based decision that both sides are obligated to accept (a process sometimes referred to as arbitration).

There are many benefits to resolving disputes through Christian conciliation. It prevents a public quarrel that would dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ and diminish the credibility and witness of His Church. Conciliation also allows Christians to demonstrate their faith in Christ and their confidence in His teachings (John 13:34; 14:15; 17:20-23). In addition, conciliation encourages forgiveness and promotes reconciliation, which can help to preserve valuable relationships and strengthen the Church (Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-17). Conciliation also helps people to identify and deal with the root causes of conflict, which may include such things as pride, selfishness, fear, vengeance, greed, bitterness, or unforgiveness (see Matt. 7:3-5). This allows people to make changes in their lives so that they will enjoy more peaceful relationships in the future (Eph. 4:1-3, 22-24).

Christian conciliation is especially beneficial for people who sincerely want to do what is right and are open to learning where they have been wrong (Prov. 15:31-32). Conciliators can help them to identify improper attitudes or unwise practices, to understand more fully the effects of their decision and actions, and to make improvements in their lives that will help them to honor and serve the Lord more effectively in the future (1 Peter 2:12).

Teaching and Ruling elders are encouraged to learn all they can about Christian conciliation and develop local ministries that will equip members under their care to respond to conflicts in a manner that reflects the power of Christ working in their lives. The more church members understand these concepts and benefits, the more likely they will be to apply biblical principles when conflicts occur.

2. The second step - <u>An individual's responsibility to admonish another</u> (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1).
Scripture warns against making a premature judgment about a matter (Matt. 7:1-5). By first going personally and in private to those who have offended, we provide the opportunity for clarification of misunderstandings and avoid premature judgment. This step includes the three responses of <u>personal</u> peacemaking as follows:

<u>Overlook an offense:</u> An individual may overlook an offense of another if it is minor in nature <u>and</u> it has not significantly dishonored God, damaged a personal relationship, or hurt other people (including the offender). "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense" (Prov. 19:11).

<u>Discussion</u>: When personal wrongs are too serious to overlook, the parties are required to seek to resolve them privately through loving confrontation and confession. "If your brother has something against you...go and be reconciled" (Matt. 5:23-24). "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you" (Matt. 18:15).

<u>Negotiation</u>: When a substantive issue related to money, property, or other material issues or rights divides Christians, a process of biblical negotiation should be followed that will meet the interests of all those involved. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4).

Privately responding to conflict early, before it escalates, through the means of these three forms of personal peacemaking will often result in reconciliation and no need for further peacemaking attention. Successful personal peacemaking is usually based on at least one parties' willingness to accept responsibility for how they have contributed to the conflict and by being willing to humble themselves for the greater goal of God's glory through "making every effort" (Eph. 4:3) to keep the unity of the spirit.

3. The third step - <u>If private admonition is rejected, then calling of one or more witnesses</u> (Matt. 18:16; 1 Cor. 6:1-9).
Involving others is a serious escalation of a conflict and should be considered only after the elements of step two have been fully exhausted. Step three includes the three <u>assisted</u> peacemaking responses as follows:

Mediation: If a dispute cannot be resolved through personal peacemaking, the parties should ask one or more other Christians to meet with them to help the parties communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. The mediators may give advice but have no power to impose solutions. They may later act as witnesses in formal church disciplinary proceedings, should mediation fail due to hardness of heart or the unrepentant sin of one or both parties. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (Matt. 18:16).

Arbitration: When two parties to a conflict cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a substantive issue, one or more arbitrators may be appointed to listen to the arguments and evidence of each side and render a binding decision. "If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

Church Discipline: Formal church discipline, pursuant to the procedures of *BCO* Part II, is reserved for those cases where the person who professes to be a Christian refuses to be reconciled, repent of personal sin, and do what is right. Church leaders bearing ecclesiastical jurisdiction over such persons should formally intervene to promote justice, repentance, and forgiveness. "If he refuses to listen, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17-20).

APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

Judicial cases that come to the attention of church courts frequently begin as personal disputes between two or more individuals. Typically, when one side feels they are not getting what they want, they bring charges of sin against the other side. In this manner, sessions and presbyteries are drawn into conflicts that would better be resolved at a personal level through Christian conciliation. Of course, when conflicted parties refuse to be reconciled, the accountability afforded by formal church discipline should be used to further the goals of purity in the Church, the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, and the spiritual good of offenders (1 Cor. 5:5). Every effort should be made, however, to resolve the conflict through repentance, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation before formal charges are entertained by a church court. The intent of the relevant *BCO* provisions is to encourage Christian unity before the formal provisions of church discipline are brought to bear on a situation. Of course, not every situation will lend itself to Christian conciliation. However, every effort should be made to utilize private confrontation, mediation, and arbitration in order to

reserve the use of formal church discipline, and the time of church courts, for those matters related to the purity of the Church and the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners (*BCO* 27-3). Many of these ends will be realized through the processes of Christian conciliation and, therefore, should be viewed as prerequisite procedures to the formal disciplinary process.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE STEPS

Churches unwilling or unable to instruct their members completely in the full breadth of the steps of conciliation and discipline encourage resorting to unbiblical, worldly responses to conflict. The escape responses of denial, flight, and even suicide can be expected if church members are not positively directed to the biblical processes of Christian conciliation. Others, when not given the hope of having matters responded to within the body of Christ, will resort to civil litigation, verbal and physical attack, and possibly even murder to remove an opponent where there is no avenue for a just resolution.

Moving a case too quickly to formal church discipline can build barriers that could otherwise be dealt with in mediation or arbitration. Every church and presbytery is encouraged to equip elders and mature members with the skills of Christian conciliation, and to exhaust conciliation processes and remedies before moving to formal church discipline.

USE OF CONCILIATION CLAUSES IN MEMBERSHIP DOCUMENTS

One significant way church members can be educated and prepared for biblical conflict resolution is through the use of a conciliation clause in the membership covenant or other agreement signed by new members when they join the church. The recommended language for this clause is set forth below. It should be noted that signing this clause cannot be made a condition for membership, but may be encouraged as a voluntary biblical commitment. It should be clearly offered as an optional statement for the resolution of any disputes that may arise.

Christian Conciliation

Members are encouraged <u>but not required</u> to make this additional commitment.

If I ever have a dispute with the church that cannot be resolved through its own internal procedures, I agree to resolve the dispute according to biblical principles (such as those set forth in Matthew 5:23-25 and 18:15-20, and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) by submitting the matter to mediation and, if necessary, arbitration, according to the Bylaws of this church and the *Rules of Procedure* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation. I understand that arbitration is a legally binding process, and that judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction.

Dated this ____ day of _____, 20____

_____

Name (Printed) Signature

_____

Name (Printed) Signature

_____

Parent's or Guardian's Name (for minors) Parent's or Guardian's Signature

<u>THIS AGREEMENT IS SUBJECT TO ARBITRATION PURSUANT TO THE [STATE] ARBITRATION ACT, TITLE ##, CHAPTER #, [STATE] CODE ANNOTATED.</u>

AMEND CHURCH BYLAWS TO ALLOW CONTINUING CHURCH JURISDICTION

The following clause is recommended for inclusion in local church bylaws to allow the continuing ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a member who may otherwise simply flee from the church to avoid biblical discipline:

Members may be removed from membership at their own request following the steps of appropriate pastoral care as set forth in *BCO* 38-4. If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or disappointments with the church, the Session shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the Session is unable to resolve those matters, it shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and practice that can respond more effectively to his gifts and needs. If it appears to the Session that a member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded.

Use of this clause will also help the church avoid serious legal liability for following through with all of the steps of church discipline. Members should be informed of its provisions and carefully taught the Scriptural basis for continuing shepherding and pastoral care especially when caught in sin (see also *BCO* 38-3 and 38-4).

CONCLUSION

The courts of the church are encouraged to employ the means of Christian conciliation whenever possible. That is, churches and presbyteries are encouraged to defer judicial action until all other remedies have been exhausted. Peace, unity, and the mission of the Church can be furthered through careful and complete attention to every step of the process as set forth in *BCO* 27-5 as understood through the expanded guidance concerning Christian conciliation as set forth above.

APPENDIX J

SAMPLE FORM FOR TERMS OF CALL

____(Church Name)_____ (PCA) being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, ___(Minister's Name)___, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our special interests, do earnestly call 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. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to provide you with the following salary, benefits, vacations, and leaves of absence.

Salary and Housing Allowances _____ basis
(weekly, monthly, etc.)

Gross Salary, which includes housing allowance $_____
Amount Designated as Housing Allowance* $_____

Benefits

Primary Benefits

Healthcare and Medicare Supplement Insurance/Allowance	$_____
Retirement Savings** -amount equal to _____% of salary + housing	$_____
Long Term Disability Insurance – replaces _____% of salary + housing	$_____
Life Insurance – amount equal to _____ times salary + housing	$_____
Social Security/Medicare Allowance	$_____
Equity Allowance for ministers who are living in a manse	$_____
Leadership Counseling/Coaching	$_____

Secondary Benefits

Dental	$_____
Vision	$_____
HSA (Health Savings Account)***	$_____
Total Benefits	$_____

Temporary Benefits

Relocation expenses will be reimbursed but shall not exceed the following	$_____
Other	$_____
Temporary Benefits Total	$_____
TOTAL AMOUNTS	$_____

Vacations and Leaves of Absence

Vacation	_____ Days	Holiday Leave	_____ Days
Paid Sick Leave	_____ Days	Paternity Leave	_____ Days
Bereavement	_____ Days	Educational Leave	_____ Days
Sabbatical Leave	_____ Days, after _____ years		

Attestation

I, having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to _____(Minister's Name)_____ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the Book of Church Order, and that the persons who signed the call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

Clerk of Session:
Signature: _____
Print Name: _____
Date: _____

Minister-Elect:
Signature: _____
Print Name: _____
Date: _____

Send a copy to each of the following: 1) Minister-Elect 2) Stated clerk of the Presbytery

*Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code allows a minister to exclude a housing allowance from their taxable salary for eligible housing related expenses (i.e., mortgage payment, rent payments, utilities, etc.). It is important to note that the housing allowance is excludable for income tax purposes only (e.g., federal, and most states). It is not excludable for Self-Employment tax purposes (i.e., SECA) which are paid into the Social Security and Medicare system.

A minister's total cash salary can be broken down into two parts: 1) Taxable Salary and 2) Housing Allowance (Partially Taxable Salary).

Minister's Salary

Taxable Salary	Housing Allowance (Partially Taxable Salary)
• Taxable for Self-Employment Tax purposes • Taxable for Federal Income Tax purposes	• Taxable only for Self-Employment Tax purposes

** There is an annual limit on the amount of total contributions (i.e., employee and employer contributions) that can be made to a 403(b) plan. This limit is referred to as the 415(c) limit. However, it is important to note that a minister's housing allowance cannot be included as part of includible compensation because it is not a component of a minister's gross income (1.425-2(d) of income tax regulations). This limit may reduce the amount that can be contributed to a retirement account even though the call package guidelines formula includes it (i.e., retirement contributions are a percentage of salary and housing allowance).

*** Health Savings Account requires a high deductible heath savings account eligible plan.

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and additional index entries that are of assistance to you.
Communicating these entries to the Stated Clerk's Office would be appreciated

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RULES OF ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS

With revisions adopted through the 53rd General Assembly (2026)

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PREFATORY STATEMENT

In keeping with the concept that the Bylaws are designed for the conduct of Presbyterian Church in America (A Corporation) in regard to civil matters, the *Rules of Assembly Operations* (*RAO*) is designed to serve the General Assembly itself as an ecclesiastical organization. Therefore, care should be taken that these Rules contain only that which is essential for the biblical and efficient operation of the General Assembly ecclesiastically.

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RULES OF ASSEMBLY OPERATIONS

ARTICLE I. ORGANIZATION OF A GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S MEETING

1-1. The General Assembly shall be called to order at the designated time by the Moderator, and shall begin with a worship service, including a season of prayer, a sermon or exhortation by the retiring Moderator, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

1-2. The Stated Clerk shall present a report on the enrollment of commissioners, and declare if a quorum is present. If it is present, then the Assembly shall be declared to be properly constituted for the transaction of business.

1-3. The first order of business shall be the election of a Moderator. There shall be only one nominating speech not to exceed five minutes for each nominee. No seconding speeches shall be permitted.

1-4. If more than one commissioner is nominated, election shall be by ballot, on ballots provided by the Stated Clerk. Tellers appointed by the Stated Clerk shall gather and count the ballots, and report the tabulation to the Stated Clerk. If no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast, a second ballot shall be called on the two nominees who received the highest number of votes on the first ballot. The Moderator shall declare an election when a nominee receives a majority of the votes cast by the commissioners present and voting.

1-5. As soon as a Moderator shall have been declared elected he shall assume his constitutional duties as Moderator

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ARTICLE II. THE MODERATOR

2-1. The Moderator shall preside at all sessions of the Assembly except when he may invite another commissioner to act temporarily as the presiding officer.

2-2. The Moderator shall call the succeeding Assembly to order and preside over its sessions until a successor has been elected. Ordinarily he shall present a retiring Moderator's sermon or exhortation. If the Moderator is unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall call the Assembly to order and preside over its sessions until a Moderator has been elected.

2-3. Any former moderator attending a General Assembly shall have the privilege of the floor.

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ARTICLE III. THE STATED CLERK

3-1. The Stated Clerk shall perform the duties assigned by the *Book of Church Order*, the Rules of Assembly Operations, and the Bylaws of the Presbyterian Church in America, (A Corporation). The Stated Clerk shall serve as chief administrative officer of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly. As such, he shall be responsible, under the supervision and subject to the direction of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, for carrying out and executing the appropriate duties and responsibilities of said Committee. The Stated Clerk shall be authorized to employ, with the approval of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, a Business Administrator. All other staff personnel for said Committee shall then be employed by the Business Administrator with the approval and consent of the Stated Clerk.

3-2. The Stated Clerk shall have the following responsibilities to the General Assembly:

a. In his office as an elder he may, as appropriate, advise and counsel, and upon invitation, preach and teach.
b. His duties are clerical, and as an ordained elder in the denomination he has no special role as spiritual leader or teacher to the denomination.
c. He shall be responsible for the recording of the transactions of each General Assembly.
d. He shall carefully preserve all of the records of each General Assembly.
e. He shall obtain and grant abstracts from the Assembly records whenever properly required or requested.
f. He shall prepare and distribute a *Commissioner Handbook* so as to reach commissioners one month prior to the convening of each General Assembly.
g. He shall gather and assemble the items of business that come before each Assembly and refer such items of business to the proper committee or committees.
h. He shall be responsible for publishing both digitally and in print the General Assembly minutes and church statistical reports of the Presbyterian Church in America and periodically updating the digest of the minutes.
i. He shall be the parliamentarian of the General Assembly but may fulfill this function through the use of assistant parliamentarians whom he recommends to the Moderator for his appointment.

j. He shall be an ex officio member of the Committee on Interchurch Relations.
k. He shall be available to give advice to the Boards and Agencies of the Presbyterian Church in America if, as, and when so requested.
l. He shall be responsible for the oversight of the PCA Historical Center for the preservation of the archives of the Presbyterian Church in America.
m. Under the supervision of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, he shall propose the docket of the General Assembly and shall be available to advise the General Assembly on means to expedite and complete the business of the General Assembly.
n. He shall be responsible for notifying all appropriate persons of the decisions of the General Assembly.
o. He shall serve as the secretary and treasurer of the Presbyterian Church in America (A Corporation).
p. He shall receive progress reports and/or minutes from the committees appointed by the General Assembly, including special committees.
q. He shall have the privilege of the floor in all matters pertaining to his office at the General Assembly, to present necessary information on business before the meeting concerning the work and report of any committee on which he serves, and at such times when the Moderator, the coordinators, the executive directors, chairmen of Assembly Committees and Agencies (or their designated representative), or any commissioner may request that he clarify matters before the court.
r. He shall serve as custodian of the rolls of each General Assembly.
s. He shall be the correspondent with the lower courts of the church.
t. He shall be authorized to make public statements for and on behalf of the denomination only insofar as such statements are warranted on the basis of specific actions of the General Assembly.

3-3. The Stated Clerk shall have responsibility to the Administrative Committee of General Assembly as follows:

a. He shall work under the supervision of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly between the meetings of General Assembly.
b. He shall perform such duties as the Administrative Committee of General Assembly shall direct.

c. He shall recommend a person to fill the office of business administrator, such recommendation to be made to the Administrative Committee of General Assembly. He shall employ such business administrator, with the prior approval of this Administrative Committee. The person filling the office of business administrator shall be responsible directly to the Stated Clerk, and through the business administrator the necessary personnel and equipment shall be obtained and utilized -- all under the overall oversight of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly.
d. He shall make a full report to the Administrative Committee of General Assembly each year pertaining to his assessment of and evaluation of the performance by himself and those under his supervision and control during the year, which full report shall be submitted by this Administrative Committee to the General Assembly. This Administrative Committee shall have the responsibility of adding its comments, recommendations and suggestions to such report which shall include an evaluation of the performance of the person filling the office of the Stated Clerk.

3-4. The Administrative Committee of General Assembly has the responsibility of nominating to the General Assembly the person to fill the office of the Stated Clerk. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Assembly through the regular process for additional nominations.

3-5. The qualifications for the person to fill the office of the Stated Clerk shall be as follows:

a. He must be either a teaching or ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in America.
b. He must be conversant with the history and distinctives of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition and in particular of the history and distinctives of the Presbyterian Church in America.
c. He must possess a competent knowledge of the *Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America.*
d. He must have demonstrated managerial and organizational skills.

e. He must be loyal to the standards of the Presbyterian Church in America and be able to fairly represent the actions of each General Assembly. He must be conversant with the breadth of Reformed thinking in the Presbyterian Church in America and be able to communicate with the members of the Presbyterian Church in America and with representatives of other Reformed denominations.
f. He must be able to work in a capable, sensitive manner with persons who are in positions of responsibility in the Presbyterian Church in America organization structure.
g. He must understand and be committed to the proposition set out in *BCO* 14-1, 3: "The work of the Church as set forth in the Great Commission is one work. . ." Therefore, such person must recognize and be committed to implementing the important principle of the interdependency of each court, Committee, and Agency of the PCA.
h. He must have an appreciation of the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ as defined in *BCO* 1-3 and thus be able to work with the leaders of all branches of this true Church.

ARTICLE IV. COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES

4-1. The affairs and programs of the General Assembly shall be conducted primarily through its permanent Committees and Agencies.

4-2. The permanent Committees are those specifically created by the *Book of Church Order*:

Administrative Committee (AC)
Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM)
Mission to the World (MTW)
Mission to North America (MNA)
Reformed University Fellowship (RUF)

The Administrative Committee shall function as a service committee to the General Assembly and the denomination. The Committees on Discipleship Ministries, Mission to North America, Mission to the World, and Reformed University Fellowship shall be known as program Committees.

4-3. The Agencies are:

Covenant College (CC)
Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS)
PCA Foundation (PCAF)
Geneva Benefits Group (Geneva)
Ridge Haven Conference Center (RH)

The relationship of the Agencies to the Assembly remains as a Committee, although they may be incorporated separately for civil purposes. The composition and responsibilities of the Agencies are set forth in the Bylaws.

4-4. The Special Committees are:

Constitutional Business, Committee on (CCB)
Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC)
Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC)
Nominating Committee (NC)
Review of Presbytery Records, Committee on (RPR)
Theological Examining Committee (TEC)

4-5. The membership of Committees or Agencies shall be limited to the constitutional provisions for the permanent Committees or Agencies (*BCO* 14-1.12): namely, that those who have served for at least a full term, or at least two years of a partial term on one of the Assembly's permanent Committees or Agencies shall not be eligible for re-election to an Assembly Committee or Agency until one year has elapsed, unless provision has been approved by the Agency bylaws. Nominations shall be handled according to the *BCO* 14-1.11. These provisions shall not apply to ad interim committees, study committees or other committees appointed.

4-6. No individual shall serve on more than one Assembly committee or agency at one time, except those who serve as permanent Committee or Agency representatives on the Administrative Committee of General Assembly and those who serve on ad interim committees.

4-7. Employees of the Assembly's Committees and Agencies are not eligible for office on an Assembly's Committee or Agency which administers matters directly related to their area of employment.

4-8. The chief administrative officer of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly shall be the Stated Clerk. The chief administrative officer of the four program Committees shall be the coordinators and of the Agencies shall be the executive directors or presidents.

4-9. The four program Committees shall nominate annually a coordinator for election by the General Assembly. The Administrative Committee shall nominate annually a Stated Clerk for election by the General Assembly. If the nominee has not been examined by the Theological Examining Committee, such an examination must take place prior to the election when it is a first time employment. A new coordinator shall assume office at the end of the Assembly meeting, or at such time thereafter as designated by the General Assembly.

4-10. Permanent Committees and Agencies may appoint subcommittees for specific tasks or areas of responsibility assigned by the General Assembly, according to the following guidelines:

a. Membership of subcommittees may include persons not elected to the permanent Committee or Agency, provided the subcommittee chairman is a permanent Committee or Agency member.
b. All policies and procedures of a subcommittee must be approved by the permanent Committee or Agency prior to implementation.

c. The staff of a subcommittee is controlled by the permanent Committee or Agency through its chief administrative officer.

4-11. The budget for each permanent Committee and Agency shall be submitted to the Administrative Committee of General Assembly, which shall independently evaluate the proposed budget of each permanent Committee and Agency and report to the Assembly its considered opinion on the adoption. To protect the ministry and fiduciary responsibilities of the Committees and Agency Boards, the financial coordination and independent evaluation of the budgets by the Administrative Committee shall be for review, discussion, and recommendation to the Assembly.

Should modifications in budgets be deemed necessary by the Assembly, special care shall be taken that changes not be made in such a way as to threaten the continuity or effectiveness of the Committee's or Agency's ministry. Budgets of permanent Committees and Agencies that are agreed upon by the Administrative Committee may be changed only by a two-thirds vote of the Assembly commissioners present and voting at the time the budget is submitted for adoption. In the event the Administrative Committee disagrees with the budget submitted by one of the Committees or Boards, in whole or any item thereof, the General Assembly may adopt either the Committee's or Board's budget or the Administrative Committee's recommended budget by simple majority. The requirement of a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly applies only to changes not recommended by the Administrative Committee, initiated on the floor of the Assembly. With respect to the Committees and Agencies, financial coordination is through the Administrative Committee to the Assembly and from the General Assembly to the Committees and Agencies. The Administrative Committee is a "filter upward" and has no downward authority.

The Administrative Committee shall annually provide and publish guidelines for the Partnership Share Giving Program of the PCA, including the Ministry Ask. These guidelines shall include statistical information expressed both in per capita giving terms and in proportional (percentage) giving terms to demonstrate the giving necessary to attain full funding for budgets of the General Assembly Committees and Agencies.

The Committees and Agencies receiving support through the PCA Partnership Share Giving Program shall present their financial needs and their Ministry Ask to the Administrative Committee for review and recommendation in the course of the regular budgeting process. Each Committee and Agency shall then be free to request from the PCA churches and constituency the contributions necessary to fund its approved budget.

While all churches remain free to give their contributions as they by God's guidance determine, all churches are encouraged to give, as they are able, at least ten percent (10%) of their tithes and offerings to the PCA causes of presbyteries and General Assembly.

The Administrative Committee shall maintain a manual containing the Affirmation of Core Financial Standards. This information, by which each PCA General Assembly ministry (Committee or Agency) shall function and by which the budget process is governed for each Committee and Agency, shall be available to all constituencies.

4-12. All funds received by the Corporation that are designated for the benefit of any particular permanent Committee or Agency shall be disbursed by the treasurer to the proper Committee or Agency. There shall be no equalization of funds so designated. Any funds received by the Corporation not designated as being for the benefit of a particular permanent Committee or Agency shall be distributed by the treasurer as directed by the General Assembly.

4-13. Each permanent Committee or Agency, by resolution adopted by a majority of its Committee or Board members, may designate the place, date, and time for its regular meetings, which should be held as needed, but no less than twice a year. Written or printed notice of such resolution should be given to all Committee or Board members within a reasonable time after the adoption thereof. Notice of the time, place or purpose of such regular meetings of the permanent Committee or Board shall not be required to be given.

4-14. Special meetings of the permanent Committees and Agencies may be called at any time or place by the chairman of the Committee or Board, or by a majority of the Committee or Board members. Written notice stating the place, date, and hour of such special meeting shall be delivered by the chairman of the Committee or Board to each Committee or Board member at least ten days prior to the date of such meetings, and such notice should specify the purpose of such special meetings. Attendance of a Committee or Board member at such a meeting will constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting. The act of the majority of the Committee or Board members present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the act of the Committee or Board.

4-15. A majority of a permanent Committee or Board shall constitute a quorum.

4-16. The chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and any other officers of each permanent Committee or Agency shall be elected annually at the last regular meeting of the Committee or Board prior to the meeting of the General Assembly. Notice of this meeting shall include notice to the effect that these elections shall take place.

4-17. In the event any administrative personnel employed by a Committee or Agency and approved by the General Assembly resigns, dies, or is unable to act, such Committee or Agency may employ a provisional replacement, who has been examined and approved by the Assembly's Theological Examining Committee, and who shall serve until the next General Assembly.

4-18. Chairmen of special committees (4-4), subcommittees, commissions including the SJC, ad interim committees, and study committees (9-1–9-4) that are funded through the Administrative Committee or whose funds are administered by the Administrative Committee, have the authority to call, postpone, or cancel meetings. The Stated Clerk has the authority and responsibility to notify the chairman that a meeting(s) to be held between Assemblies will not be funded if the resources are not sufficient to meet the General Assembly defined spending requirements. These requirements dictate that Committee and Agency expenses not exceed income and reserve levels.

4-19. Copies of all permanent Committee and Agency meeting agendas and minutes shall be sent, in a timely manner, to all chairmen and chief administrative officers of the General Assembly permanent Committees and Agencies.

4-20. All chairmen and chief administrative officers of the General Assembly permanent Committees and Agencies (or their designees) shall be given the opportunity to attend (at the expense of their respective permanent Committee or Agency) any meeting of any permanent Committee or Agency.

4-21. Committees and commissions of the General Assembly established by the *Book of Church Order* and these *Rules*, except the Overtures Committee and Committees of Commissioners, may meet electronically (see RONR [12th ed.] 9:30-36) if that committee or commission so determines according to its own rules. Ad hoc and ad interim committees and commissions are authorized to meet electronically at the call of the Chairman or Convenor.

4-22. Guidelines for Keeping Minutes of Permanent Committees and ● Agencies of the General Assembly

a. The minutes of Assembly Committees and Agencies should be kept either in a lock-type record book, with numbered pages, or be printed, mimeographed, or otherwise reproduced.
b. The minutes should be typewritten or printed, or reproduced from typewritten masters, and should be neat and legible.
c. The opening paragraphs of the minutes should contain the following information (which need not, however, be divided into numbered or separate items):
    1) The kind of meeting: regular, called, adjourned regular, or adjourned called;
    2) The name of the Committee or Agency;
    3) The date and time of the meeting, and the place;
    4) The name of the chairman, and if someone other than the regular secretary served as a clerk pro-tem, his name should be indicated;
    5) If the minutes of the previous meeting were not approved at that meeting, a record of their having been read and approved by this session should be indicated, including the date of the minutes being so approved.
    6) The names of those present at the meeting should be recorded, indicating whether they were teaching elders or ruling elders, and the presbytery represented in each case. The names of alternate elders and their respective churches should also be included, and the names of visitors should be included.
d. The contents of the minutes should include the following items:
    1) The names of persons leading in opening and closing prayers at all sessions;
    2) In the event of a called meeting, the portion of the call stating the purpose of the meeting should be recorded verbatim in the minutes;
    3) A recording of the actions of the Committee or Board, including all motions adopted and business transacted, together with such additional information as the Committee or Board deems desirable for historical purposes. Ordinarily in church courts, motions that are lost are not included in the record unless an affirmative vote for the lost motion is recorded, in which case the lost motion must be shown. Each main motion should normally be recorded in a separate paragraph. Subsidiary and procedural motions may be recorded in the same paragraph with the main motion to which

they pertain. Main motions may be recorded in the same paragraph if they are closely related and pertain to the same item of business.

4) A recording of information sufficient to demonstrate the Committee's or Board's implementation of instructions received from General Assembly and of material policies and material policy changes adopted by the Committee or Board in that year.

5) If a Committee or Agency is a higher education institution, the minutes shall include the following data, updated annually and delineated by degree program: total student enrollment, number of students by full-time or part-time status, number of students by gender, and number of students by learning modality (whether in-person, online, or hybrid). The minutes should indicate that the data have been reviewed by the respective Committee or Board.

6) The report to the General Assembly from the permanent Committee on Mission to North America (MNA) shall include annualized totals for the number of men completing MNA's church planter assessment process and the aggregate number of final ratings given in each rating category. The Minutes of the Committee should indicate that the data have been reviewed by the MNA Committee.

e. It may be desirable to number these paragraphs consecutively, and to give a title over each paragraph indicating succinctly the content of business included. This is not mandatory but is desirable for the later reading of the minutes. For historical purposes, some notes as to the extent and kind of debate may be included, but minutes should never reflect the secretary's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.

f. The minutes of the Committees and Boards should appear in the minute book in the order in which the meetings occur. When a previous action of the Committee or Board is cited, the date should be given, and the volume and page and paragraph number.

g. The minutes of each meeting should be signed by the secretary.

h. The chief administrative officer, if there be one, and if not, the chairman, shall be responsible for the custody of the minutes of the Committee or Agency. He is responsible for the presentation to the General Assembly for approval of all minutes of the Committee or Agency which have been approved by the Committee or Agency not previously approved by the General Assembly. All other minutes of the Committee or Agency to which specific reference is made in the minutes submitted to the

General Assembly for approval shall be submitted for purposes of information.

i. A copy of the **Guidelines for Keeping Committee or Agency Minutes** should be kept with the minutes of the Committee or Agency.

j. An up-to-date copy of the bylaws and manual of the Committee or Agency, if such exist, should be kept with the minutes.

ARTICLE V. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5-1. The Administrative Committee of General Assembly (AC) shall consist of twenty (20) members:

a. Eleven members in classes elected through the standard nomination and election procedure;
b. One member each from the following program Committees or Agencies:
    1) Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM);
    2) Covenant College (CC);
    3) Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS);
    4) Mission to North America (MNA);
    5) Mission to the World (MTW);
    6) PCA Foundation (PCAF);
    7) Geneva Benefits Group (Geneva);
    8) Reformed University Fellowship (RUF);
    9) Ridge Haven Conference Center (RH).

5-2. The eleven members at large shall serve a term of four years. The chairman of the Administrative Committee shall be one of its members at large.

5-3. Each program Committee and each Agency shall designate its member each year at the last meeting of the Committee or Board before the meeting of General Assembly. The chief administrative officers of the program Committees and Agencies may attend any meeting of the Administrative Committee. They shall be entitled to the privilege of the floor but shall not have a vote and must be excluded when an executive session is called.

5-4. In order to support the ministry of the Administrative Committee in its unique role as a service committee to the to the General Assembly and to the entire denomination, and in order to express financially a mutual commitment to the theology of a spiritually connectional Church, Committees and Agencies are directed, and particular churches and Teaching Elders are encouraged, to contribute to the support of the Administrative Committee in the following manner:

a. Each Committee and Agency of the General Assembly shall annually contribute at an equal share to the operating budget of the Administrative Committee. The General Assembly shall annually determine the specific contribution to be given by each Committee or

Agency based on a recommendation from the Administrative Committee, not to exceed (in total) 5% of the budget of the Administrative Committee. In a given year, should a Committee or Agency have difficulty contributing its share, the Administrative Committee may recommend to the Assembly a reduction for that Committee or Agency, and so reduce the total contribution for that year.

b. Particular churches are encouraged to contribute to the Administrative Committee on an annual basis a percentage of their operating budget. The General Assembly shall annually determine the percentage of congregational operating budgets requested, based on a recommendation from the Administrative Committee. For the purpose of this provision, the operating budget shall be defined as all funds received excepting those for capital campaign expenditures.
c. All Teaching Elders are encouraged to pay an annual "Administration Fee for Ministers." The General Assembly shall annually determine the Administration Fee for Ministers, based on a recommendation from the Administrative Committee.

ARTICLE VI. PROGRAM COMMITTEES

6-1. The Committee on Discipleship Ministries. The affairs of the church in the areas of Christian education and publications are assigned to the Committee on Discipleship Ministries, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

6-2. The Committee on Mission to North America. The affairs of the church involved in its extension in the United States and Canada are assigned to the Committee on Mission to North America, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

6-3. The Committee on Mission to the World. The affairs of the church in the area of world missions outside of the United States and Canada are assigned to the Committee on Mission to the World, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

6-4. The Committee on Reformed University Fellowship. The affairs of the church in the area of campus ministry are assigned to the Committee on Reformed University Fellowship, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

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ARTICLE VII. THE COOPERATIVE MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

7-1. Membership

a. The members of the Cooperative Ministries Committee shall be the chairmen and chief administrative officers of the General Assembly permanent Committees and Agencies.
b. The current Moderator and immediate past five moderators of the General Assembly shall be advisory members, having six-year terms.

7-2. Terms of office

a. The chairmen of the General Assembly permanent Committees and Agencies shall serve as elected by their respective Committees or Boards.
b. The chief administrative officers of the General Assembly permanent Committees shall serve as elected by the General Assembly and the chief administrative officers of Agencies shall serve as elected by their respective Boards.
c. The Moderator shall begin service during the year he is elected by the Assembly as Moderator.
d. Past moderators shall serve during six years following their election by the Assembly as Moderator.

7-3. Responsibilities

a. Consider only such matters as enumerated below or such matters as referred to it by the Committees and Agencies of the General Assembly.
b. Meet together to foster cooperative ministry among Committees and Agencies in accordance with the PCA purpose statement adopted by the 10th Assembly in 1982, upon recommendation of the Committee on Mission to the United States:

> It is the purpose of the PCA to bring glory to God as a worshipping and serving community until the nations in which we live are filled with churches that make Jesus Christ and His Word their chief joy, and the nations of the world, hearing the Word are discipled in obedience to the Great Commission.

c. Facilitate integrated long-range planning that supports progress toward the overall mission and ministry of the PCA. Such

planning shall be with respect to matters that fall within the ordinary scope of the respective responsibilities of the PCA's Committees and Agencies, particularly with a view toward the mission of the PCA as a whole. Any matters requiring General Assembly action shall come to the General Assembly through overtures from the lower courts.

d. Keep minutes of the meetings and distribute them to all chief administrative officers and chairmen.
e. Establish appropriate subcommittees to deal with specific issues as they are identified.
f. Send recommendations to chief administrative officers and their respective Committees or Boards. Encourage them to deal with the issues presented to them, and if necessary, for them to meet together to resolve issues.
g. Monitor and evaluate the standards of effectiveness and efficiency of permanent Committees and Agencies in light of the unique ministry of each Committee or Agency, with particular attention to inter-Committee-and-Agency communication, collaboration, and cooperation.
h. Serve as a forum for resolving issues of inter-agency cooperation, collaboration or conflict.

7-4. Meetings

a. Frequency – The committee shall have an annual meeting in January, and other called meetings as necessary. The moderator of the Cooperative Ministries Committee shall call a special meeting of the committee when requested by the chief administrative officers or chairmen of two Committees or Agencies. There shall be thirty days advance notice of called meetings. The moderator of the Cooperative Ministries Committee shall call an emergency meeting of the committee when requested by the chief administrative officers or chairmen of three Committees or Agencies**.** There shall be seven days advance notice of emergency meetings.
b. Moderator – The current Moderator of the General Assembly or his designee shall moderate the meetings of the Cooperative Ministries Committee.
c. Docket – The Stated Clerk shall be the secretary of the committee for the purposes of maintaining the committee's records, receiving matters for the agenda from all committee members, working with the moderator of the committee to

propose the agenda at each meeting of the committee, and to prepare the annual informational report to the General Assembly.

7-5. Appeal to the Administrative Committee for Unresolved Matters

In the event any matter considered by the Cooperative Ministries Committee has not been satisfactorily resolved within the committee, the matter may be referred to the Administrative Committee.

a. Any member of the Cooperative Ministries Committee may request the advisory members to refer a matter arising from the committee to the Administrative Committee.
b. A request shall be referred to the Administrative Committee only if a majority of the advisory members of the Cooperative Ministries Committee agree to make the reference to the Administrative Committee by:
    1) Giving notice of an intent to make the reference to the chairman within three (3) business days after adjournment and;
    2) Submitting the reference signed and in writing to the Office of the Stated Clerk at least thirty-five (35) business days prior to the spring meeting of the Administrative Committee.
c. The committee by its own action may bring a matter arising from the committee to the Administrative Committee.
d. Matters referred from the committee or the majority of advisory members shall be considered by the Administrative Committee only at its stated spring meeting.
e. The six advisory members of the Cooperative Ministries Committee may attend the Administrative Committee meeting or Administrative Committee subcommittee meetings when issues referred to the Administrative Committee from the Cooperative Ministries Committee are being addressed.
f. The chairmen, chief administrative officers, and immediate past chairmen of the General Assembly permanent Committees and Agencies or their designees may attend the Administrative Committee meeting or Administrative Committee subcommittee meetings when issues referred to the Administrative Committee from the Cooperative Ministries Committee are being addressed.
g. The Administrative Committee may not act upon matters that are solely within the specified areas of responsibility of the Cooperative Ministries Committee until such matters are properly referred to the Administrative Committee in order for the

Administrative Committee to facilitate discussion and resolution of such matters.

7-6. Reporting Process – The Cooperative Ministries Committee shall submit an annual report to the General Assembly, but any recommendations to the Assembly must come as set forth in 7-3.c.

7-7. Funding – The funding of the committee shall be as follows:

a. All travel and other expenses for each chief administrative officer and chairman shall be borne by the respective Committee or Agency.
b. All travel and other expenses of the advisory members shall be shared equally by the Committees and Agencies.

ARTICLE VIII. SPECIAL COMMITTEES

8-1. Interchurch Relations Committee

There shall be an Interchurch Relations Committee composed of three teaching elders and three ruling elders who may serve two consecutive, three-year terms of office. There shall be a ruling elder and a teaching elder to serve as alternates.

The committee shall serve as liaison between the Presbyterian Church in America and other denominations and church councils as approved by the Assembly.

8-2. The Committee on Constitutional Business

a. There shall be a Committee on Constitutional Business composed of eight members divided into four classes of two members each serving four-year terms. Each class shall be composed of one teaching elder and one ruling elder. There shall be one teaching elder and one ruling elder to serve as alternates.
b. The Committee on Constitutional Business shall:
    1) Function as advisor to the Stated Clerk when requested by him. Such advice shall be for information only and without binding authority.
    2) Receive from the Stated Clerk all non-judicial references submitted by presbyteries under *BCO* 41-1 and 41-4, and, if it accedes to the request, give its advice to the presbytery sending the non-judicial reference. Such advice shall be for information only and without binding authority or precedent but shall be included as a part of the annual report of the Stated Clerk to the General Assembly.
    3) Provide advice concerning the effect of any proposed amendment to the Constitution or to the Rules of Assembly Operations. Such advice shall be included in the report of the committee as printed in the *Commissioner Handbook*, and shall be presented orally to the Overtures Committee at the time the proposed amendment is considered by the Overtures Committee. Upon so advising the Overtures Committee, the Committee on Constitutional Business's responsibility with respect to such proposed amendment shall cease.
    4) Advise the Overtures Committee on any constitutional inquiry submitted to it by the Overtures Committee.

5) Report directly to the General Assembly on all constitutional inquiries submitted to it by the General Assembly.

c. The Committee on Constitutional Business shall not be separately funded but administratively shall operate as a subcommittee of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly.

8-3. Theological Examining Committee

In accordance with *BCO* 14-1.14 there shall be a Theological Examining Committee composed of three teaching elders and three ruling elders of three classes of two men each. There shall also be one teaching elder and one ruling elder as alternates to fill any vacancy that may occur during the year.

This committee shall conduct its work as specified in *BCO* 14-1.14. Furthermore this committee shall record all nominees' differences to our denominational standards in their own words, as set forth in *RAO* 16-3.e.7. Those differences shall be included in this committee's annual report which is submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

8-4. Nominating Committee

The Assembly's Nominating Committee shall operate under the following guidelines:

a. Every member of the Nominating Committee should make a reasonable effort to attend the next General Assembly.
b. The Nominating Committee should be reminded of paragraph *BCO* 14-1.9 regarding proportionate representation wherever possible.
c. No presbytery shall ordinarily be represented by more than one person nominated for any given Committee or Agency. This includes alternates.
d. A typed biographical form must accompany each name submitted to the Nominating Committee. All nominees should be contacted by their presbyteries to ascertain their availability and willingness to serve prior to submission of names to General Assembly's Nominating Committee.
e. Presbyteries should send names of nominees on forms to the Stated Clerk's office no later than four months prior to the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk will then make the forms available to the convener of the Nominating Committee.

f. A list of members, by presbytery, currently serving on the permanent Committees and Agencies should be furnished to the convener of the Nominating Committee by the Stated Clerk. The Directory of the current Assembly Committees should indicate the presbytery of each Committee or Agency member.

g. "In addition to the new nominees from presbyteries, alternates not assuming any vacancies during a year will be automatically considered by the Nominating Committee as candidates for nomination to that same committee" (*BCO* 14-1.11).

h. The committee shall present its nominations to the Assembly through the *Commissioner Handbook* or *Supplement*. This presentation shall include a brief statement regarding each nominee.

i. Additional nominations may be submitted either (1) in writing or (2) electronically, in either case on forms supplied by the Stated Clerk, which shall include consent of the nominee to serve, if elected, and a brief statement regarding the nominee. In the event that a nomination is submitted electronically, the nominator should be aware that responsibility for such nomination rests with the nominator and that non-delivery is the sole responsibility of the nominator. Because the nominator has sole responsibility for delivery of a nomination, the nominator should obtain a receipt verifying successful electronic delivery of the nomination. The nominee is to give consent to only one nomination. In the event that the nominee is nominated for more than one position, the nominee may indicate to which nomination the nominee consents. The deadline for these nominations is the close of the afternoon session of the first full day of the Assembly. The Clerk's office shall issue a supplement to the Assembly's Nominating Committee report during the second day's business sessions.

j. The time for the election shall be docketed as a special order. Only those commissioners present or on the floor of the Assembly shall be eligible to vote. The voting procedures may be conducted either by voice vote or by standing vote, or by use of ballots as determined by the General Assembly.

k. In the event of the resignation of any member of an Assembly elected Committee or Agency, such resignation should be presented to the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk, shall, after consultation with the chairman of the respective Committee or Board, be authorized to

accept such resignation on behalf of the Assembly. He is to report such actions to the next General Assembly, and arrange for the nomination of a replacement by the Assembly's Nominating Committee, where such replacement is appropriate.

8-5. Committee on Review of Presbytery Records

a. The Committee on Review of Presbytery Records shall be comprised of one representative from each presbytery elected by the presbytery in the manner set forth in *BCO* 14-1.11 for the election of the Nominating Committee. A person who is serving as a member of or on the staff of one of the permanent or special committees, or boards of the General Assembly shall be eligible to serve on this committee.
b. The committee shall be scheduled to meet prior to the opening session of the Assembly.
c. A chairman and vice-chairman for the following year shall be elected by the committee from members who shall be serving in at least the second year of their term.

ARTICLE IX. AD INTERIM COMMITTEES

9-1. The Assembly may elect or appoint ad interim or study committees of a temporary character to handle particular matters of business as designated by the Assembly.

9-2. Recommendations for the appointment of ad-interim or study committees shall arise only by way of overtures from Presbyteries, which shall be submitted to the Overtures Committee for recommendations to the General Assembly.

9-3. Only two (2) ad interim committees may be appointed or continued in any given year, unless additional ones are approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly.

Funds for ad interim committees will ordinarily be administered by the Administrative Committee, with contributions to the AC being designated for a particular ad interim committee. Any motion to task the Administrative Committee with the funding of an ad interim committee through undesignated giving would require the approval of a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly as an amendment to the AC budget (per *RAO* 4-11).

Any overture proposing an ad interim committee should ordinarily include a plan for how sufficient, designated funds for the ad interim committee will be raised. Funding should not be the burden primarily of the members of the ad interim committee or the AC, but of those requesting the ad interim committee. Permanent Committees and Agencies of the PCA may grant monies toward the funding of an ad interim committee.

9-4. The total number of committee members per committee is not to exceed seven (7) members. Each committee's appointment and/or extension must be ratified by a majority vote of the commissioners.

9-5. All ad interim and study committees shall be considered by the General Assembly for appointment or extension at the time during the General Assembly docket of the Administrative Committee's report so that due consideration be given as to their priority and their effect on the budgets.

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ARTICLE X. THE ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

10-1. There shall be a General Assembly Local Arrangements Committee, which shall function under the Administrative Committee. Final approval of all decisions regarding the Assembly shall rest in the Administrative Committee. The Assembly's Administrative Committee and the Local Arrangements Committee shall operate under a Manual approved by the Administrative Committee.

10-2. The Local Arrangements Committee shall be composed of the following:

a. The chairman of the Local Arrangements Committee, who is appointed by the host presbytery.
b. The treasurer of the local committee
c. Other members of the local committee as set forth in the General Assembly Arrangements Manual.
d. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.
e. The business administrator of the Administrative Committee.

10-3. Worship services shall be included as approved by the Assembly. The Administrative Committee must approve any non-PCA speaker.

10-4. The Administrative Committee shall set a suitable registration fee, subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

10-5. The Administrative Committee must approve any non-PCA exhibitors in accordance with the following:

Guidelines for Displays at the Assembly.

Subject to space available, priorities for exhibitors will be as follows:

a. Committees and Agencies of the Presbyterian Church in America, including agencies or institutions with which they have formally, through their minutes, established a working relationship;
b. Agencies or institutions with which the General Assembly, through its minutes has established a working relationship;
c. Agencies and institutions which in the opinion of the Committee have objectives, policies, or programs in general conformity with those of the Presbyterian Church in America;
d. A disclaimer statement should be printed in the *Commissioner Handbook* distributed to all commissioners, stating in effect that

permission granted to place an exhibit does not mean the Presbyterian Church in America necessarily fully endorses the exhibitor's product, services, or objectives. These guidelines are to serve as the ordinary guidelines. If the Administrative Committee feels that an exception must be made, it has the authority to do so, and is to report such actions and the reasons to the next Assembly.

10-6. In case of extraordinary events occurring or unusual circumstances arising that make it impractical for the General Assembly to hold its annual stated meeting on the dates or at the site previously approved by the Assembly, the Moderator with the Administrative Committee shall be authorized, upon the recommendation of the Stated Clerk and Moderator, to make alternative arrangements.

10-7. The Administrative Committee shall be authorized to take the initiative to investigate and recommend to the General Assembly sites for the annual meeting of the General Assembly, and to that end, the Administrative Committee shall be authorized to suggest to presbyteries their hosting the annual meeting of the General Assembly.

10-8. Ordinarily the Administrative Committee will bring General Assembly sites before the Assembly for approval before any contracts are finalized. However, the Administrative Committee shall be authorized to finalize contracts with hotels and convention centers before obtaining General Assembly approval when circumstances arise wherein the Administrative Committee approves the site, the presbytery (or presbyteries) has/have agreed to host the Assembly, good facilities at favorable rates are available, and the opportunity may be lost if a delay in finalizing the contract must await approval at the next General Assembly."

10-9. In order to assist more Presbyteries to host the annual meeting of the General Assembly, each Presbytery is encouraged to contribute to the Administrative Committee annually an amount determined by the General Assembly. The Administrative Committee shall annually recommend to the Assembly the amount of the requested Presbytery contribution. The Administrative Committee will make such designated gifts available to the Local Arrangements Committee of host Presbyteries.

ARTICLE XI. COMMUNICATIONS AND OVERTURES

11-1. A communication to the General Assembly is formal correspondence received by the Stated Clerk from other churches, from interchurch agencies to which this church may be related, from committees of this church on matters which can not be included in regular reports, from presbyteries, and from organized bodies outside the Church proper having business with the General Assembly.

11-2. Communications from individuals shall not be received by the General Assembly, unless they originate with persons who have no other access to the Assembly. If the Assembly desires to receive and consider any such communications, other than as information, the Stated Clerk shall recommend reference to the proper Assembly committee. Letters, telegrams, emails, or telephone calls from communicants or congregations of the Presbyterian Church in America are not proper communications, and are not to be received by the Assembly.

11-3. The Stated Clerk shall recommend to the Assembly reference for all proper communications.

11-4. An overture ordinarily is the request of a presbytery for action by the General Assembly upon a specific matter.

11-5. All overtures shall be published in the *Commissioner Handbook* with reference for consideration indicated. The Stated Clerk shall refer overtures as follows. The Stated Clerk's referral shall be final unless redirected by a vote of the General Assembly.

a. All overtures requesting amendment of the *Book of Church Order* or the *Rules of Assembly Operations* shall be referred to the Committee on Constitutional Business for its advice to the relevant Committee(s) as listed below.
b. All overtures proposing amendment to the Constitution shall be referred to the Overtures Committee. The Stated Clerk may also refer such overtures to other Committees of Commissioners, other permanent Committees or Agencies, or other ad interim or special committees for advice only to the Overtures Committee.
c. All overtures proposing amendment to the *Rules of Assembly Operations* having to do with the nature or responsibilities of a permanent Committee or Agency shall be referred to the Overtures Committee and to the permanent Committee(s) or

Agency(ies) that would be impacted by the proposed change. In such cases the permanent Committee(s) or Agency(ies) and the relevant Committee(s) of Commissioners shall be given the opportunity to meet with the Overtures Committee to share their proposed response(s). Such opportunity shall occur at a mutually convenient time or at the beginning of the Overtures Committee's Tuesday afternoon session. The General Assembly shall act on the overture on the basis of the recommendation of the Overtures Committee, recognizing that the members of the permanent Committee(s) or Agency(ies) and the relevant Committee(s) of Commissioners will be able to enter into floor debate on that recommendation.

d. Any other overture having to do with the nature or responsibilities of a permanent Committee or Agency shall be referred by the Stated Clerk to the appropriate permanent Committee or Agency, ad interim committee, or special committee.
e. All overtures concerning presbytery boundaries or the formation of a new presbytery shall be referred by the Stated Clerk to the permanent Committee on Mission to North America.
f. All other overtures shall be referred by the Stated Clerk to the Overtures Committee.

11-6. All overtures requiring references to the Committee on Constitutional Business shall be delivered by at least sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly to the Stated Clerk in order to be referred to the committee. No overture requiring reference to the permanent Committee on Constitutional Business received later than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly by the Stated Clerk shall be referred or considered by the General Assembly convening in that year.

11-7. All other overtures shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly in order to be included in the *Commissioner Handbook* for the next meeting of the General Assembly.

11-8. Overtures received after the *Commissioner Handbook* is published, and at least one (1) month (31 days) prior to the opening of the General Assembly shall be reported to the Assembly by the Stated Clerk, together with reference.

11-9. No overtures received by the Stated Clerk less than one month prior to the opening of the meeting of the General Assembly shall be referred to or considered by the General Assembly convening in that year. An overture

proposed by a commissioner to the General Assembly during its proceedings shall be treated as new business (cf. 13-1, 13-2).

11-10. No overture will be considered by the General Assembly until it first has been presented to a presbytery. If approved by the presbytery, it will come before the Assembly as the overture of that court. An overture requested by a ruling elder commissioner to presbytery, a teaching elder, or a session, but rejected by the presbytery, may be presented to the Assembly, provided the overture includes as an attachment a copy of the relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting at which presbytery rejected the overture or correspondence from presbytery's Stated Clerk confirming presbytery's rejection of the overture. Such an overture must be the same overture as that presented to and rejected by the presbytery.

11-11. All communications or overtures which propose or request that General Assembly appoint a study committee for any purpose shall contain as a part of the request or proposal a statement of the maximum amount to be budgeted for the study committee (see 9-2).

11-12. No communication or overture shall be received that seeks to memorialize someone.

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ARTICLE XII. REPORTS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12-1. The permanent Committees and Agencies, special committees, and ad interim committees of the Assembly shall make annual reports, which shall be transmitted to the Stated Clerk by at least ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk shall refer these reports to the relevant committee of commissioners for their review and recommendation to the General Assembly (cf. 14-6; 14-7). The Nominating Committee, the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records, the Standing Judicial Commission, the Committee on Constitutional Business, and ad interim committees shall report directly to the General Assembly without reference to a committee of commissioners. However, all recommendations proposing amendment to the Constitution shall be referred to the Overtures Committee for their review and recommendation to the General Assembly under the rules governing a committee of commissioners as applicable (*RAO* 14-6.d.-k.; 14-7.c.-d.; 14-9.d.-h.).

12-2. Presentations informing the Assembly of the work reported by the permanent Committees and Agencies shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes.

12-3. All other business brought to the General Assembly shall be referred to a committee of commissioners.

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ARTICLE XIII. NEW BUSINESS

13-1. Any matter presented in any form which has not been received by the Stated Clerk prior to the opening of the General Assembly shall be treated as new business.

13-2. New business must be presented to the General Assembly before the recess of the afternoon session on the first full day of business, and if it was not first presented as an overture to a Presbytery, the proposal must include an explanation for why it was not. If received by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the commissioners present and voting, it shall be referred by the Stated Clerk to the appropriate committee of commissioners. No proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be received as new business. No proposal that seeks to memorialize someone shall be received as new business.

13-3. The appropriate committee shall receive and consider all such references, deliberate, and report to the Assembly in compliance with the directions of these Rules.

13-4. All matters introduced as new business, if received, and touching on constitutional matters, including requested rulings by the Moderator on questions of order involving constitutional questions, shall be referred in writing to the Committee on Constitutional Business for consideration.

13-5. The Committee on Constitutional Business shall consider each such constitutional matter referred to it, and make recommendation directly to the Assembly.

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ARTICLE XIV. COMMITTEES OF COMMISSIONERS FOR PERMANENT COMMITTEES AND AGENCIES

14-1. Committees of commissioners shall review the report and recommendations of their assigned permanent Committees or Agencies or special committee:

	Title	Committee/Agency	Review Matters Touching
1.	Administrative Committee	Permanent Committee	Administration
2.	Committee on Discipleship Ministries	Permanent Committee	Christian education and publications
3.	Covenant College	Agency	Covenant College
4.	Covenant Seminary	Agency	Covenant Seminary
5.	Interchurch Relations	Special Committee	Comity, cooperation, relations to other churches
6.	Mission to North America	Permanent Committee	Home missions
7.	Mission to the World	Permanent Committee	World missions
8.	PCA Foundation	Agency	PCA Foundation
9.	Geneva Benefits Group	Agency	Retirement, insurance, & ministerial relief
10.	Reformed University Fellowship	Permanent Committee	Reformed University Fellowship
11.	Ridge Haven	Agency	Ridge Haven

14-2. Each presbytery shall, prior to the meeting of the Assembly, elect one of its commissioners to each of these committees of commissioners (cf. 14-1), dividing them as to ruling and teaching elders by a formula established by the Stated Clerk. In the event that presbytery does not have sufficient teaching elders to supply the committees thus assigned, the presbytery may, at its own discretion, elect ruling elders to these committees (or vice versa, may elect teaching elders for insufficient ruling elders). In the event that presbytery is not able to supply members for all the committees, the presbytery may select the committees to which they wish to appoint representatives. Commissioners serving on permanent Committees or Agencies or sub-committees of the Assembly or the staffs thereof are not eligible to serve on any of these committees of commissioners. For the purpose of defining those ineligible for service in committees of commissioners, permanent Committee or Agency "staff" is to be understood as persons required to be examined by the Theological Examining Committee (*BCO* 14-1.12.) and all permanent Committee and Agency support personnel. All commissioners should bear in

mind *Robert's Rules of Order* regarding abstaining from voting on a question of direct personal interest (RONR (12th ed.) 45:4-5).

14-3. Minutes of the permanent Committee or Agency shall be submitted to the committee of commissioners for review. Copies of the minutes shall be sent by the Stated Clerk to the members of committees of commissioners one month prior to the opening of the General Assembly.

14-4. The conveners of the committees shall be designated by the Moderator.

14-5. Committees may be scheduled to meet prior to the opening session of the Assembly to handle the business referred by the Stated Clerk, as published in the *Commissioner Handbook*.

14-6. The committees of commissioners shall proceed as follows:

a. At the proper time each committee shall assemble in its assigned room, elect a chairman and a secretary, review material in hand, appoint sub-committees as may be necessary, and begin its work. Before the work of the committee begins, the committee of commissioners chairman shall call on the Coordinator or Chairman of the permanent Committee or Agency or his designee to report on the work of that body and field questions or discussion from the committee of commissioners.
b. Each committee shall be available to reconvene to consider additional references that may come from the floor of the Assembly.
c. Meetings of a committee of commissioners shall ordinarily be open to the public as non-participating visitors, to the extent made possible by the physical facilities of the available meeting room. If such visitors desire the committee to consider a proposal on some item of business that is before the committee, this must be presented in writing.
d. Only business referred to a committee of commissioners by the Stated Clerk may be considered. Proposed amendments to recommendations must be germane according to *Robert's Rules.* [Editor's Note: This rule defines germane according to the definition stated in RONR (12th ed.) 12:16-21.]
e. The chairman and representatives of the permanent Committees and Agencies, and the coordinator and appropriate staff members shall be available for consultation with the committee of commissioners reviewing their work. If a substitute recommendation

is made by the committee of commissioners during its work of review, the permanent Committee or Agency staff members should be consulted before the committee's report is adopted and shall remain available for consultation throughout the committee of commissioners meeting, including when the committee goes into executive session.

f. After a committee of commissioners has received input from the permanent Committee, coordinator, staff members, and visitors, it should then go into executive session as it frames and adopts its report to the General Assembly. It must be in executive session when it actually adopts the report.

g. When necessary for the performance of its duties, a committee of commissioners may, by a majority of those present and voting, invite other persons to address the committee.

h. A committee of commissioners may, by a majority of those present and voting, adopt a recommendation to be offered to the Assembly as a substitute (cf. RONR (12th ed.) 12:69-90) for a recommendation of a permanent Committee or Agency (cf. *RAO* 14-9.h). Should a recommendation of a permanent Committee or Agency be properly liable to division, a committee of commissioners may, by a two thirds (2/3) vote of those present and voting, divide the recommendation. A minority report from a committee of commissioners shall not be permitted.

i. Upon the adoption of a proposed substitute recommendation, the chairman of a committee of commissioners shall provide written notice to the Office of the Stated Clerk within one hour of any recess or adjournment of the committee following the adoption of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall inform the chairman of the permanent Committee or Agency of such notice as soon as practicable. The printed substitute recommendation must be presented to the chairman of the permanent Committee or Agency as soon as practicable, but in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the recommendation in question is brought to the floor.

j. Any recommendation affecting the budgets of the Assembly or the Assembly’s Committees and Agencies shall be referred to the committee of commissioners on Administrative Committee.

k. By majority vote the committee of commissioners may adopt recommendations commending coordinators, staff, Committees and/or Agencies for their efforts.

14-7. The report of a committee of commissioners shall be brief and concise. It shall include the following:

a. A list of all items referred to and considered by the committee.
b. A statement of the issues discussed.
c. A report of all recommendations contained in a Committee or Agency report under consideration, and any recommendation to be offered as a substitute for the permanent Committee or Agency's recommendation, with any rationale approved by the committee of commissioners.
d. A statement of the division of the vote on every recommendation made by the committee.
e. Reference to overtures by number with brief statement of content and recommended answer. Amendments to the original overture shall be reported and explained. Deference should be shown to the intent of the body presenting the overture.
f. Reference to communications by number with brief statement of content and recommended answer.
g. Only such portions of narrative sections of the printed reports as are necessary to make the report of the committee of commissioners intelligible.
h. A note that the audit of the reporting Committee or Agency has been received and that the Committee or Agency is taking any necessary action on any recommendation of its audits.
i. Where a study committee is proposed in any communication or overture, a statement of the maximum amount that is to be budgeted for the study committee.
j. The findings of the committee with respect to the minutes of the relevant permanent Committee or Agency (cf. 14-11).

14-8. The completed report of a committee of commissioners shall contain the full text of the report and shall be handled as follows:

a. Committee of commissioners sends report to Stated Clerk's Office in the manner prescribed by the Clerk.
b. Stated Clerk's Office staff processes report for publication.
c. Committee of commissioners' chairman or his designee presents report to the Assembly, the text having been made available in sufficient time that commissioners may read the entire report before acting upon it. Any change ordered by the Assembly shall be noted in the permanent records of the Assembly.

d. The full report, as adopted by the Assembly, shall be included in the permanent records of the Assembly.

14-9. Presentation of the Report of Permanent Committees and Agencies through Their Respective Committees of Commissioners, to the General Assembly

a. The informational report or portions of that report of a permanent Committee or Agency shall be presented to the General Assembly by the permanent Committee or Agency chairman or his designee.
b. No report printed in the C*ommissioner Handbook* shall be read in full to the Assembly.
c. After whatever informational presentation there may be (cf. 12-2), the chairman of the committee of commissioners shall be called upon to present the committee of commissioners' report.
d. The chairman of the committee of commissioners or his designee shall move each recommendation in turn, offering an explanation of the motion and the committee's rationale. The Moderator may put to the Assembly in gross all recommendations passed by the committee, unless there is objection from the floor to the inclusion of specific recommendation(s), in which case such recommendation(s) shall be voted upon separately.
e. A recommendation shall be considered under the standard rules governing debate, but Subsidiary Motions (RONR (12th ed.) 11-13 and 15) to *Postpone Indefinitely,* to *Amend,* to *Commit,* and to *Limit Debate;* and Incidental Motions (RONR (12th ed.) 27-28 and 33) to *Divide a Question,* to *Consider Seriatim,* and *Constitutional Inquiries,* shall not be permitted. A motion to *Recommit* shall be permitted, but a motion to *Recommit With Instructions* shall not be permitted.
f. Recommendations recommitted may be considered and reported by the committee of commissioners to that General Assembly, or may be referred to the permanent Committee or Agency for report to the following General Assembly (cf. 12-1).
g. Should a recommendation proposing an answer to an overture in the affirmative fail to be adopted, the overture shall be considered to have been answered in the negative. Should a recommendation proposing an answer to an overture in the negative fail to be adopted, the overture by that action shall be recommitted to the committee of commissioners.

h. If a committee of commissioners offers a substitute for a recommendation of a permanent Committee or Agency, the substitute shall be presented to the Assembly as follows:
   1) The chairman of the permanent Committee or Agency or his designee shall have ten (10) minutes to move the recommendation and present the argument of the Committee; the chairman of the committee of commissioners or his designee shall have fifteen (15) minutes to move the substitute and present the argument of the committee; the same representative of the permanent Committee or Agency shall have five (5) minutes to reply to the committee of commissioners;
   2) Consideration of the substitute and the main motion shall be as above (d-e).
   3) Debate on the main motion and the substitute shall be limited to a total of sixty (60) minutes unless extended. When the allotted time has elapsed the Moderator shall put the question to the Assembly: "Will the Assembly extend the time on the question ten (10) minutes?" A simple majority shall extend the time; otherwise the Moderator shall put the question or questions as the case may be. If time is extended, the question of extension shall again be put every succeeding ten (10) minutes until the matter is concluded. Each Commissioner shall be limited to five (5) minutes on the same question unless the Court by a simple majority grants additional time.

14-10. No partial report of a committee of commissioners shall be presented without the consent of the Assembly.

14-11. Guidelines for Examining Committee and Agency Minutes

a. Minutes of Assembly Committees and Agencies shall be examined for conformity to:
   1) The primary and secondary standards of the church, as to substance of the actions recorded;
   2) The Assembly's Guidelines for Keeping Minutes of Permanent Committees of the General Assembly, as to form, structure, and minimum content (4-22); and
   3) Appropriate standards as to the use of the English language.
b. Each set of Committee or Agency minutes should be read by at least two members of the committee of commissioners;

c. The committee may divide its work so that two or more members examine them primarily as to form, and two or more members may examine them primarily as to substance.
d. The findings of the committee with respect to the minutes of each permanent Committee or Agency shall be reported under the following categories as appropriate:
    1) Notations**:** Typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation, non-prejudicial misstatements of fact, etc., may be reported under this category. Also failures to provide proper or sufficient information or identification, etc., may be reported under this category.
    2) Exceptions: Violations of the Assembly's Guidelines for Keeping Minutes of Permanent Committees of the General Assembly, prejudicial misstatements of fact, and actions which in substance appear not to conform to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church in America, or to be out of accord with the deliverances of the General Assembly, should be reported under this category.
e. The committee shall prepare a report concerning the minutes of the permanent Committee or Agency. The filling out of a form, designed for the purpose for each committee, shall meet the requirement for this section. After action by the Assembly, one copy of the report shall be sent by the Stated Clerk to the permanent Committee or Agency. A second copy shall be retained by the Stated Clerk in a permanent file. A third copy shall be kept in the records of the committee of commissioners, which shall be maintained in a suitable binder. The custody of the records of the committee shall be the responsibility of the Stated Clerk in the period between the General Assemblies.
f. Notations and exceptions in a Committee's or Agency's report shall be disposed of as follows:
    1) Notations shall normally be sent to the Committee or Agency by the Stated Clerk without being read before the General Assembly or recorded in its Minutes.
    2) Exceptions shall be read before the Assembly, recorded in its Minutes, and disposed of as the Assembly determines.
    3) The Assembly shall adopt an appropriate motion with respect to the minutes of each permanent Committee or Agency, the following being examples:

a) That the minutes of the Committee of _____ be approved without exception (show dates of minutes being approved);
b) That the minutes of the Committee of_____ be approved with the exceptions noted (show dates of minutes being approved).

g. The permanent Committee or Agency shall take note in its minutes of exceptions taken by the Assembly, together with the corrections or explanations adopted by the committee to rectify them. Committees or Agencies shall advise the next General Assembly of the disposition they have made of the exceptions.
h. Reports to the Assembly from the permanent Committees and Agencies concerning disposition of exceptions taken by the past Assembly shall normally be referred to the relevant committee of commissioners.

ARTICLE XV. THE OVERTURES COMMITTEE

15-1. The Overtures Committee shall consider and make recommendation upon all overtures or recommendations (cf. *RAO* 12-1.) proposing amendment to the Constitution, and all other overtures referred by the Stated Clerk.

15-2. Each presbytery shall, prior to the meeting of each General Assembly, elect to the Overtures Committee one teaching elder and one ruling elder from among its registered commissioners to the General Assembly. Unless approved by a two thirds (2/3) vote of his presbytery, no commissioner shall serve on the Overtures Committee for more than two (2) consecutive Assemblies. It is recommended that, where necessary, the presbytery underwrite the expenses of its representatives to the Overtures Committee.

15-3. The Overtures Committee shall meet immediately preceding the General Assembly in sufficient time, as determined by the Stated Clerk, for the committee to complete its work before the convening of the Assembly. Should the committee fail to finish before the convening of the Assembly, or should the committee be called into session during the meeting of the Assembly, the committee's sessions shall be held during non-business sessions of the Assembly, unless by majority vote the Assembly directs otherwise.

15-4. The Moderator shall designate a convener for the Overtures Committee, and the Stated Clerk shall provide a meeting room large enough for committee members, interested commissioners to the General Assembly, and others to observe the proceedings of the committee.

15-5. The committee shall elect from among its number a chairman and vice-chairman. The Stated Clerk shall be an advisory member of the committee, and he, or his designee, shall serve as secretary and parliamentarian. The chairman of the committee may appoint assistant parliamentarians.

15-6. Special Rules of Procedure for the Overtures Committee.

a. The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, §50 and other relevant sections, shall govern the Overture Committee in all cases to which they are applicable, except as provided below.

b. A quorum shall consist of fifteen (15) teaching elder members of the committee and fifteen (15) ruling elder members of the committee.
c. Only business referred to the committee by the Stated Clerk may be considered.
d. The chairman may not enter debate or make motions without leaving the chair and ordinarily should not vote on a question.
e. Members of the committee must obtain the floor before making motions or speaking.
f. Motions must be seconded.
g. A motion to *Limit or Extend Limits of Debate* shall not be permitted, but there shall be permitted a motion to order the *Previous Question*, which motion shall be adopted upon three-quarters (3/4) of the members present and voting.
h. Informal discussion of a subject shall not be permitted.
i. Proposed amendments to overtures must be germane according to *Robert's Rules*. [Editor's Note: This rule defines germane according to the definition stated in RONR (12th ed.) 12:16-21.]
j. Commissioners to the General Assembly shall have the right to be present throughout the committee's proceedings.
k. Commissioners to the General Assembly from a presbytery sending an overture shall be permitted to appear before the committee in order to present their views and respond to questions but may not enter into debate.
l. The chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Business or his designee shall be permitted to appear before the Overtures Committee to present the Committee on Constitutional Business's advice on any proposed amendment to the Constitution and respond to questions but may not enter into debate.
m. When necessary for the performance of its duties, the committee may, by a majority of those present and voting, invite other persons to address the committee.
n. Amendments adopted by the committee to proposed amendments to the Constitution may be recommended to the General Assembly without further consideration by the Committee on Constitutional Business unless one-fifth (1/5) of the members of the Overtures Committee request further consultation.
o. Upon majority vote a constitutional inquiry may be submitted to the Committee on Constitutional Business.
p. The committee may go into executive session only upon three-quarters (3/4) vote of the members present and voting, and such executive session shall not exclude visiting General Assembly commissioners.

q. Each recommendation by the committee to the General Assembly must be approved by a majority of members of the committee present and voting.
r. Any recommendation affecting the budget of the Assembly shall be referred to the Committee of Commissioners on Administrative Committee.
s. Minority Reports.
    1) With respect to any recommendation, prior to a recess or adjournment of the Overtures Committee following the adoption of said recommendation, any member of the committee may indicate an intention to file a minority report by giving notice to the chairman.
    2) Written notice of intent to file a minority report, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the total number of votes cast on the applicable item by members of the committee of whom at least 4% of such total votes cast must be teaching elders and at least 4% of such total votes cast must be ruling elders, must be delivered to the Office of the Stated Clerk within one hour of any recess or adjournment following the adoption of said recommendation. The Office of the Stated Clerk shall inform the chairman of the Overtures Committee of such notice as soon as practicable.
    3) The printed minority report, signed by at least ten percent (10%) of the total number of votes cast on the applicable item by members of the committee of whom at least 4% of such total votes cast must be teaching elders and at least 4% of such total votes cast must be ruling elders, must be presented to the chairman of the committee as soon as practicable, but in no case less than fifteen (15) minutes before the recommendation in question is brought to the floor.

15-7. The written report of the Overtures Committee shall include the following:

a. A list of all items referred to and considered by the committee.
b. A statement of the division of the vote on every recommendation made by the committee.
c. Reference to overtures by number with brief statement of content and recommended answer.
d. In the case of overtures requesting amendment of the *Book of Church Order,* explicit indication of any language that would be added or deleted from the *Book of Church Order* through adoption

of the overture. Such overture shall be sent to the presbyteries, if approved by the General Assembly, in this particular form.

e. Reference to communications by number with brief statement of content and recommended answer.
f. Where a study committee is recommended, a statement of the maximum amount to be budgeted for the study committee.

15-8. Presentation of the Report of the Overtures Committee to the General Assembly.

a. The report or portions of the report shall be presented to the General Assembly by the chairman of the committee or his designee.
b. The chairman or his designee shall move each recommendation in turn, offering an explanation of the motion and the committee's rationale. The Moderator may put to the Assembly in gross all recommendations passed by the committee, unless there is objection from the floor to the inclusion of specific recommendation(s), in which case such recommendation(s) shall be voted upon separately.
c. A recommendation shall be considered under the standard rules governing debate, but Subsidiary Motions (RONR (12th ed.) 11-13 and 15) to *Postpone Indefinitely*, to *Amend*, to *Commit*, and to *Limit Debate;* and Incidental Motions (RONR (12th ed.) 27-28 and 33) to *Divide a Question*, to *Consider Seriatim*, and *Constitutional Inquiries*, shall not be permitted. A motion to *Recommit* shall be permitted, but a motion to *Recommit With Instructions* shall not be permitted.
d. Recommendations recommitted may be considered and reported by the Overtures Committee to that General Assembly, or may be referred to a subsequent Overtures Committee for report to the following General Assembly.
e. Should a recommendation proposing an answer to an overture in the affirmative fail to be adopted, the overture shall be considered to have been answered in the negative. Should a recommendation proposing an answer to an overture in the negative fail to be adopted, the overture by that action shall be recommitted to the Overtures Committee.
f. A member of the Overtures Committee may not participate in debate unless he is the designee of the chairman with respect to the presentation of a particular recommendation, or presenting a minority report. With respect to any recommendation, this restriction may be removed for a particular member of the

Overtures Committee upon the adoption of a non-debatable motion to that effect by majority vote.

g. If there is a minority report (cf. 15-6.s), that report shall be presented to the Assembly as follows:
    1) The chairman or his designee shall have ten (10) minutes to move the recommendation and present the argument of the committee; the minority shall have fifteen (15) minutes to move the substitute and present the argument of the minority; the same representative of the committee shall have five (5) minutes to reply to the minority;
    2) Consideration of the substitute and the main motion shall be as above (c-d).
    3) Debate on the main motion and the substitute shall be limited to a total of sixty (60) minutes unless extended. When the allotted time has elapsed the Moderator shall put the question to the Assembly: "Will the Assembly extend the time on the question ten (10) minutes?" A simple majority shall extend the time; otherwise the Moderator shall put the question or questions as the case may be. If time is extended, the question of extension shall again be put every succeeding ten (10) minutes until the matter is concluded. Each Commissioner shall be limited to five (5) minutes on the same question unless the Court by a simple majority grants additional time.

15-9. The completed report of the Overtures Committee, and any duly filed minority report, in which case the provisions below shall be understood to apply to a minority representative, shall contain the full text of the report and shall be handled as follows:

a. Typed original by Assembly stenographers or committee secretary.
b. Proofread and signed by the chairman of the committee; and then delivered to the Stated Clerk when duplicated copies are available for the commissioners.
c. Docketed as agreed by the Moderator and Stated Clerk for consideration by the Assembly.
d. Presented to the Assembly by the chairman or his designee, the text having been made available by electronic means, or by copies distributed, such that commissioners may read the entire report prior to acting upon it. Any change ordered by the Assembly shall be noted and included by the chairman with the assistance of the Stated Clerk on the original copy.
e. The report, as adopted by the Assembly, shall be filed with the Recording Clerk for the permanent record.

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ARTICLE XVI. REVIEW OF PRESBYTERY RECORDS

16-1. It is the right and duty of the General Assembly to review, at least once a year, the records of the Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* 40-1 and 2).

16-2. General Assembly carries out this review through its Committee on Review of Presbytery Records. The operation of this committee shall be considered a General Assembly expense.

16-3. Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes

a. The stated clerk of each Presbytery is responsible for the custody of the minutes of Presbytery.
b. The minutes should be neat and legible. Minutes should be dated, and the pages numbered. An official copy of the minutes should be printed and either bound or kept in a good binder. Neither this official copy of the minutes nor any electronic copy submitted to the General Assembly for review may contain any material that must be accessed outside the documents submitted. This includes material that must be accessed through external links, websites, QR codes, file-sharing services, or other external digital platforms.
c. The minutes should contain the following information:
    1) The kind of meeting: stated, called, adjourned stated, or adjourned called. In the case of a called meeting the portion of the call stating the purpose of the meeting should be recorded verbatim in the minutes.
    2) The name of the Presbytery.
    3) The date, time and place of the meeting.
    4) The name of the moderator, and if someone other than the regular stated clerk served as a clerk pro-tem, his name should be indicated.
    5) That sessions were opened and closed with prayer (*BCO* 10-5).
    6) The names of those present at the meeting, indicating whether they were teaching elders, or ruling elders and the church they represented. The names of alternate ruling elders and their respective churches should also be included, and the names of visitors may be included.
    7) Teaching elders not attending and churches not represented should be listed as excused or unexcused.
    8) Approval of current or previous minutes.
d. The minutes should be signed by the clerk.

e. Additional guidelines:
   1) Points of order ruled against by the chair and appeals from the decision of the chair, whether sustained or lost, together with the reason given by the chair for his ruling, should be included for the sake of any case that may be carried to a higher court and for the protection of a minority. The record of the Presbytery's actions should be recorded.
   2) When a count has been ordered, or the vote is by ballot, the number of votes on each side should be entered.
   3) The proceedings of a committee of the whole should not be entered in the minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into the committee as a whole. The committee report should be recorded.
   4) When a commission is charged with carrying out a task prescribed in the Constitution (such as organizing a church or ordaining or installing a teaching elder), the minutes of Presbytery should reflect the completion of each action prescribed in the respective constitutional provision. This may be accomplished by reporting the work of the commission using a form provided by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, which should be included in or appended to the minutes.
   5) Minutes of presbytery relating to examinations must list all specific requirements and trials for licensure, ordination, and/or transfer which have been accomplished. This does not mean that a separate vote on each item must be recorded.
   6) Minutes of Presbytery examinations for ordination (*BCO* 21-4) and/or transfer (*BCO* 13-6) must record that Presbytery accomplished the requirements of *BCO* 21-4.e. A statement such as "The examination in experiential religion (*BCO* 21-4.c.(1)(a)) covered all the items specified in section e of *BCO* 21-4" would be sufficient.
   7) Minutes of Presbytery shall record that each candidate being examined for licensure, ordination, or transfer from another denomination was required to "state the specific instances in which he may differ with the *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* in any of their statements and/or propositions" (*BCO* 13-6; 19-2; 21-4). Presbytery minutes shall record ministers' and ministerial candidates' stated differences with our Standards in their own words. Each presbytery shall also record whether:
      a) the candidate stated that he had no differences; or

b) the court judged the stated difference(s) to be merely semantic; or
c) the court judged the stated difference(s) to be more than semantic, but "not out of accord with any fundamental of our system of doctrine" (*BCO* 19-2; 21-4); or
d) the court judged the stated difference(s) to be "out of accord," that is, "hostile to the system" or "strik[ing] at the vitals of religion" (*BCO* 19-2; 21-4).

8) Minutes of Presbytery relating to ministerial calls shall record that the specific arrangements (*BCO* 20-1, and *BCO* 8-7 as applicable) of the call were found to be in order. The call document need not be attached to the minutes.
9) Minutes of executive sessions are not exempt from the general requirement that Presbytery's actions shall be recorded in the Presbytery's minutes and that these minutes (even if kept in a separate section on executive sessions) shall be submitted to the General Assembly for review (*BCO* 13-11; 14-6.c; 40-1). Presbytery may ask that the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records deal with these minutes confidentially. However, any exceptions to these minutes must be submitted to the General Assembly through the normal procedures.
10) Minutes of Presbytery dealing with judicial cases shall not be dealt with by Committee on Review of Presbytery Records when notice of appeal or complaint has been given the lower court (*BCO* 40-3). Nevertheless, minutes of judicial cases must always be submitted as part of the record of Presbytery.

f. The following suggestions are made to clerks and Presbyteries for the keeping of minutes:
1) The minutes should record the actions of the Presbytery, including all motions adopted and business transacted, together with such additional information as the Presbytery deems desirable for historical purposes.
2) Ordinarily in church courts, motions that are lost are not included in the record, unless an affirmative vote for the lost motion is recorded, in which case the lost motion must be shown.
3) Each main motion should normally be recorded in a separate paragraph. Subsidiary and procedural motions may be recorded in the same paragraph with the main motion to which it pertains.

16-4. Guidelines for Submitting of Presbytery Records:

a. The stated clerk of each Presbytery is to provide the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly with copies of all minutes to be reviewed,

in one of two formats: (1) four bound, paginated hard-copies or (2) two bound, paginated hard-copies and one paginated digital copy (preferably as a single document).

b. The minutes to be reviewed shall include the unreviewed minutes of all Presbytery meetings that have been held through the end of the previous calendar year (*BCO* 40-1).

c. In addition to the minutes themselves, the Presbytery shall submit a corresponding number of copies, in accordance with 16-4.a, of the following items:
   1) A current Directory of Presbytery, including (1) a list of all teaching elders, with their addresses and their status; and of all churches and missions with the address of the church, and the name and address of the Clerk of Session, (2) a listing of all officers and committee members of the regular committees of Presbytery, and (3) a list identifying all candidates under care, interns, and licentiates of the Presbytery with their addresses and their status.
   2) An up-to-date copy of the Standing Rules of the Presbytery.
   3) A letter stating Presbytery's response to the Assembly concerning disposition of any exceptions of substance taken by the past Assembly.

d. The minutes are to be reviewed and the items listed under 16-4.c shall be mailed to the office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly by March 15 each year.

e. If a Presbytery repeatedly fails to submit its minutes, or its responses to exceptions of substance, the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records may recommend to the General Assembly that the provisions of *BCO* 40-1, 4, & 5 be applied.

16-5. The stated clerk of each Presbytery, or his representative, should be prepared to meet with the committee to answer questions and to clarify any possible discrepancy. The committee should make every reasonable effort to consult with the clerk of the Presbytery (or his designee) on any questions before finalizing the report to the General Assembly.

16-6. Guidelines for Examining Presbytery Records:

a. Presbytery minutes shall be examined for conformity to:
   1) The Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America as to the substance of the actions recorded (*BCO* 40-2), and

2) The Assembly Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes, as to form, structure, and minimum content (*RAO* 16-3).

b. Each set of Presbytery minutes and other materials submitted under *RAO* 16-4c should be read by at least two members of the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records.

c. The findings of the committee with respect to the minutes of each Presbytery shall be noted under the following categories as appropriate:

1) Exceptions of substance: Apparent violations of the Scripture or serious irregularities from the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, actions out of accord with the deliverances of the General Assembly, and matters of impropriety and important delinquencies, and any non-compliance with *RAO* 16-3.e.5-7 should be reported under this category.

2) Exceptions of form: Violations of the Assembly's Guidelines for Keeping Presbytery Minutes (*RAO* 16-3), rules of order, etc. should normally be reported under this category. When a minor irregularity from a *BCO* provision or requirement is noted, it may be treated as an exception of form (*BCO* 40-3). If subsequent minutes continue to reflect the same particular exception of form, it may become an exception of substance.

3) Notations: The committee may report to the clerk of Presbytery any typographical errors, misspellings, improper punctuation and other minor variations in form and clarity. These are to be given as advice for the respective clerks.

16-7. Guidelines for Reporting on Presbytery Records: The report of the committee shall be concise. It shall include the following:

a. A list of the minutes, by Presbyteries, received by the committee.

b. A list of the Presbyteries which have not submitted minutes, if any.

c. A recommendation concerning the minutes of each Presbytery, which shall include:

1) Minutes approved without exception;

2) Minutes approved with exceptions of form, which shall be reported directly to the Presbytery;

3) Minutes approved with exceptions of substance which shall be presented to the General Assembly, which presentation shall include citation of any relevant scriptural and/or constitutional references, and provide the committee’s rationale for finding the exception of substance;

4) Responses to exceptions of previous Assemblies, if any;
5) Recommendations concerning all responses to exceptions taken by previous Assemblies that have not been disposed of suitably.

d. Any other recommendation to the Assembly.
e. A statement of the division of the vote on each recommendation.
f. Any recommendation which may affect the budget of the Assembly shall be referred to the Committee of Commissioners on Administrative Committee.
g. A list of members present.
h. Minority Reports
   1) With respect to any recommendation, prior to a recess or adjournment of the Review of Presbytery Records Committee following the adoption of said recommendation, any member of the committee may indicate an intention to file a minority report by giving notice to the chairman.
   2) The minority report, from at least six (6) members of the committee, must be filed with the chairman of the committee and the office of the Stated Clerk of General Assembly not more than seven (7) days after the adjournment of the RPR Committee meeting.

16-8. The report of the committee shall be prepared and handled in the same manner as reports of committees of commissioners as set forth in *RAO* 14-8. Neither the report of the committee nor the General Assembly's approval or disapproval of this report establishes doctrinal precedent.

16-9. No partial report of the committee shall be presented without the consent of the Assembly.

16-10. Guidelines for Responding to General Assembly

a. Presbyteries shall be advised of exceptions of form; however, they shall take note in their minutes of exceptions of substance taken by the Assembly, together with their responses adopted by the presbytery to these exceptions. These responses should normally be adopted by Presbytery in the same calendar year as the exceptions were taken by the Assembly. Regardless, responses must be filed in accordance with *RAO* 16-4.d.
b. Presbyteries shall correspond with the next General Assembly the disposition they have made of the exceptions of substance (including general), with specific reference to Presbytery's action

as recorded in its minutes. Responses shall be in one of the following forms:

1) Presbytery agrees with the exceptions and corrects its record (if possible), corrects its actions (if possible) and promises to be more careful in the future. Or,
2) Presbytery respectfully disagrees with the exception, states its grounds and refers the exception back to the Assembly.

c. If, in responding to an exception of substance, a Presbytery reports that it disagrees with the conclusion of the Assembly and/or has not corrected or redressed the identified problem; and, the committee (after reviewing the Presbytery's response and rationale, and, if a majority so desires, consulting with the Committee on Constitutional Business) continues to believe that the Presbytery has persisted in an error that is significant enough to require an Assembly response; then, the committee shall notify the Assembly of the continuing exception, and shall make recommendation as to whether the Assembly should again seek a more acceptable response from the Presbytery, or should appoint a representative to present its case and refer the matter to the Standing Judicial Commission to cite the Presbytery to appear for proceedings according to *BCO* 40-5.

16-11. During a meeting of the Committee on Review of Presbytery Records, a motion to *Limit or Extend Limits of Debate* shall not be permitted, but there shall be permitted a motion to order the *Previous Question*, which motion shall be adopted upon three-quarters (3/4) of the members present and voting.

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ARTICLE XVII. STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION

17-1. There shall be a Standing Judicial Commission composed of twenty-four members in accordance with *BCO* 15-4. Upon election, each new member of the Standing Judicial Commission, before entering upon the duties of this office, shall sign a printed copy of the following vows; further, if the newly elected member is present, he shall affirm these vows in the presence of the Assembly electing him:

> **"I do solemnly vow, by the assistance of the grace of God, in my service as a judge in this branch of the church of our lord Jesus Christ, that**
>
> 1. **I will act as before God, my Judge and the Searcher of hearts;**
> 2. **I will judge without respect to persons, and if so tempted, will recuse myself from judgment;**
> 3. **I will judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgment;**
> 4. **I will judge according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, through my best efforts applied to nothing other than the record of the case and other documents properly before me; and**
> 5. **If in a given case I find my view on a particular issue to be in conflict with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, I will recuse myself from such case, if I cannot conscientiously apply the Constitution."**

The Standing Judicial Commission shall have oversight of appeals, complaints and judicial references from lower courts. The Standing Judicial Commission will report directly to the General Assembly.

The Standing Judicial Commission shall not be separately funded but administratively will operate as a subcommittee of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly.

The minutes, but not the judicial cases, decisions, or reports, of the Standing Judicial Commission shall be reviewed annually by the Committee on Constitutional Business. The minutes shall be examined for conformity to the *Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission* and *RAO* 17, violations of which shall be reported as "exceptions" as defined in *RAO* 14-11.d.(2). With respect to this examination, the Committee on Constitutional Business shall report directly to the General Assembly. If

exceptions are taken with respect to a case, the Assembly may find this a ground to direct the Standing Judicial Commission to retry the case.

17-2. With respect to the Rules of Discipline, any reference (*BCO* 41), appeal (*BCO* 42), complaint (*BCO* 43), *BCO* 40-5 proceeding, or request to assume original jurisdiction (*BCO* 34-1) made to the General Assembly shall be assigned to the Standing Judicial Commission for adjudication.

17-3. The Standing Judicial Commission may appoint a judicial panel of not less than five of its members to hear the case in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Discipline and these *Rules of Assembly Operations*. Such panels shall be chosen as follows:

a. A pool with the names of Standing Judicial Commission members shall be established. The chairman of the Standing Judicial Commission shall draw by lot names of panel members until he reaches a combination of three teaching elders and two ruling elders, or vice versa. The chairman shall notify the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, who shall notify, immediately, those so chosen.
b. If a panel member so selected shall be disqualified under Section 2 of the *Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission*, he shall be replaced by another from the same class drawn from the pool.
c. The names of those panel members selected and qualified shall not be returned to the pool until all names therein have been exhausted. The names of those members whose terms expire at the next General Assembly shall be withdrawn from the pool on May 1 of that year.
d. Immediately after each General Assembly the name of each new member selected at such General Assembly shall be added to the pool.
e. If a case is pending and a judicial panel has been appointed as set out above, and another case is filed from the same presbytery, the officers of the commission may elect to assign the second case to the same panel without resort to the pools. The officers of the commission may assign the additional case or cases to the same panel without resort to the pools only if: (1) the facts of the cases are so interconnected that assignment to different panels reasonably appears to require repetitious consideration of the same factual circumstances; or (2) assignment of unrelated cases to the same panel is agreed to by all parties to all of the cases.

17-4. Proposed decision(s) of any judicial panel shall be circulated to the entire Standing Judicial Commission. It shall act upon the recommended decision(s) without further hearings unless a party to the case, or a commission member, requests a rehearing of the case by the Standing Judicial Commission as a whole. The commission may or may not grant such a rehearing; except such rehearing must be granted when requested by a voting member of the panel or by at least seven qualified members of the commission. If granted, such rehearing shall be only on the record of the case; but the commission may allow oral arguments by the parties.

17-5. The Standing Judicial Commission shall be governed by the provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America and the *Rules of Assembly Operations*. Specific directions governing the implementation of these provisions shall be set forth in an *Operating Manual for Standing Judicial Commission*, as adopted by the General Assembly. Amendments to this Manual may be proposed to the General Assembly by overture from a Presbytery (cf. Article XI), or by recommendation from the Standing Judicial Commission. Proposed amendments from either source shall be reported to the Assembly by the Standing Judicial Commission, and shall be adopted upon a two-thirds vote of those voting, which must be a majority of the total enrollment of commissioners. This Manual shall be printed as an appendix to the *Rules of Assembly Operations*.

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ARTICLE XVIII. ASSEMBLY EXPENSES

18-1. Each congregation of the denomination shall be encouraged each year to make a specific subscription donation to assist in defraying the expenses of the General Assembly, whether a commissioner is sent to the Assembly or not. Such subscription donation shall cover the registration for one representative from the congregation. All other commissioners shall be encouraged to make a similar donation. A copy of the *Minutes* and the *Commissioner Handbook* will be sent to the donors and those paying the subscription donation/registration fee without additional charge.

Churches are encouraged to make this annual donation, whether or not they send a commissioner to the Assembly. The General Assembly shall set the amount of the subscription donation/registration for the next General Assembly.

18-2. The expenses of the recording clerks of the General Assembly will be borne by the Assembly.

18-3. All other expenses of the General Assembly shall be divided among the five major permanent Committees on the percentage basis of distributing undesignated gifts.

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ARTICLE XIX. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

19-1. Except as otherwise specifically provided in these Rules, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure.

19-2. Each chairman shall lead the Assembly in a brief prayer before making his report.

When a minority of a committee wishes to present a minority report, the member reporting for the minority shall have the privilege of presenting the minority report and moving it as a substitute for the portion of the majority report affected.

19-3. Each recommendation in each report must be read, considered, and acted upon separately.

a. The chairman moves the adoption; no second is necessary for a committee recommendation.
b. The Moderator asks: "Is there objection or question?"
c. Hearing no objection or question, the Moderator states: "It is adopted." (The above procedure is known as the "Short Form of Voting.")
d. When it is necessary to postpone action on the completion of a report for some subsequent action of the Assembly, such as the approval of the budgets, or other special items, the report shall be approved as a whole pending the completion of these other items. At the time that the other items come to the floor, only these matters may be considered by the Assembly, since the report as a whole will have already been adopted.

19-4. Procedure in debating a question:

a. The chairman or his designate may answer questions concerning the report addressed to him through the Moderator.
b. With respect to any recommendation, the representative of any Committee or Agency shall have the right to make the final speech in support of the Committee's motion before the question is put on a substitute, or on the Committee or Agency's main motion, as the case may be, even upon the expiration of time on the question, the failure of a motion to extend the time, or the adoption of a motion to order the *Previous Question*.

c. No commissioner may speak on the same question more than once until all desiring to speak have done so.
d. Unless otherwise provided, debate on the main motion shall be limited to ten (10) minutes unless extended. When a main motion has been debated for ten (10) minutes, the Moderator shall put the question to the Assembly: "Does the Assembly desire to extend the time an additional five (5) minutes?" A simple majority will decide the question. If the majority decides not to extend debate, the Moderator will call the question. If an amendment of a substitution is on the floor, the question of extending time on the main motion shall be repeated after the vote on the amendment or substitute. If time is extended, the question of extension will again be put every succeeding five (5) minutes until the motion is concluded. Unless otherwise provided, each commissioner shall be limited to three (3) minutes on the same question unless the court by a simple majority grants additional time.
e. Debate shall be free and open, with equal time being given to proponents and opponents insofar as possible.

19-5. Special Provisions

a. The assistants to the Stated Clerk shall have the privilege of the floor when requested by the Moderator to render some specific service to the court.
b. All motions shall be presented in writing and read before being voted upon.

ARTICLE XX. AMENDMENT OR SUSPENSION OF RULES

The *Rules of Assembly Operations* may be amended or suspended only by a two-thirds vote of those voting, which must also be a majority of the total enrollment of commissioners. A motion to amend is debatable. A motion to suspend is not debatable.

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OPERATING MANUAL FOR STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION

With revisions adopted through the 53rd General Assembly (2026)

Changes to *OMSJC* adopted in 2026:
NONE

PREFACE

This Manual is subordinate to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America and to the *Rules of Assembly Operation*. If there is any conflict between the provisions of this Manual and the Constitution or *Rules of Assembly Operation*, the Constitution or *Rules of Assembly Operation* shall take precedence.

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STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION MEMBER VOWS

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1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Membership shall be determined by the General Assembly in accordance with *BCO* 15-4.

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2. CONDUCT OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

2.1 A member shall, at all times, keep in mind his high calling as an officer of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and shall in all endeavors conduct himself in accordance with that calling. Further, since "ecclesiastical discipline… can derive no force whatever but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church" (*BCO*, Preface, II. Preliminary Principles, 8), the members of the Standing Judicial Commission must maintain the highest standards of integrity, independence, impartiality, and competence.

2.2 All members of the commission, including officers, shall be entitled to participate in the discussion and to vote on any matter pending before the commission for which they are qualified.

2.3 A "qualified" member under these Rules is any member of the commission who:

a. in a hearing (*OMSJC* 10.8.a (2)) has read the Record of the Case and all briefs timely filed by the parties;
b. in a review or rehearing *OMSJC* 17.8.b has read the Judicial Panel's proposed decision, all briefs timely filed by the parties, and that portion of the Record of the Case the member feels necessary to understand the issues of the case;
c. heard the arguments of the parties (if such arguments are presented) and the discussion as to the merits of the matters in controversy; and
d. is not disqualified for one or more of the reasons stated in Sections 2.4-2.12 below.

2.4 A member shall not render judgment in any matter pending before the commission on the basis of anything other than the Constitution of the Church and the facts presented by the Record of the Case and the other materials properly before him. If he

finds himself subject to any other influence, or if he finds himself unable to render the judgment so required, he shall recuse himself from further proceedings in that matter.

2.5 A member of the Commission shall not make any public or private statement that might reasonably be expected to affect the outcome of a pending matter or impending matter in any court of the church (*BCO* 11-4; 39-3).

a. A pending matter is a matter with respect to which process (*BCO* 31-2, ¶ 2) has commenced or which has been filed under the Rules of Discipline with the appropriate court. A matter continues to be pending through any appellate process. (*BCO* 39-1).

b. An impending matter is a matter that is reasonably expected to (a) become a case of process or (b) otherwise be brought before an appropriate court for consideration. "Reasonably" refers to the judgment of one in possession of all the relevant facts, which facts are subject to a fair-minded assessment.

2.6. So long as he complies with Section 2.5 above, a member may make public or private statements in the course of his duties as a presbyter or Session member with respect to biblical teaching, confessional interpretation, the principles of the form of government and discipline, the requirements of the *BCO*, the *Rules of Assembly Operation*, *Robert's Rules*, and may explain Commission procedures. If such statements seem to the member especially liable to be construed to address a pending or impending matter before the Commission, a member making such public or private statements shall expressly qualify the statements indicating that they are limited to the subject matters permitted by this subsection and are not made with a view to any pending or impending matter.

2.7. A member of the Commission shall not discuss or comment on a pending or impending case with any party in the case or any person other than a Commission member, except as otherwise provided in the Manual or in the *BCO*.

2.8. Notwithstanding Section 2.5 above, a member of the Commission may fully participate in a judicial matter before the Presbytery or Session of which he is a member and advise his Presbytery or Session in judicial matters.

2.9. A member of the Commission shall not represent himself or any other party before the Commission.

2.10. A member of the Commission shall perform the duties of his office with impartiality and shall be diligent to maintain the impartiality of the Commission.

a. A member must be objective and open-minded with respect to all issues and parties.

b. A member shall not, in connection with cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the impartial performance of the duties of his office.

c. A member shall not initiate, permit, or consider *ex parte* communications, or consider other communications made to the member outside the presence of the parties or their representatives, concerning a pending or impending matter, except as follows:

(1) When circumstances require it, *ex parte* communication for scheduling, administrative, or emergency purposes, which does not address substantive matters, is permitted to a Commission officer, or panel convener, chairman, or secretary.

(2) If a member receives an unauthorized *ex parte* communication bearing upon the substance of a matter, the member shall promptly notify the Officers of the substance of the communication in writing. The Officers shall promptly notify the parties of the substance of the communication in writing.

(3) A member shall not investigate facts in a matter independently, and shall consider only the evidence presented and any facts that may properly be judicially noticed.

d. A member shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which the member's impartiality might reasonably (see Section 2.5.b) be questioned, including but not limited to the following circumstances:

(1) The member has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's representative, or personal knowledge of facts that are in dispute in the proceeding, which is inconsistent with the impartial performance of the duties of his office.

(2) The member, while a member or after nomination to membership, has made a public statement, other than in a court proceeding, judicial decision, or opinion, that commits or appears to commit the member to reach a particular result or rule in a particular way in the proceeding or controversy.

(3) The member or a family member (i.e. sibling, parent, child, or spouse, and the spouse of any sibling, parent, or child):

i. served as a representative in the matter in controversy;

ii. was a witness concerning the matter; or

iii. is a member of a court which is party to the case or was a commissioner to a court which is a party to the case during the time of the proceedings in question.

e. A member subject to disqualification under this chapter shall disclose on the record the basis of the member's disqualification.

2.11. A member of the Commission shall conduct his extra-Commission activities to minimize the risk of conflict with the obligations of office thereby ensuring that he is available to fulfill his duties. A member shall not participate in activities that require the frequent disqualification of the member.

2.12. The enforcement of the Commission's standards of conduct shall be as follows:

a. Concerns with respect to a member's conduct as a member of the Commission shall be directed to the

Officers of the Commission who shall respond to those concerns, after consulting with the member.

b. If the eligibility of a member is questioned, the chairman shall rule on the member's eligibility. By majority vote the Commission may reverse the ruling of the chairman on the member's eligibility.

c. To maintain order and decorum at meetings the procedures and sanctions of *RONR* (12th ed.), 61:6-61:21, shall be available to the Commission, except that the Commission may not suspend the rights of membership or expel a member from the Commission.

d. By a two-thirds vote the Commission may recommend to the General Assembly that a Commission member be removed from the Commission for cause. The recommendation shall include a brief statement of the grounds for the recommendation.

e. Should the conduct leading to a recommendation that a member be removed from the Commission be potentially liable to censure under the Rules of Discipline, the Commission may include in its recommendation to the General Assembly a further recommendation that the grounds for removal be forwarded to the appropriate court of original jurisdiction for consideration under *BCO* 31-2.

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3. OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

3.1 Officers of the Commission shall be elected from its membership and shall be a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Assistant Secretary.

3.2 These officers shall be elected annually at the March stated meeting and shall take office at the adjournment of the General Assembly.

3.3 After a member has served in the same office for three consecutive years, he is not eligible for election to the same office in the fourth year, but later may be elected to serve in the same office.

3.4 The Chairman shall preside at meetings and perform other duties assigned by the Commission.

3.5 The Vice-Chairman shall assist the Chairman and in his absence or incapacity shall fulfill his duties.

3.6 The Secretary shall record the minutes of the meetings and the votes of SJC and maintain the records of the Commission and perform other duties specified in this Manual and/or assigned by the Commission.

3.7 The Assistant Secretary shall assist the Secretary and in his absence or incapacity shall fulfill his duties. The Assistant Secretary shall report to the full SJC every other month the status of all cases.

3.8 Under the supervision of the Chairman and Secretary, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall be the Clerk of the Commission. The Clerk of the Commission shall perform the following functions on behalf of the Commission:

a. keep the records of the Commission;
b. perform the administrative functions required under the Manual;
c. keep the records of and process all the regular correspondence and notices required by this Manual;
d. as requested by the SJC Officers or by the Clerks of the Presbyteries, advise the Stated Clerks of Presbyteries on

matters of proper form and procedures in the preparation of the Record of the Case;

e. on behalf of the Officers, initially review the Record of the Case for each case before the Commission and make inquiries of the lower court in relation to any obvious technical errors or corrections; and

f. perform such other functions as directed by this Manual or the Officers of the Commission.

3.9 The Clerk shall send a copy of the Manual to each new member of the Commission elected by the General Assembly; and he shall also send copies of any pending cases and papers presently before the Commission.

3.10 The Minutes of the Officers' Meetings are to be reported for review to each meeting of the full Commission.

4. MEETINGS

4.1 The stated meetings of the Commission shall begin on the first Thursday of March and on the third Thursday of October in each year. The stated meetings may be held by telephone conference call if, in the unanimous judgment of the officers and the Panel Chairmen prepared to report a Panel decision, if any, there is insufficient business to warrant a face-to-face meeting. By the same standard, a stated meeting may be canceled. The duration of these meetings shall be set by the Chairman in consultation with the other officers, as guided by the need to make the most efficient use of time, while not slighting the right of parties appearing to a fair hearing, and not restricting full and free deliberation on the part of the Commission. Ordinarily these stated meetings shall be scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. on Thursday and to conclude no later than noon on Friday. Other business to be considered shall be governed by the procedure set out in Section 4.2.

4.2 In addition to the stated meetings specified in Section 4.1, the Commission may hold special meetings, provided such special meetings shall be called by one of the following methods, to-wit:

a. The Officers of the Commission may call a special in person meeting at any time upon at least 30 days' notice or a special phone or videoconference meeting upon at least 14 days' notice.
b. The Commission, at any stated meeting, may announce a call of a special meeting, provided the time and place is specified in the call. A notice of the call of the special meeting shall be sent immediately by the Stated Clerk to all absent Commission members.
c. If at least six Commission members request, in writing, a special called meeting, the Chairman and Secretary shall issue a call within 10 days from receipt of the request.

The call of a special meeting shall specify the business to be considered at the meeting, and no other business may be considered except by an affirmative vote of three-fourths of those members present and voting, which in no case shall be less than 13 affirmative votes of members of the Commission. Further, no action may be taken on any case not specified in the call. The Officers may amend the call for the consideration of additional

business if notice thereof is sent by electronic means to the Commission members no less than 14 days before the date of the meeting.

No special meeting of the SJC shall be scheduled less than 30 days after the date on which the call is issued.

4.3 If under the Rules of this Manual a review or rehearing by the full Commission of a proposed decision by a Judicial Panel is required, the Officers shall place it on the docket at the next stated meeting.

5. EXPENSES

5.1 The expenses incurred by the Commission, its panels, and its members shall be borne by the Administrative Committee of General Assembly. All expenses (including travel expenses) incurred by a party or by the witnesses called by that party shall be borne by that party.

5.2 The parties shall be responsible for the notification and expenses of their own witnesses.

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6. QUORUM

6.1 A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Commission shall be 13 qualified members, composed of at least 5 teaching elders and at least 5 ruling elders.

6.2 A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of a Judicial Panel appointed hereunder shall be a majority of the Panel members, which shall include at least one teaching elder and one ruling elder.

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7. THE RECORD OF THE CASE

7.1 The Record of the Case shall be prepared by the Clerk of the lower court and shall be submitted to the Office of the Stated Clerk.

7.2 Content

a. The Record of the Case in an Appeal shall be prepared in accordance with *BCO* 32-18 and 42-5 which shall include:

(1) a copy of all proceedings in connection with the case, such as the Minutes of the trial before the lower court, the charges, answers, citations and returns;

(2) the notice of appeal and reasons therefor;

(3) all transcribed testimony actually taken before the lower court (*BCO* 35-9). Audio and/or video recordings shall not be admissible or be made a part of the Record of the Case unless the same have been transcribed and authenticated by the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the lower court (*BCO* 35-10);

(4) the response of the lower court in its actions, orders, decisions and judgment;

(5) any papers bearing on the case.

b. The Record of the Case in a Complaint shall be prepared in accordance with *BCO* 43-6 which shall include:

(1) a copy of all the lower court's proceedings in connection with the complaint, including the notice of complaint and supporting reasons and Minutes of any hearing;

(2) the response of the lower court, its acts, orders, decisions and judgment;

(3) all transcribed testimony actually taken before the lower court (*BCO* 35-9). Audio and/or video recordings shall not be admissible or be made a part of the Record of the Case unless the same have been transcribed and authenticated by the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the lower court (*BCO* 35-10);

(4) any papers bearing on the complaint.

c. Only documents provided to the Office of the Stated Clerk can be included in the Record of the Case. No document shall be included in the Record of the Case that must be accessed through external links, websites, QR codes, file-sharing services, or other external digital platforms.

d. The Clerk shall work with the Office of Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to provide an inventory of documents for the Record.

e. The Clerk shall provide a summary timeline of the Case. This will include dates that important documents were filed, dates parties received important notifications, significant actions of the original and higher courts related to the matter and dates thereof in the following format.

MM/DD/YY	Session action.
MM/DD/YY	John Doe filed complaint with Session.
MM/DD/YY	Session called meeting; complaint was considered and denied.
MM/DD/YY	Complainant received notification that his complaint was denied.
MM/DD/YY	Complainant carried/filed that complaint with Presbytery.
MM/DD/YY	Presbytery stated meeting; complaint was considered and denied.
MM/DD/YY	Complainant notified Presbytery Clerk he had carried/filed it with the SJC.

7.3 The Stated Clerk shall send a copy of the Record of the Case to

a. the members of the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, or to the members of the Judicial Panel and to the alternate members of the Judicial Panel if the case is to be heard by a Judicial Panel; and

b. the parties to the case. The Stated Clerk shall notify the parties that the *SJC Manual* is printed as an appendix to the *Book of Church Order*.

7.4 The parties shall have the right to examine the Record of the Case. Corrections to the Record of the Case shall be considered as follows:

a. The Panel Chairman, or the Chairman of the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, shall serve as mediator between the parties with respect to the perfection of the Record. The Convener of a Panel may initiate this process (cf. *OMSJC* 10.3).

b. The hearing body may delete any portions of the Record as submitted that violate justice or due process, a provision of the *BCO* or *Robert's Rules of Order*, or that are extraneous to the matter before the Commission. The hearing body may also require the addition of material to the Record that is relevant to the Case. Deletions and additions shall always be recorded in the minutes of the hearing body, with the approved rationale for the change. Any deletions or additions shall be reported to the parties, and may be addressed in argument from the parties in any hearing requested by a party on the ROC.

c. If a party objects to the Record as being incorrect or incomplete, such party shall notify: (i) the Stated Clerk, (ii) the Panel Chairman or the Chairman of the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, and (iii) the other party, by electronic means within 15 days of the date of receiving of such Record of the Case from the Stated Clerk, obtaining a receipt of acknowledgment from each. Any party so objecting shall specify, in writing, the alleged defect(s) and proposed remedy(ies). Failure to lodge a timely objection to the Record of the Case shall constitute acceptance of the Record of the Case by the parties.

d. If a party objects to any portion of the Record, the other party shall respond to such objection within 15 days of receipt of notification of the objection. Such response shall be in writing and must be filed by mail or electronic means with Stated Clerk and the Panel Chairman, or the Chairman of the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission. The response must also be copied to the

party that lodged the objection. If a party, having received notice that an objection to the Record has been filed, fails to respond to that objection within 15 days they shall be deemed to have acceded to the objection.

e. If the other party shall accede to the objection, it shall be so stipulated in writing and made a part of the Record of the Case. Such stipulation shall be filed by electronic means with the Stated Clerk and the Panel Chairman, or the Chairman of the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, not more than 30 days after the date the last party received such Record of the Case from the Stated Clerk, obtaining a receipt of acknowledgment.

f. If the other party does not accede to the objection, the Judicial Panel, or the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, shall hold a hearing by electronic conference with respect to the objection.

(1) In preparation for the hearing the Chairman shall:

(a) Set a date and time for the hearing, making every reasonable effort to obtain such date and time as may be agreeable to the parties.

(b) Notify the parties of such date and time for the hearing by electronic means not less than 14 days prior to the date of hearing, obtaining a receipt of acknowledgement from each party. Such 14 day period may be shortened if the parties agree in writing.

(c) Notify the parties of their right to submit briefs according to the standard set forth in *OMSJC* 8.4.a. of not more than 5 pages in length.

(2) The hearing shall proceed as follows:

(a) After the hearing has been opened, but before any arguments are presented, the members of the Panel or Commission shall have the opportunity to question the parties with respect to the matter at hand. The same shall be true after the conclusion of the time for argument.

(b) A party shall have a maximum of 20 minutes to address the question, the time divided between opening arguments by the parties in turn, and rebuttal arguments by the parties in turn.

(c) At any time during which a party is presenting an argument, a member of the Panel or Commission may ask questions of that party; the time taken for such questions shall not form a part of the time of the party questioned.

(3) After oral argument the parties shall be dismissed and the Panel or Commission shall make a decision as to whether in fairness and justice the Record of the Case should be corrected.

g. The Judicial Panel, or the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, may extend any of the deadline dates in this section if it determines that so doing is in the interest of justice.

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8. BRIEFS

8.1 Review Briefs

In the event that the Officers find that a case is not administratively in order (*OMSJC* 9.1(a)), or a Judicial Panel finds that a case is not judicially in order (*OMSJC* 9.1(b) & *OMSJC* 10.5-6), each party may file a review brief setting out the party's position regarding whether the case is in order. In such review brief the parties may allude to those documents that have been supplied by the lower court as the proposed Record of the Case and may additionally allude to any documents that were not submitted as part of the proposed Record of the Case but only if such documents bear on whether the case is in order. Review briefs shall be filed with and reviewed by the officers if no panel has been assigned and shall be filed with and reviewed by a panel if a panel has been assigned.

8.2 Preliminary Briefs

a. Once the Record of the Case is established only one preliminary brief may be submitted through the Stated Clerk before the initial hearing by a Panel or the Full Commission, whichever is hearing the case. Any preliminary brief from a Complainant or Appellant shall be filed after the Panel has declared the case judicially in order and no later than 14 days after he receives the established (perfected) ROC. The Stated Clerk immediately shall mail a copy of this brief to the Respondent or Appellee. Any preliminary brief from a Respondent or Appellee must be filed no later than 14 days prior to the date set for the hearing of the case.

b. Such a preliminary brief should include the party's position with regard to the following:
   (1) A summary of the facts.
   (2) A summary of the proceedings in the lower court(s).
   (3) A statement of the issues.
   (4) The proposed judgment and relief.
   (5) Argument in support of judgment and relief.

8.3 Supplemental Briefs

A supplemental brief may be filed only when the case initially has been heard by a panel. Within 14 days after a party has received a proposed and recommended decision of a Judicial Panel under *OMSJC* 17.5 of this Manual, that party may file with the Stated Clerk a supplemental brief which shall be limited to setting forth errors the party believes were made in the proposed and recommended decision of the Panel or Commission in accordance with *OMSJC* 17.9.a. In the event of a rehearing before the full Commission, each party may file a supplemental brief in accord with a briefing schedule to be established by the officers of the Commission.

8.4 No brief of a party shall make any reference to any fact not a part of the Record of the Case. The Panel or Commission may, at its discretion, strike all or part of a brief that makes such reference.

8.5 a. Any brief filed hereunder must be typewritten or printed on 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, with no smaller than 12 point type, with 1 inch margin on all sides, line numbering that restarts on each page, and may be single spaced. All briefs shall also be filed by electronic means with the Stated Clerk. The text of footnotes shall be no smaller than 10 point type and shall be single spaced.

b. Any review brief shall not exceed two pages in length. The preliminary brief filed by a party shall not exceed 12 pages in length. Any supplemental brief filed by a party shall not exceed 6 pages in length. Briefs may include a cover page and table of contents which shall not count toward the page limitation.

c. Any brief timely filed which does not meet these standards of form shall be returned to the sending party with reasons. In this case a revised brief may be submitted provided that such brief is filed with the Stated Clerk within 5 days of notification that the brief does not meet the standard of form.

8.6 Failure to file a brief by a party shall not be considered to be an abandonment of the case.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

9.1 When a judicial case is submitted to the Commission, the Officers shall make an initial determination as to whether the case is administratively in order.

a. A case is administratively in order if the relevant provisions of *BCO* 41, 42, and 43 have been followed, including but not limited to:

(1) an Appeal must include specification(s) of error set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs for each error alleged to support the Appeal (*BCO* 42-3, -8; cf. *BCO*, Forms For Judicial Business Appendix G, V Appeal). If an Appeal fails this qualification, putting the case in order (*OMSJC* 9.2 a.) shall include only formatting, not substantive, changes.

(2) a Complaint must include a statement of the action(s) or delinquency(s) complained of and the reasons supporting said complaint set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs (*BCO* 43-2; *BCO*, Forms for Judicial Business Appendix G, VI Complaint). If a Complaint fails this qualification, putting the case in order (*OMSJC* 9.2 a.) shall include only formatting, not substantive, changes.

b. If a majority of the Officers cannot agree, then it shall be submitted to the full Commission at its next meeting.

9.2 a. If a case is preliminarily found not to be administratively in order or not to be judicially in order, the Officers or a Panel shall reduce to writing the ground for such preliminary finding, including any conclusion as to whether the case either can or cannot be put in order. The Stated Clerk shall notify the relevant parties or clerks of such preliminary conclusion and request that the case be put in order, if possible, and advise the parties that the party bringing the appeal or complaint may file a review brief within 15 days of such notification. The Respondent may file a responsive review brief within 15 days of the first review brief.

b. In cases where the Officers or a Panel have made such a preliminary finding that the case is out of order, the Officers or Panel, as the case may be, shall, after the 30-day period described above has expired, and after reviewing any review brief(s), make a secondary determination as to whether the case is in order. No party shall be entitled to an oral hearing on such a jurisdictional question without the consent of the Officers or Commission as the case may be. If the Officers' or Panel's secondary conclusion is that the case is not in order, no further action shall be taken in relation to the case other than to recommend to the next meeting of the Commission that the case be dismissed on the ground that the case is out of order. That recommendation shall include a statement setting forth the ground(s) for the conclusion that the case is not in order and either an explanation as to why it cannot be put in order or that the parties have failed to timely put the case in order despite an opportunity to do so. Alternatively, the Officers or Panel may, based on the review brief(s), find that the case is administratively in order and proceed with the case, subject to the review of any jurisdictional question by the Full Commission.

c. In cases where it is determined that the case should be heard by the Full Commission and the Commission makes a preliminary finding that the case is out of order, the Commission shall reduce to writing the ground for such preliminary finding, including any conclusion as to whether the case either can or cannot be put in order. The Stated Clerk shall notify the relevant parties or clerks of such preliminary conclusion and request that the case be put in order, if possible, and advise the parties that they may file a review brief within 30 days of such notification. After the 30-day period described above has expired, and after reviewing any review brief(s), the Commission shall make a final determination as to whether the case is in order. No party shall be entitled to an oral hearing on such a jurisdictional question without the consent of the Commission.

9.3 When the case is administratively in order, the Officers shall determine whether the case is of such significance that it should

be heard by the full Commission or submitted to a Judicial Panel. Ordinarily, it will be submitted to such a Judicial Panel.

9.4 If it is determined that the case should be heard by the Full Commission, the parties shall be notified and a full copy of the Record of the Case shall be sent to each member of the Commission. When the Record of the Case has been perfected under *OMSJC* 7, and when the parties have had opportunity to file briefs under *OMSJC* 8.1, the case shall be docketed for hearing by the Full Commission at its next stated meeting, or at a called meeting set to hear the case.

9.5 If it is determined that the case should be heard by a Judicial Panel, the Officers shall immediately appoint such a Judicial Panel in accordance with *RAO* 17.3.

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10. JUDICIAL PANELS

10.1 A Judicial Panel shall consist of at least five qualified (*OMSJC* 2.3.d) members of the Commission, which shall include at least two teaching elders and two ruling elders.

10.2 Should, in the judgment of the officers, circumstances warrant, larger panels may be appointed with an approximately equal balance between teaching and ruling elders.

10.3 When a Judicial Panel is appointed, one member thereof shall be designated as "Convener." The Convener may make initial contact with the parties:

a. to obtain information for the initial meetings of the Panel;
b. to answer initial questions by the parties;
c. to answer questions of the parties concerning the preparation and submission of written briefs.
d. to begin the process of considering corrections to the Record of the Case, if any (see *OMSJC* 7-4).

10.4 CONSTITUTING MEETING. Within 10 days of the date of the receipt of the Record of the Case from the Stated Clerk, the Convener shall call a meeting of the Judicial Panel members. This first meeting may be held by telephone conference call. At this first meeting, the Judicial Panel shall organize itself by:

a. the election of a Chairman;
b. the election of a Secretary;
c. the selection of a tentative time and place for hearing the case;
d. such other organizational matters as would speed the time of hearing without prejudicing the rights of any of the parties.

10.5 INITIAL MEETING. Not later than 30 days after the receipt of the Record of the Case under *OMSJC* 7.3, and subject to the requirements of *OMSJC* 7.4, the Chairman of the Panel may call a second meeting of the Judicial Panel members, which meeting may also be held by a telephone conference call. This second meeting may form part of the first organizational meeting of the Judicial Panel referred to under *OMSJC* 10.4 if the requirements of *OMSJC* 7.4 have been met. The purpose of this second meeting

shall be to determine if the case is judicially in order and ready for hearing. This review shall include:

a. that the case was timely filed as provided in *BCO* 42-4 and 43-2;
b. in the case of a complaint, that the complaint was first filed with the Court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error (*BCO* 43-2);
c. that a ground or reason has been specified as required by *BCO* 42-3 and 43-2;
d. that the parties have complied with the Rules of Discipline of the *BCO* and this Manual;
e. that the Record of the Case appears to be complete and sufficiently documented.

10.6 If the Judicial Panel determines that a case is not judicially in order, the Panel through the Stated Clerk shall notify the parties and give them an opportunity to cure the defect, if it can be cured within the Rules of Discipline of the *BCO* and the requirements of this Manual. If the defect is cured within 30 days from receipt of such notice, the Panel shall proceed to hear and adjudicate the case. Except as noted below, if significant defects are not cured within 30 days from the receipt of notice then the Panel may make a determination that the case not be found in order and take no further action in relation to the case other than to recommend to the next meeting of the Commission that the case be dismissed on the ground that the case was not found in order. If, however, the defect is due to the neglect or failure of the lower court to provide a Record of the Case that is "complete and sufficiently documented" as defined in *BCO* 32-18, 42-5, and *OMSJC* 7, then the Panel shall apply *BCO* 42-7 or 43-6 as appropriate. If the decision of the Panel is not confirmed by the Commission, the Commission may return the case to the Panel, or may appoint a new Panel in accordance with *RAO* 17.3 to hear and adjudicate the case, or may decide to hear the case as the Full Commission.

10.7 When the Judicial Panel determines that the case is judicially in order, the Chairman of the Judicial Panel shall take the following actions:

a. Set a date and time and, if necessary, a place for a hearing of the case, making every reasonable effort to obtain such date and time and or place as may be agreeable to all parties. A panel hearing will normally be held by electronic conference unless a member of the panel

determines that the nature of the case warrants a face-to-face hearing.

b. Notify all parties of such time and place of hearing by electronic means. Such notice shall be sent not less than 40 days prior to the date of hearing and there must be a receipt of acknowledgement in the file from each party. Such 40 day period may be shortened if the parties to the case agree in writing.

c. Notify all parties of their right to submit written briefs, in accordance with *OMSJC* 8. A written brief must comply with *OMSJC* 8.3 and following.

d. Notify all parties of their right to represent themselves or to be represented at the hearing in accordance with *BCO* 32-19, 42-10 or 43-5, as the case may be.

10.8 Initial Procedures for Hearings before a Judicial Panel or Full Commission

a. At the time and place set for a hearing of the case, the Chairman shall call the Judicial Panel or the Full Commission to order and proceed as follows:

(1) Prayer should be offered by a member of the Panel or Commission.

(2) All Panel or Commission members shall be polled to certify that they have read the Record of the Case and all briefs timely filed.

Any member who cannot so certify shall not participate in any aspect of the proceedings, including deliberations and voting on the case, unless such member can become qualified after a postponement of the hearing.

(3) The Chairman shall enjoin the Panel or Commission members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ and the solemn duty in which they are about to engage (*BCO* 32-12).

b. Furthermore, the Chairman shall:

(1) Remind the Panel or Commission Members that they should disregard all evidence not in the Record of the Case (*BCO* 32-18); even though such evidence may be found in the briefs of the parties or in oral argument (See *OMSJC* 8.3).

(2) Read to the Panel or Commission members the principles of Review set forth in *BCO* 39-3.

(3) Read to the Panel or Commission members the vows each affirmed when elected to the Standing Judicial Commission (*RAO* 17-1).

10.9 ORAL ARGUMENT. A Judicial Panel shall hear oral argument as follows: in an Appeal in accordance with *OMSJC* 13.3; in a Complaint in accordance with *OMSJC* 14.3; and in a Report Arising Out of General Review and Control in accordance with *OMSJC* 15.4.

10.10 AFTER THE ORAL ARGUMENTS. A Judicial Panel immediately after hearing the oral arguments of the parties, shall go into closed session and discuss the issues in the case. In that discussion, the Panel may (1) frame the issues, (2) vote on a judgment and (3) announce these to the parties. Or, the Panel may take all these matters under advisement and reconvene within the next 20 days, as often as necessary, to frame the issues and render a judgment. This "reconvening" may be held by telephone conference call. The Chairman of the Panel shall designate a Panel member voting with the majority to prepare a written decision. This decision shall be sent by electronic means to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly within 40 days from the date the Panel heard the oral arguments. Any Panel member may file, within said 40 day period, a concurring or dissenting opinion which shall be appended to the decision.

10.11 a. When a Judicial Panel has reached a decision in a case, the Chairman or Secretary of the Judicial Panel shall prepare a full report of the case and send by electronic means the same to the Stated Clerk, who shall forward, immediately, a copy of the full report to each member of the Commission. This report shall include the following:

(1) The Record of the Case.

(2) The proposed and recommended decision in the following format:

I. A Summary of the Facts. (A presentation in chronological order of the relevant history and facts that bear on the case.) This Summary, and the summaries of facts mentioned elsewhere in this Manual, may also include a separate “Case

Summary" paragraph summarizing the Case and Decision.)

II. A Statement of the Issues. (A concise framing by the Court of the specific issues being judged in the case.)

III. The Judgment. (A definite conclusion rendered on the specific issues being adjudged.)

IV. The Reasoning and Opinion of the Court. (The explanation by the court of the resolution of disputed facts and reasons for the judgment rendered.)

(3) Any timely filed written briefs of the parties meeting the requirements of *OMSJC* 8.

(4) A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Judicial Panel.

(5) Any concurring or dissenting opinion of a Panel member.

(6) Any voting Panel member's request for rehearing by the full Commission, appending reasons therefor which must be submitted to the Stated Clerk within 20 days after the Panel's decision is transmitted to the parties.

(7) Any request for a rehearing by a party (*OMSJC* 17.5).

b. Any audio tape of the oral arguments of the parties is not a part of this report; but any Commission member may obtain a copy thereof from the Stated Clerk, if available. Any such tapes are for the sole use of SJC.

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11. HEARING BY THE FULL COMMISSION

11.1 Where it is determined under *OMSJC* 9.3 that a judicial case should be heard by the full Commission, the officers of the Commission shall first determine whether the case is judicially in order and ready for hearing. This review may be done by a telephone conference call and shall include:

a. that the case was timely filed as provided in *BCO* 42-3 and 43-2;
b. in the case of a complaint, that the complaint was first filed with the Court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error (*BCO* 43-2);
c. that a ground or reason has been specified as required by *BCO* 42-3 and 43-2;
d. that the parties have complied with the Rules of Discipline of the *BCO* and this Manual;
e. that the Record of the Case appears to be complete and sufficiently documented.

11.2 a. If the Officers of the Commission determine that a case is not judicially in order, they through the Stated Clerk shall notify the parties and give them an opportunity to cure the defect, if it can be cured within the Rules of Discipline of the *BCO* and the requirements of this Manual.
b. If the defect is cured within 30 days from the receipt of such notice the Commission shall proceed to adjudicate the case.
c. If significant defects cannot be cured within 30 days of receipt of such notice, then the Officers may make a determination that the case not be found in order and take no further action in relation to the case other than to recommend to the next meeting of the Commission that the case be dismissed on the ground that the case was not found in order.
d. If the decision of the Officers in finding the case not in order is not confirmed by the Commission, the Commission shall proceed to adjudicate the case.

11.3 If it is determined that the appeal or complaint is judicially in order, the Chairman of the Commission shall take the following actions:

a. Set a time and place for a hearing of the appeal or complaint, making every reasonable effort to obtain such time and place as may be agreeable to both the parties.
b. Notify the parties of such time and place of hearing by electronic means. Such notice shall be sent not less than 30 days prior to the date of hearing and there must be a receipt of acknowledgement in the file from each party.
c. Notify the parties of their right to submit written briefs, in accordance with *OMSJC* 8. A written brief must comply with *OMSJC* 8.3 and following.
d. Notify all parties of their right to represent themselves or to be represented at the hearing in accordance with *BCO* 32-19 or 42-10, as the case may be.

11.4 For initial procedures for hearings before the Full Commission see *OMSJC* 10.8.

11.5 After the initial procedures have been followed, the Commission shall proceed with an appeal in accordance with *OMSJC* 13.3 and following, or if it is a complaint, it shall proceed in accordance with *OMSJC* 14.3 and following.

12. PROCEDURE FOR HEARING A JUDICIAL REFERENCE CASE (*BCO* 41)

12.1 The only reference which the Commission may entertain is the reference of an appeal or a complaint received by the lower court and referred by that lower court to the Commission for final disposition, or of a reference of "a judicial case with request for its trial and decision by the higher court" (*BCO* 41-3).

a. Where such a reference is received by the Stated Clerk, a determination shall be made under *OMSJC* 10.1 as to whether or not the case is administratively in order.

b. If the case is found to be administratively in order, the Officers of the Commission shall determine whether or not the Commission should accede to the request of the lower court (*BCO* 41-5), remembering the admonition of *BCO* 41-5 that "in general it is better that every court should discharge the duty assigned to it under the law of the church."

c. Where the Officers decide that the Commission should not accede to the request of the lower court to hear the case, the question shall be placed on the docket of the next stated or called meeting of the Commission for final determination.

12.2 Where a judicial case referred to and accepted by the Commission under Section 12.1 above is an appeal under *BCO* 42, that appeal shall be heard by a Panel or the Full Commission in accordance with the provisions of Section 14, and where such a case is a complaint under *BCO* 43, that complaint shall be heard by a Panel or by the Full Commission in accordance with the provisions of *OMSJC* 14, and where it is an initial trial of an issue or charges, such a case shall be heard *de novo* by a Panel or the Full Commission in accordance with the provisions of *OMSJC* 13.2 or 14.2 and following as the case may be.

12.3 The Clerk of the lower court making the reference shall submit to this Commission all documents through the Stated Clerk which should become a part of the Record of the Case.

12.4 The lower court making the reference shall assist this Commission as provided in *BCO* 41-6.

12.5 The Commission shall be organized as in any other case, except the trial of such a case shall be conducted under the "General Provisions Applicable To All Cases Of Process" as set out in *BCO* 32, and in accordance with rules of evidence as set out in *BCO* 35.

12.6 The testimony of the witnesses in any case so referred and accepted shall be taken and transcribed as part of the Record of the Case. (Note the provisions of *BCO* 41-6)

12.7 The parties shall be responsible for the notification and expenses of their own witnesses. When a party requests that a witness be cited to testify, the Chairman of the Commission shall promptly cite, by personal service or by certified mail, the witness to appear and testify as provided in *BCO* 32-4.

12.8 When the trial hearing is convened the following procedures will apply:

a. The initial proceedings set out in *OMSJC* 10.8**,** as applicable, shall be followed, and at the close of the proceedings prayer shall be offered in accordance with *OMSJC* 18.1.

b. The requirements of *BCO* 32 shall apply.

c. The procedures of *BCO* 32-15 shall be followed, namely:

(1) The Chairman shall charge the court.

(2) The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused shall be heard.

(3) The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.

(4) The arguments of the parties shall be heard:

(a) the Prosecutor; then

(b) the Accused; and

(c) the Prosecutor shall close.

(5) The Commission shall go into closed session and the roll shall be called and the members of the Commission may express their opinion in the case. After discussion:

(a) the vote shall be taken; and

(b) the preliminary verdict shall be determined.

(6) The Commission shall rise from closed session and announce the preliminary verdict. Since there is no higher court of appeal to which written briefs may be submitted, each party (or the

minister in a trial arising from *BCO* 34-1) may submit a written supplemental brief in accordance with *OMSJC* 8.2. If the parties state to the court that they all waive their right to submit written briefs, the judgment shall be entered on the record.

d. The Record of the Case and the report of the Commission shall be prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of this Manual.

12.9 Unless the parties waive their rights to submit a written brief, no decision shall be made until the time periods specified in *OMSJC* 8.1 have expired. If briefs are filed, copies shall be sent to all members of the Panel or Commission as the case requires. Then the Chairman shall convene the Panel or Commission where further discussion of the case may take place. This may be done by telephone conference call. After discussion, the vote shall be taken on each issue.

After a decision has been reached, the decision shall be processed in accordance with *OMSJC* 17.

12.10 After a decision has been reached by the full Commission, any member may file by electronic means, within 14 days after the date the text of the decision is sent by the Secretary to the members of the Commission, a concurring or dissenting opinion, which, if it conforms with the requirements of *OMSJC* 18.12, shall be promptly sent to the parties as an appendix to the decision.

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13. PROCEDURE FOR HEARING AN APPEAL (*BCO* 42)

13.1 At the hearing of an appeal the procedures outlined in *BCO* 42-8 will apply whether heard by a Judicial Panel or by the full Commission.

13.2 At the time and place set for a hearing of the case, the Chairman shall call the Judicial Panel to order and proceed in accordance with the initial procedures set forth in *OMSJC* 10.8, as applicable.

13.3 DURING THE HEARING

a. The arguments of the parties shall be heard in the following order:
   (1) the Appellant makes the opening argument;
   (2) the Appellee then replies;
   (3) the Appellant makes the closing argument.

b. After the hearing shall have been opened and the initial requirements of *BCO* 42-8 met, but before any arguments of the parties have been presented the members of the Panel or Commission shall have the opportunity to question the parties on any matter before the court.

c. A party shall have a maximum of 30 minutes to argue his case before the Panel or Commission (and in the case of the Appellant, this 30 minutes is inclusive of both his opening and closing arguments).

d. At any time during which a party is presenting an argument to a Panel or the Commission, a member of the Panel or Commission may ask questions of that party; the time taken for such questions shall not form a part of the argument time of the party questioned.

13.4 AFTER THE ORAL ARGUMENTS

a. After the oral arguments have been completed and if the appeal is being heard by a Judicial Panel, the Panel shall proceed under *OMSJC* 10.10.

b. After the oral arguments have been completed and if the appeal is being heard by the full Commission rather than by a Judicial Panel, the Commission shall go into closed session to discuss the case and consider its merits.

c. When the Judicial Panel acting under *OMSJC* 10.10 is ready to vote or when the full Commission has completed its discussion under Section 13.4.b above, and is ready to vote, the vote shall then be taken without further debate, on each specification, in this form:

"Shall this specification of error be sustained?"

The decision may be to affirm the lower court's decision, in whole or in part. If the lower court's decision is not sustained, the decision will be to:

(1) reverse the lower court's decision, in whole or in part; or,

(2) render the decision that should have been rendered; or,

(3) remand the case to the lower court for a new trial.

13.5 As soon as the judgment is thus rendered, when the appeal is heard by a Judicial Panel, the Judicial Panel shall proceed under *OMSJC* 10.11.

13.6 As soon as the judgment is thus rendered, when the appeal is heard by the full Commission rather than by a Judicial Panel, the Chairman shall designate a member or committee of members voting with the majority to prepare a proposed written decision.

13.7 After a decision has been reached by the full Commission, any member may file by electronic means, within 14 days after the date the text of the decision is sent by the Secretary to the members of the Commission, a concurring or dissenting opinion, which, if it conforms with the requirements of *OMSJC* 18.12, shall be promptly sent to the parties as an appendix to the decision.

14. PROCEDURE FOR HEARING A COMPLAINT (*BCO* 43)

14.1 At the hearing of a Complaint the following procedures will apply whether the Complaint be heard by a Judicial Panel or by the full Commission.

14.2 At the time and place set for a hearing of the case, the Chairman shall call the Judicial Panel to order and proceed in accordance with the initial procedures set forth in *OMSJC* 10.8, as applicable.

14.3 DURING THE HEARING

a. The arguments of the parties shall be heard in the following order:
   (1) the Complainant makes the opening argument;
   (2) the Respondent then replies;
   (3) the Complainant makes the closing argument.

b. After the hearing shall have been opened and the initial requirements of *BCO* 43-9 met, but before any arguments of the parties have been presented, the members of the Panel or Commission shall have the opportunity to question the parties on any matter before the court.

c. A party shall have a maximum of 30 minutes to argue his case before the Panel or Commission (and in the case of the Complainant, this 30 minutes is inclusive of both his opening and closing arguments).

d. At any time during which a party is presenting an argument to a Panel or the Commission, a member of the Panel or Commission may ask questions of that party; the time taken for such questions shall not form a part of the argument time of the party questioned.

14.4 AFTER THE ORAL ARGUMENTS

a. After the oral arguments have been completed and if the complaint is being heard by a Judicial Panel, the Panel shall proceed under *OMSJC* 10.10.

b. After the oral arguments have been heard and if the complaint is being heard by the full Commission rather than by a Judicial Panel the Commission shall go into closed session to discuss the complaint and consider its merits.

c. When the Judicial Panel acting under *OMSJC* 10.10 is ready to vote or when the full Commission has completed its discussion under Section 14.4.b, above, the vote shall be taken, without further debate, as to what disposition should be made of the complaint. The decision may be to affirm the lower court's decision, in whole or in part. If the lower court's decision is not sustained the decision will be to:

(1) annul the whole or any part of the action of the lower court against which the complaint has been made; or,

(2) send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for a new hearing.

14.5 As soon as the judgment has been rendered when the complaint is heard by a Judicial Panel, the Judicial Panel shall proceed under *OMSJC* 10.10.

14.6 As soon as the judgment is rendered, when the complaint is heard by the full Commission rather than by a Judicial Panel, the Chairman shall designate a member or committee of members voting with the majority to prepare a proposed written decision.

14.7 After a decision has been reached by the full Commission, any member may file by electronic means, within 14 days after the date the text of the decision is sent by the Secretary to the members of the Commission, a concurring or dissenting opinion, which, if it conforms with the requirements of *OMSJC* 18.12, shall be promptly sent to the parties as an appendix to the decision.

15. PROCEDURE FOR HEARING A REPORT ARISING OUT OF GENERAL REVIEW AND CONTROL (*BCO* 40; *RAO* 16-10.c)

15.1 A Report arising out of General Review and Control is one which purports to demonstrate an important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceeding of a lower court (*BCO* 40-5). When such a Report is submitted to the Commission, it shall be first handled according to *OMSJC* 9, as applicable.

15.2 If the Report is found administratively in order, any representative of the Report (cf. *RAO* 16-10.c) and court alleged to have offended shall be cited to appear, the latter by representative or in writing, providing such documents as bear on the alleged important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceedings (*BCO* 40-5). The Stated Clerk shall collate these documents which shall be deemed equivalent to a Record of the Case and dealt with according to Section 8 of this Manual as applicable.

15.3 At the time and place set for a hearing of the Report, the Chairman shall call the Judicial Panel or Commission to order and proceed in accordance with the initial procedures set forth in *OMSJC* 10.8 as applicable.

15.4 The hearing shall be conducted as follows:

a. The members of the Panel or Commission shall have the opportunity to question the representatives present on any matter before the court.

b. The Panel or Commission shall then proceed to hear oral arguments, if there be any, in the following order:
   (1) the representative of the Report shall make the opening argument;
   (2) the representative of the court alleged to have offended shall reply;
   (3) the representative of the Report shall make the closing argument.

c. A representative shall have a maximum of 30 minutes to argue his case before the Panel or Commission. With respect to the representative of the Report, this 30 minutes is inclusive of both the opening and closing arguments.

d. At any time during which a representative is presenting an argument to a Panel or the Commission, a member of the Panel or Commission may ask questions of that representative; the time taken for such questions shall not

form a part of the argument time of the representative questioned.

15.5 After arguments have been heard, the Panel or Commission shall go into closed session to discuss the Report and consider its merits.

15.6 If heard by a Panel, the Panel shall then make a full report to the Commission including such recommendations as

a. to reverse or redress the proceedings of the court below in other than judicial cases; or
b. to censure the delinquent court; or
c. to remit the whole matter to the delinquent court with an injunction to take it up and dispose of it in a constitutional manner; or
d. to stay all further proceedings and declare that all matters relating to the Report, presently or previously pending before the General Assembly, are ended, concluded and terminated.

15.7 When the full Commission has completed its discussion and is ready to vote, the vote shall be taken on each recommendation. The report as a whole shall then be voted on by roll call without change or amendment. All qualified members present shall participate in the vote.

15.8 If heard by the full Commission, the Commission shall proceed to deliberate the merits of the matter and make a determination as provided in Sections 15.6.a, b, c, and d. A vote shall be taken on the decision(s). The report as a whole shall then be voted on by roll call. All qualified members present shall participate in the vote.

15.9 After a decision has been reached by the Full Commission, any member may file, within 20 days after the day the decision is reached, a concurring or dissenting opinion, which, if it conforms with the requirements of *OMSJC* 18.12, shall be promptly sent to the parties as an appendix to the decision.

15.10 When a report with its recommendations on the Report has been adopted, a copy thereof shall immediately be sent by mail or electronic means to the Representatives and shall be included in the final report of the SJC to the General Assembly.

16. PROCEDURES FOR ASSUMING ORIGINAL JURISDICTION OVER A MINISTER (*BCO* 34-1)

16.1 Upon proper receipt of a case filed against a minister under *BCO* 34-1, the SJC shall in accordance with the provisions set out below:

a. Appoint a panel in accordance with *RAO* 17.3 to investigate the matter and determine whether or not that the case is in order, i.e., that the provisions of *BCO* 34-1 have been followed.

b. If the case is determined to be in order, the panel shall conduct an investigation of allegations against the minister under the provisions of *BCO* 31-2.

c. The panel's findings and recommendation shall be mailed to the full SJC, said minister and the stated clerks of the involved presbyteries that instituted this action under *BCO* 34-1. The matter shall be scheduled for review at the SJC's next stated meeting or a meeting called under the provisions of *OMSJC* 4.2.

d. Within 14 days of receipt of the panel's findings and recommendation said minister and the stated clerks of the involved presbyteries may submit a brief citing reasons as to whether the panel's recommendations should be approved or rejected. Such brief must comply with the requirement of *OMSJC* 8.

e. Briefs under these paragraphs shall comply with the requirements for briefs in *OMSJC* 8.5 but shall not exceed 5 pages.

16.2 At its next stated meeting or meeting called to hear the matter under the provision of *OMSJC* 4.2, the SJC in closed session shall discuss the panel's findings and recommendation. The SJC shall vote to accept or reject the panel's findings and recommendation.

16.3 The SJC decision shall be mailed to said minister and stated clerks of the involved presbyteries. Within 14 days of receipt of the decision a party may request a reconsideration of the decision by filing a supplemental brief as set forth in *OMSJC* 8.2. This supplemental brief shall state the reasons for requesting

reconsideration of the decision. Copies of the supplemental brief and the SJC decision shall be mailed to members of the SJC. Reconsideration of the judgment shall be granted only by majority vote of the full Commission either by mail or by conference call, as determined by the officers

If reconsideration is granted, the Officers shall call a special meeting, under *OMSJC* 4.2.a and b, to discuss the case, consider its merits, and render a final judgment. If reconsideration is not granted, the previous judgment shall become final in accordance with *BCO* 15.5 (a).

16.4 If the SJC's final judgment is that the above investigation does not raise "a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved," (*BCO* 31-2) the SJC shall dismiss the case and advise the parties to the case.

16.5 If, however, the SJC's final judgment is that the above investigation raises "a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved," (*BCO* 31-2) it shall institute process under *BCO* 31. In such event, the SJC shall conduct a trial in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 32, *BCO* 35 and *OMSJC* 12.5 through 12.10.

17. DECISIONS, REVIEW AND REHEARING THEREOF

17.1 Each decision shall be in the following format:

a. A summary of the facts. (A presentation in chronological order of the relevant history and facts that bear on the case.)
b. A statement of the issues. (A concise framing by the Court of the specific issues being judged in the case.)
c. The judgment. (A definite conclusion rendered on the specific issues being adjudged.)
d. The reasoning and opinion of the court. (The explanation by the court of the resolution of disputed facts and reasons for the judgment rendered.)
e. Any Amends. (Directions as to what the lower court must do, or undo, in light of the Judgment. Cf. *BCO* 42-9; 43-10; 40-5).
f. A direction that the full decision (*OMSJC* 17.1(a-f)) shall be recorded in the minutes of the lower court(s), as well as a statement of how an affected lower court has complied with any amends therein.

17.2 A judgment of the Standing Judicial Commission shall be effective from the time of its announcement to the parties in accordance with *BCO* 15-5(b). except in the case of a minority report in accordance with *BCO* 15-5(c). Any SJC decision can be announced immediately to the parties if approved by 2/3 of voting members in such case. Otherwise, the Decision will not be announced until after the procedures of OMSJC 18.12 have been completed.

17.3 Judicial decisions shall be binding and conclusive on the parties. Judicial decisions are to be given due and serious consideration by the Church and its lower courts when deliberating matters related to such action, and may be appealed to in subsequent, similar cases as to any principle which may have been decided (*BCO* 14-7).

17.4 Each decision of the Commission and a Judicial Panel shall show the name of the member(s) who wrote the opinion, together with the names of all members as to their concurrence, dissent, abstention or disqualification.

17.5 Proposed judgments of a Judicial Panel are not binding on the parties, but the Stated Clerk shall transmit to the parties a copy of the panel's proposed decision and inform the parties of their right to request a rehearing before the full Standing Judicial Commission. If any party desires a rehearing by the full Commission, such request must be filed with the Stated Clerk within 14 days after receipt of said Panel's proposed and recommended decision. Said party filing such a request for rehearing may attach a brief giving such party's reasons and arguments for this request. Such brief must comply with the requirement of *OMSJC* 8.3-8.5 of this Manual as it relates to supplemental briefs.

17.6 If no member of the Judicial Panel shall request a rehearing but a party shall have timely requested under Section 17.5 a rehearing by the full Commission, the Stated Clerk shall send by electronic means a ballot to each Commission member which shall have a place for each member to indicate his vote in favor of or against such party's request. Each member shall complete and file such ballot with the Stated Clerk within 15 days of the receipt of the electronic notice. If any member fails to file such ballot by electronic means within said 15 days, or shall file the ballot without completing it, that member's vote shall be recorded as a vote against the request for such a rehearing.

17.7 A rehearing of the case by the full Standing Judicial Commission shall be had only in the following circumstances:

a. Where, within 15 days of the receipt of the ballot from the Stated Clerk under Section 17.6 at least seven qualified members of the full Commission shall request by mail or electronic means (including any requests made under *OMSJC* 17.7.d), by ballot or by separate written notice to the Stated Clerk or the Secretary of the Commission, that the case be reheard by the full Commission; or

b. In the case of a Panel of three voting members or less, where one voting member of the Judicial Panel hearing the case shall so request under *OMSJC* 10.11.a; or

c. In the case of a Panel of four voting members or more, where two voting members of the Judicial Panel hearing the case shall so request under *OMSJC* 10.11.a; or

d. Where seven members of the Standing Judicial Commission shall file by electronic means written request

for such rehearing within 15 days of the receipt of the proposed decision under Section 17.5.

17.8 a. Every Judicial Panel's proposed and recommended decision shall be reviewed by the full Commission. In addition, those cases approved under Section 17.7 shall be reheard. A "review" means that the full Commission shall consider, discuss and debate each decision. A "rehearing" means that in addition to a "review", the full Commission shall hear the oral arguments of the parties.

b. After hearing the oral arguments in a case where a rehearing is granted under Section 17.7, or immediately when a case is called for review if there is no rehearing, the presiding officer of the full Commission shall poll each member present as to whether or not they have read the following:

(1) the Judicial Panel's proposed and recommended decision;

(2) all briefs timely filed by the parties;

(3) those portions of the Record of the Case such member feels is necessary to understand the issues of the case.

Any member who is not able to certify affirmatively to these inquiries shall not be eligible to participate in discussion or vote on this case.

c. After the completion of (b) above, the Court shall go into closed session but may permit the Stated Clerk and his assistant(s) to remain to assist with the taking of the minutes.

d. Then the consideration and discussion of the proposed and recommended decision of the Panel shall begin with members of the Panel briefing the full Commission on the facts of the case, the Panel's statement of the issues, the Panel's proposed judgment and the Panel's Reasoning and Opinion. Any dissenting member of the Panel may then present his reasons for dissent. The full Commission will then enter upon a regular parliamentary procedure to perfect, revise, change or approve any part of the Panel's proposed and recommended decision.

e. In this procedure, each of the 4 parts of the proposed and recommended decision shall be perfected.

(1) The Summary of the Facts

(2) The Statement of the Issues
(3) The Judgment
(4) The Reasoning and Opinion of the Court.

f. After all 4 parts have been approved individually then the decision as a whole shall be voted on by roll call without change or amendment.

g. All qualified members present should participate in the vote and the vote of each member shall be included in the written decision.

h. Upon such review, if parts 1, 2 and 3 of the decision have been perfected but part 4 - the Reasoning and Opinion of the Court - needs to be rewritten and cannot be done at that meeting of the Commission, the Chairman of the Commission shall designate a member or a committee of members voting with the majority on the other 3 parts to write the proposed reasoning and opinion based on the decisions on the other 3 parts. The Chairman, upon consulting with the members of the Commission present, shall:

(1) set a date and time for a telephone conference call for the perfecting and voting on the "Reasoning and Opinion" part of the decision;
(2) this date shall be at least 30 days in advance and not more than 45 days in advance;
(3) the members or committee of members appointed to write "The Reasoning and Opinion" shall agree to have a proposal in the hands of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly within 15 days;
(4) the Stated Clerk shall send the proposal by electronic means to each member of the Commission at least 10 days before the date set for such telephone conference call;
(5) the Stated Clerk shall in the same communication send to each Commission member a written ballot;
(6) if any Commissioner cannot participate in the telephone conference call, his vote on the decision as a whole will be counted so as to be consistent with his vote on the other parts. If he wishes to change his vote, he may fax a copy of his signed written ballot to the Stated Clerk at or before the time of the telephone conference call;

(7) when "The Reasoning and Opinion" part of the decision has been perfected, then the Chairman shall call for a roll call vote on the decision as a whole and announce the decision;

(8) the other 3 portions of the decision previously approved may not be altered or revised on this telephone conference call.

(9) After all 4 parts have been approved individually, then the decision as a whole shall be voted on by roll call without change or amendment.

i. After a decision has been reached by the Full Commission, any member may file, within 14 days after the date the text of the decision is sent by the Secretary to the members of the Commission, a concurring or dissenting opinion, which, if it conforms with the requirements of *OMSJC* 18.12, shall be included as an appendix to the decision when it is sent to the parties. The decision and any concurring or dissenting opinions shall be sent to the parties and released to the public at the same time and only after the procedures of *OMSJC* 18.12 have been completed. (See also 17.2)

17.9 a. In the event of a hearing by the Full Commission where the case was not heard by a judicial panel, the Commission shall issue to the parties a preliminary judgment. Within 14 days after receiving the preliminary judgment, a party may request reconsideration of the judgment by filing a supplemental brief as set forth in *OMSJC* 8.2. This supplemental brief shall state the reasons for requesting reconsideration of the preliminary judgment. The commission at its next meeting shall consider the request for reconsideration. Reconsideration of the preliminary judgment shall be granted only by majority vote of the Full Commission.

b. If reconsideration is granted, the Commission shall immediately go into closed session to discuss the case, consider its merits, and render a final judgment. If reconsideration is not granted, the preliminary judgment shall become final in accordance with *BCO* 15-5(a).

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18. MISCELLANEOUS

18.1 Any meeting of the Commission or a Judicial Panel shall be opened and closed with prayer.

18.2 All oral arguments by the parties before the Commission or a Judicial Panel thereof shall be electronically recorded. No other recordings are authorized without the consent of all of the parties and the approval of the Panel/Commission. SJC recordings shall be kept by the Stated Clerk for the use of the SJC until the case has been finally determined, and then such recordings may be destroyed. Upon request, the Officers may authorize the use of SJC recordings.

18.3 a. Multiple complaints against the same act or decision of a lower court may be combined into one case but each complainant shall receive individual notices issued under this Manual. However, such multiple complainants may designate one of their number to be representative of the multiple complainants, and in such a case notices issued under this Manual shall be sent to that complainant.

b. A single complaint signed by more than one person against the same act or decision of a lower court shall be treated as a single complaint and all notices issued under this Manual shall be sent to the first named complainant.

c. In either of the cases under *OMSJC* 12.8.a or b where a hearing is held under this Manual the multiple complainants shall be treated as one complainant and:

(1) be granted the same total amount of time to present oral arguments as would have been given to a single complainant to present oral arguments; and

(2) be permitted to present one combined brief and supplemental brief (if the circumstances permit a supplemental brief) and such brief or supplemental brief shall meet the same requirements as would be imposed upon a single complainant presenting a brief or supplemental brief.

18.4 a. If at any time up to 15 days prior to the date set for a Judicial Panel or the Commission to hear a judicial reference, appeal or complaint, a party asserts that new evidence has been obtained, which was not available or was not made available because of justifiable

circumstances at the time the Record of the Case was put together, said new evidence shall be put in writing and sent within 5 days to the Stated Clerk and shall be received as part of the Record of the Case only when all the parties stipulate in writing agreeing to the new evidence. If the parties do not agree to this stipulation, and the party presenting the new evidence insists that it is material to the case, the proceedings shall be suspended and the matter docketed at the next meeting of the Panel or the Commission to make a determination as to whether the new evidence to be offered has an important bearing on the case. At that next meeting, the Panel or Commission may decide:

(1) that the new evidence does not have an important bearing on the case and proceed with the case; or

(2) that the new evidence does have an important bearing on the case and refer the case to the lower court for a new trial (*BCO* 35-16).

b. If at any time during the 15 days immediately prior to the date set for a Judicial Panel or the Commission to hear the case, a party asserts that new evidence has been obtained, which was not available or was not made available because of justifiable circumstances, at the time the Record of the Case was put together, said new evidence shall be put in writing and be presented to the Panel or Commission before any oral arguments are presented on the substance of the case. Under these circumstances, the Panel or Commission before proceeding to hear oral arguments, shall receive the new evidence into the Record of the Case only if all parties stipulate in writing agreeing to such new evidence. If the parties cannot agree to this stipulation, and the party presenting the new evidence insists that it is material to the case, the Panel or Commission shall make a determination as to whether the new evidence to be offered has an important bearing on the case. The Panel or Commission may then decide:

(1) that the new evidence does not have an important bearing on the case and proceed with the case; or

(2) that the new evidence does have an important bearing on the case and refer the case to the lower court for a new trial (*BCO* 35-16).

18.5 All issues before the Standing Judicial Commission, or a Judicial Panel thereof, shall be decided by a majority vote of those qualified members voting. There shall be no proxy voting.

18.6 The minutes of the meetings of the SJC must be approved by electronic ballot within 20 days after receipt of such minutes. If any member fails to file with the Stated Clerk the ballot within 20 days, that member's vote shall be recorded as approval of the minutes.

18.7 ABANDONMENT

If an appellant, complainant or party initiating a case referred to the Commission fails to appear, in person or by a qualified representative, after receiving proper notice, at any meeting of the Standing Judicial Commission, or a Judicial Panel thereof, such party shall be deemed to have abandoned the case. The Stated Clerk shall immediately notify the party that the case has been dismissed because of the failure to appear, and the party shall have 10 days from the receipt of such notice to present, in writing, a satisfactory explanation of the failure to appear and prosecute the case. If the explanation is deemed sufficient by the Officers of the Commission, or members of the Judicial Panel, the case shall be reinstated and reset for another hearing; otherwise, it shall stand abandoned and dismissed.

18.8 WAIVER OF RIGHTS TO APPEAR

a. Any party may upon a showing of good cause waive his right to appear before the higher court and present oral argument. This waiver shall be accomplished by a written notice to the higher court, sent by electronic means not less than 14 days prior to the scheduled hearing, stating the reasons for the waiver. A party's waiver has no effect upon the other party's right of appearance.

b. The higher court, if it fails to find good cause for the waiver, may refuse to accept a waiver of appearance. If the requested waiver is rejected by the higher court, it shall promptly notify the party who requested the waiver. The party shall then be required to appear before the higher court at the scheduled time and place.

c. Failure to so appear shall constitute an abandonment of the case by that party, unless within 10 days after the date of the scheduled hearing that party provides satisfactory explanation of the failure to appear. If this explanation is deemed sufficient by the higher court and if the higher

court believes the interests of justice will be served thereby, the case shall be reset for another hearing. If no further hearing is required, the case may be decided forthwith. If the party's explanation for not appearing is not deemed sufficient by the higher court, the case shall stand abandoned and dismissed.

18.9 In computing any period of time prescribed by this Manual, the day of the act or event from which the designated period of time begins to run shall not be included. The last day of the period shall be included, unless it is a Saturday, Sunday or postal holiday, in which event the period extends until the end of the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or postal holiday.

18.10 When a provision of the Manual requires a computation of time under Section 18.9, above, such period of time shall be computed with the following construction of certain terms used herein, to-wit:

a. A communication from the Commission or Panel shall be computed from the day after the document is sent electronically.

b. Documents required or permitted to be filed by a party shall be filed with the Stated Clerk. Such filing shall be sent via electronic means and shall not be timely unless the documents are received by electronic means in the office of the Stated Clerk by 11:59 PM (Eastern Time) on the deadline date. Interested parties should be aware that responsibility for such filings rests with them and that problems in delivery or non-delivery are the sole responsibility of the filing party. An electronic confirmation of receipt shall be conclusive evidence of delivery.

c. "Notice," "notification," "from receipt," "after the receipt" shall be the local date on which the party received the electronic delivery, as ordinarily confirmed by a return email. For all papers requiring such, the Commission shall be responsible for obtaining verification of date of delivery. However, compliance with such requirements shall be deemed to have been fulfilled in any of the following instances, to wit:

(1) If a party changes his/her contact or email address without notifying the Office of the Stated Clerk.

(2) If a party cannot be located after diligent inquiry.

(3) If a party refuses to accept delivery of materials or notice, or refuses to confirm receipt of an electronic communication.

(4) If materials or notice are returned to the sender with an electronic notice of being undeliverable or by the carrier with a notation that delivery could not be accomplished.

d. The Judicial Panel, or the Commission if the case is to be heard by the Commission, may extend any of the deadline dates if it determines that so doing is in the interest of justice.

18.11 The Record of the Case, Briefs, Arguments, and all proceedings before a Panel or the Commission shall be presented in the English language.

18.12. CONCURRING AND DISSENTING OPINIONS

a. The right of a Commission member to file a Concurring or Dissenting Opinion (see 17.8.i) is an essential element of the work of the Commission, in that it preserves the unity of the Commission by allowing a member in the minority to submit to the Commission's judgment, while declaring, and thus clearing, his conscience in a particular decision. An Objection (*BCO* 45-1, 4) is only permissible in the case of an otherwise qualified member of the Commission (cf. *OMSJC* 2.2-.3) who could not vote due to being a member of the presbytery or a member of a congregation in the bounds of the presbytery from which the case arose (cf. *BCO* 39-2).

b. That right notwithstanding, in order to preserve the primacy of, the authority of, and respect for Commission decisions, any Concurring or Dissenting opinion, which does not qualify as a minority decision under the terms of *BCO* 15-5, shall meet the following standards:

(1) Concurring or Dissenting opinions shall set forth concisely, as the case may be, the alternate grounds upon which the Commission's decision ought to have been rendered; or, the alleged error of the Commission's decision, a statement of the decision that should have been rendered, and the grounds sustaining.

(2) Ordinarily Concurring or Dissenting opinions should set forth positions or employ arguments that were offered in the course of the Commission's proceedings on a case.

(3) Concurring or Dissenting opinions shall be couched in temperate language conducive to maintaining respect for the Commission, vigorous expression of disagreement with the decision notwithstanding.

(4) Concurring or Dissenting opinions shall conform to the specifications for a preliminary brief (*OMSJC* 8.5.a-b.).

c. At the request of four SJC members within 14 days after the date the text of the Concurring or Dissenting Opinion is sent by the Secretary to the members of the SJC, the Chairman shall call a special meeting of the Commission, upon at least fourteen (14) days' notice, by telephone or video conference to consider either (1) a motion to adopt an Answer to any Concurring or Dissenting Opinion or (2) a motion to strike the Opinion for failing to meet the standards in 18.12.b. With respect to (1) above, although all members may participate in discussion, only those members voting with the prevailing side may vote on the adoption of an Answer. Upon the adoption of an Answer to a Concurring or Dissenting Opinion by the Commission, no further Concurring or Dissenting Opinion shall be permitted; neither shall any amendment to the Concurring or Dissenting Opinion in question be permitted. A Concurring or Dissenting Opinion may be withdrawn.

d. Members may join in pending concurring or dissenting opinions at any time until the 14-day deadline to request the meeting described in *OMSJC* 18.12.c.

e. No concurring or dissenting opinion shall be circulated to anyone outside the SJC or the PCA Clerk's office, until the completion of the procedure described in Section 18.12.c or the passage of the deadline established in 18.12.c in the event no such meeting is requested.

18.13 An Executive Session shall be understood to be a meeting or a portion of a meeting wherein only Commissioners, and others specifically invited by the Commission, are present. On the cessation of the Session, only the conclusion, judgment, or decision shall be made public. The proceeding shall be secret unless the Commission shall vote to remove the injunction of secrecy. (RONR (12th ed.) 9:24-27)

A Closed Session shall be understood as a meeting or portion of a meeting wherein only Commissioners, and others specifically invited by the Commission, are present. Unlike an Executive Session, however, the proceedings shall not be secret, but rather discussion of such matters outside of the meeting shall be at the discretion of each commissioner, and the minutes of such a closed

session may be read and approved in open session. However, no person present at a closed session shall later identify in any manner the views, speeches or votes of a member of the commission during the closed session, apart from that member's written permission.

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19. REPORTS

19.1 The Standing Judicial Commission shall prepare a report to the General Assembly each year.

19.2 The Standing Judicial Commission shall make a full report of each case directed to the General Assembly, which report shall consist of the following:

a. A summary of the facts.
b. A statement of the issues.
c. The judgment of the Standing Judicial Commission
d. The reasoning and opinion of the Standing Judicial Commission.
e. The vote of the Standing Judicial Commission.
f. Any concurring and/or dissenting opinions of any members of the Standing Judicial Commission, and any SJC answer to them, which have been received under *OMSJC* 18.12.

19.3 a. A copy of the report (see Section 19.2, above) of each case decided subsequent to the previous annual General Assembly shall be included in the *Commissioner Handbook* for the next following General Assembly.

b. The briefs (see *OMSJC* 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5) shall be made available by electronic means or by inclusion in the Commissioner Handbook for the next following General Assembly.

19.4 A minority decision may be filed in accordance with *BCO* 15-5(c) within 20 days of the adjournment of the Standing Judicial Commission making a decision, provided also that written notice by 1/3 of the voting members of the Commission file such notice within 24 hours of the adjournment.

19.5 The minutes, but not the judicial cases, decisions, or reports, of the Standing Judicial Commission shall be reviewed annually by the Committee on Constitutional Business. The minutes shall be examined for conformity to this Manual of the Standing Judicial Commission and *RAO* 17, violations of which shall be reported as "exceptions" as defined in *RAO* 14-11.d.(2). With respect to this examination, the Committee on Constitutional Business shall report directly to the General Assembly.

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20. AMENDMENTS, USE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATING MANUAL

20.1 This Manual may be amended as provided in *RAO* 17-5.

20.2 If any member asserts that this Manual has been violated in any case, such member may file a written objection citing the alleged violation. This written objection shall be included by the Secretary in the report of the case to the General Assembly filed under *OMSJC* 19.2.

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STANDING JUDICIAL COMMISSION

MEMBER VOWS

***RAO* 17-1.** There shall be a Standing Judicial Commission composed of twenty-four members in accordance with *BCO* 15-4. Upon election, each new member of the Standing Judicial Commission, before entering upon the duties of this office, shall sign a printed copy of the following vows; further, if the newly elected member is present, he shall affirm these vows in the presence of the Assembly electing him:

"I do solemnly vow, by the assistance of the grace of God, in my service as a judge in this branch of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, that

1. I will act as before God, my Judge and the Searcher of hearts;

2. I will judge without respect to persons, and if so tempted, will recuse myself from judgment;

3. I will judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgment;

4. I will judge according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, through my best efforts applied to nothing other than the record of the case and other documents properly before me; and

5. If in a given case I find my view on a particular issue to be in conflict with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, I will recuse myself from such case, if I cannot conscientiously apply the Constitution."

SIGN: _____

Print Name: _____

Date _____

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CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION
OF
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
(A CORPORATION)

FIRST. -- The name of this corporation is Presbyterian Church in America (A Corporation).

SECOND. -- Its registered office in the State of Delaware is to be located at 229 South State Street, in the City of Dover, County of Kent. The registered agent in charge thereof is The Prentice-Hall Corporation System, Inc., at 229 South State Street, Dover, Delaware.

THIRD. -- The purpose of the corporation is to engage in any lawful act or activity for which corporations may be organized under the general Corporation Law of Delaware.

All assets of the corporation shall be principally and directly dedicated exclusively to religious and educational work. The corporation shall not engage in business activities for profit and no part of any net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of any member, director or officer of the corporation, or any private individual, save and except that reasonable compensation may be paid for services rendered to or for the corporation affecting one or more of its purposes, and no member, director or officer of the corporation, or private individual, shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets on dissolution of the corporation. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of secular propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not conduct or carry on any activities not permitted by an organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and its regulations as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, or by any organization contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c)(2) of such Code and regulations.

Upon the dissolution or liquidation or other winding up of this corporation, all of its assets, principal and income, subject to the payment of its debts, shall be distributed to an organization which is exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

FOURTH. -- The corporation shall not have any capital stock, and the conditions of membership shall be as stated in the By-Laws.

FIFTH. -- The names and places of residence of the incorporators are as follows:

NAMES	**RESIDENCES**
W. Jackson Williamson	701 Fort Dale Road Greenville, Alabama 36067
Leon F. Hendrick	1424 Pinehurst Jackson, Mississippi 39202
Gordon Kenworthy Reed	105 River Street Greenville, South Carolina 29601
Cecil Williamson, Jr.	221 Cone Drive Selma, Alabama 36707
Harry Norval Miller, Jr.	52 Adams Avenue Montgomery, Alabama 36104
Morton Howison Smith	5422 Clinton Boulevard Jackson, Mississippi 39209
Donald Bray Patterson	4611 Trawick Drive Jackson, Mississippi 39211

SIXTH. -- The civil activities and affairs of the corporation shall be managed by a board of directors. The number of directors which shall constitute the whole board shall be such as from time to time shall be fixed by, or in the manner provided in, the By-Laws, but in no case shall the number be less than three. The directors need not be members of the corporation unless so required by the By-Laws. The board of directors shall be elected by the members at the annual meeting of the corporation to be held on such date as the By-Laws may provide, and shall hold office until their successors are respectively elected and qualified. The By-Laws shall specify the number of directors necessary to constitute a quorum. The board of directors may, by resolution or resolutions, passed by a majority of the whole board, designate one or more committees, which to the extent provided in said resolution or resolutions or in the By-Laws of the corporation shall have and may exercise all the powers of the board of directors in the management of the activities and affairs of the corporation and may have power to authorize the seal of the corporation to be affixed to all papers which may require it; and such committee or committees shall have such name or names as may be stated in the By-Laws of the corporation or may be determined from time to time by resolution adopted by the board of directors. The directors of the corporation may, if the By-Laws so provide, be classified as to term of office. The Corporation may elect such

officers as the By-Laws may specify, who shall, subject to the provision of the Statute, have such titles and exercise such duties as the By-Laws may provide.

This corporation may in its By-Laws confer powers upon its board of directors in addition to the foregoing, and in addition to the powers and authorities expressly conferred upon them by the Statute, provided that the board of directors shall not exercise any power of authority conferred herein or by Statute upon the members.

SEVENTH. -- Meetings of members may be held without the State of Delaware, if the By-Laws so provide. The books of the corporation may be kept (subject to any provision contained in the Statutes) outside the State of Delaware at such place or places as may be from time to time designated by the board of directors.

EIGHTH. -- The corporation reserves the right to amend, alter, change or repeal any provision contained in this Certificate of Incorporation, in the manner now or hereafter prescribed by the Statute, and all rights conferred upon members herein are granted subject to this reservation.

We, The Undersigned, being each of the incorporators hereinbefore named, for the purpose of forming a corporation pursuant to Chapter I of Title 8 of The Delaware Code, do make this Certificate, hereby declaring and certifying that the facts herein stated are true, and accordingly have hereunto set our hands and seals this 21st day of September, A.D. 1973.

W. Jackson Williamson	Leon F. Hendrick
Gordon K. Reed	Cecil Williamson, Jr.
Harry Norval Miller, Jr.	Morton Howison Smith
Donald B. Patterson	

CLERK'S NOTES ON AMENDMENTS

1. In 1974 the original Certificate of Incorporation was amended to change the name.
2. In 1980, the General Assembly amended Article Sixth by adding the word "civil" in the first line, and deleting the last sentence of the first paragraph, namely: "The board of directors is expressly authorized to make, alter or repeal the Bylaws of this corporation."

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PREFATORY STATEMENT:

For the purpose of conducting civil matters, Presbyterian Church in America is a civil corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware. As in any civil corporation, the Presbyterian Church in America has a certificate of incorporation and bylaws under which it is to operate in regard to these civil matters. These bylaws should never be amended to include procedures for conducting ecclesiastical business but only for the conduct of civil business in our society.

CORPORATE BYLAWS
OF
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
(A CORPORATION)

ARTICLE I. NAME AND LOCATION

Section 1. The name of this corporation shall be Presbyterian Church in America (A Corporation).

Section 2. The registration of the corporation of the Presbyterian Church in America will be designated by the Board of Directors and reported annually in the corporate minutes. The official business address of the corporation is the office of the Administrative Committee.

Other offices for transaction of business shall be located at such places as the General Assembly or its Permanent Committees shall designate.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERS AND MEETINGS OF THE CORPORATION

Section 1. The members of the corporation shall be those duly ordained Teaching Elders (Ministers) enrolled in a Presbytery affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in America, and those Ruling Elders representing local congregations, which congregations are affiliated with Presbyteries affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in America who have been designated or commissioned to attend the next General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. Such Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders shall be designated or commissioned by Presbyteries or Congregations in accordance with rules and regulations prescribed by the *Book of Church Order* (14-2). Such individuals shall be the members of the corporation until the next meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America at which time the members of the Corporation shall be those individuals designated or commissioned as hereinabove set forth to attend such General Assembly.

Section 2. The annual meeting of the Corporation shall be at such time and such place as designated by the General Assembly.

Section 3. Special meetings of the membership of Corporation in General Assembly may be called in accordance with the *Book of Church Order* (14-3).

Section 4. A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the membership in General Assembly shall be that prescribed in the *Book of Church Order* (14-5).

Section 5. The Moderator shall call all meetings to order and shall preside until his successor has been selected and takes office. If the Moderator is unable to act, the Stated Clerk shall call the Assembly to order and preside over its sessions until a Moderator has been elected.

Section 6. Proxies shall not be allowed at General Assembly meetings of the membership.

ARTICLE III. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The business affairs of the Corporation, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical matters, shall be managed by the Board of Directors, which shall have such powers and duties as are set forth in the charter of the Corporation and the Bylaws.

Section 2. The Board of Directors shall consist of the members of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly. Each director shall hold office as a director as long as he remains a member of the Administrative Committee of General Assembly.

Section 3. The Board of Directors may establish such subcommittees as may be deemed necessary or desirable and vest such subcommittees with such authority as may be deemed proper.

Section 4. A Stated Meeting of the Board of Directors shall be held during each General Assembly. Notice shall not be required for this Stated Meeting. A regular meeting, without notice, may be held at each regular meeting of the Administrative Committee.

Section 5. Special Meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the Chairman or by a majority of the Board. Written notice stating the place, date and hour of such special meeting shall be delivered by the Secretary at least 10 days prior to the date of the meeting. Such notice should specify

the purpose of the meeting. A director may waive such notice; and attendance at such a meeting shall constitute a waiver of such notice.

Section 6. A majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum.

Section 7. There shall be no voting by proxy.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of the Corporation shall be the Chairman of the Board and President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and such assistant secretaries and treasurers as may be deemed desirable by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors may elect assistant secretaries and treasurers. In the event that the Secretary or the Treasurer is unable to act, the Board of Directors shall be authorized to appoint a provisional Secretary or a provisional Treasurer to serve until a regular Secretary or Treasurer may be elected by the next General Assembly.

Section 2. The Chairman of the Administrative Committee shall serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors and as the President of the Corporation. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and shall appoint the members of all subcommittees of the Board. He shall sign such instruments as may be required and shall perform such duties as may be assigned by the Board of Directors of the members of the Corporation in General Assembly.

Section 3. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall serve as the Secretary of the Corporation. The Secretary shall have such duties and responsibilities as set forth in the *Book of Church Order* and the *Rules of Assembly Operations* for the Stated Clerk. He shall be immediately responsible to the Administrative Committee. The Secretary shall prepare and forward all notices required by law or by these Bylaws, and shall have general charge of the corporate books and records. He shall sign such instruments as may be required, and perform the duties incident to the office of Secretary, and such duties as may be assigned by the Board of Directors or the members of the Corporation in General Assembly.

Section 4. The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shall serve as the Treasurer of the Corporation. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds and securities belonging to the Corporation, and not otherwise

designated to one of the four Program Committees. He shall receive, deposit and disburse such funds as directed by the General Assembly, including any provisions set forth in the *Book of Church Order*. He shall keep an accurate account of the finances of the Corporation and of the funds in his custody. He shall prepare, or have prepared, such reports of the financial condition of the Corporation as may be required, and, in general, perform all of the duties incident to the office of Treasurer. He shall be bonded in an amount to be determined by the Administrative Committee.

ARTICLE V. THE PARTICULAR PERMANENT COMMITTEES

A. The Administrative Committee of General Assembly.

The business affairs of the Corporation as distinguished from the ecclesiastical matters, and those not specifically assigned to one of the other permanent committees by these Bylaws or an act of the General Assembly, shall be managed by the Administrative Committee, which serves as the Board of Directors provided in the Charter of Incorporation, subject to such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the General Assembly, including all applicable provisions of the *Book of Church Order*.

B. The Committee on Discipleship Ministries.

The affairs of the Church in the areas of Christian education and publications are assigned to the Committee on Discipleship Ministries, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

C. The Committee on Mission to North America.

The affairs of the Church involved in its extension in the United States and Canada are assigned to the Committee on Mission to North America, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

D. The Committee on Mission to the World

The affairs of the Church in the area of world missions outside of the United States and Canada are assigned to the Committee on Mission to the World, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

E. The Committee on Reformed University Fellowship

The affairs of the Church in the area of campus ministries on college and university campuses are assigned to the Committee on Reformed University Fellowship, whose duties and authority shall be designated by the General Assembly.

F. Other Committees

The Assembly may elect or appoint other committees of either a permanent or temporary character to handle particular matters of business as designated by the Assembly. The business handled by such committees shall be limited to those matters assigned by the Assembly.

G. Boards of Agencies

When it is necessary for the handling of civil matters, the General Assembly may authorize one of its committees or agencies to incorporate and to form a board. The relationship of the board to the Assembly remains as a committee, and the provisions of the corporation charter and bylaws shall be in conformity with the constitution of the Church.

ARTICLE VI. OTHER BOARDS AND AGENCIES

The Assembly has authority to make exceptions to the above guidelines for some boards, agencies and committees not specifically covered by the *BCO*, by making amendments to these bylaws spelling out the specific exceptions, as well as approving corporation bylaws in conformity with these exceptions.

1. Geneva Benefits Group, hereinafter referred to as "Geneva," shall provide such services in furtherance of the religious purposes of this Corporation as may be agreed between Geneva and the corporation from time to time. Specifically, but not in limitation thereof, Geneva shall administer and serve as the trustee of the assets of the retirement plans, the group insurance plans and the ministerial relief programs of the Corporation.

   No action of the General Assembly, the Corporation, or Geneva shall conflict with provisions of the "Trust Agreement for the Tax-Sheltered Annuity Plan of the Presbyterian Church in America," and the "Presbyterian Church in America Health and Welfare Benefit Trust" without amendment of said Trust Agreements as provided in the Trust Agreements. Geneva shall serve as the trustee under the Trust Agreements until replaced in accordance with their terms.

   Geneva will make a report to each General Assembly through the Committee of Commissioners on Geneva Benefits Group.

The Board of Directors of Geneva shall be twelve (12) in number, divided into four (4) classes of three (3) men each serving for four (4) year terms. Directors will be eligible for re-election to a second four-year term after which there must be a one-year interval before further re-election. The Board may make requests to the Presbyteries to nominate specific men to the Board and may submit to the General Assembly Nominating Committee letters of recommendation concerning particular nominees from the Presbyteries. The General Assembly shall elect at each Assembly a class of Directors to begin service immediately following the conclusion of the Assembly. Each member of the Directors must be either a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder or Deacon in the Presbyterian Church in America. The Directors are not subject to the provisions of the *BCO*, Chapter 14 relating to proportionate representation of all Presbyteries or for equal representation of Teaching and Ruling Elders. A vacancy on the Board of Directors because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or otherwise, may be filled by the directors for the unexpired portion of the term subject to the approval of the next General Assembly.

2. The Board of Trustees of Covenant College shall consist of twenty-eight members each elected to a four-year term. The Board is divided into four classes of seven men each such that the terms of one-fourth of the Board members expire each year. There is no required formula for dividing the members of a class between teaching and ruling elders. A Trustee shall be eligible at the end of any full four-year term for re-election to a second four-year term, after which there must be a one-year interval before re-election. The General Assembly of the PCA may choose to elect Trustees to fill unfinished terms of Trustees who vacated their office before their term expired.

   The Trustee who is elected to fill the unfinished term is eligible, if reelected, to serve one additional successive term, after which a one-year period must elapse before he is eligible for re-election.

   Up to four men of denominations with which the PCA is in ecclesiastical fellowship may be elected, one to each class. In addition, the Board may make requests to the Presbyteries to nominate specific men to the Board and may submit to the Assembly Nominating Committee letters of recommendation concerning particular nominees from the presbyteries. Furthermore, the Board may recommend one nominee per class from another NAPARC member denomination for consideration by the Assembly Nominating Committee, with a maximum of two such members permitted on the Board at one time.

3. The Board of Trustees of Covenant Theological Seminary shall consist of not less than twelve and not more than thirty-two members [currently twenty-four]. The members of the Board of Trustees are each elected to a four-year term. The Board is divided equally into four classes, the terms of one-fourth of the Board members expiring each year. A Trustee shall be eligible at the end of any full four-year term for re-election to a second four-year term, after which there must be a one-year interval before re-election. The General Assembly of the PCA may choose to elect Trustees to fill unfinished terms of Trustees who vacated their office before their term expired. The Trustee who is elected to fill the unfinished term is eligible, if reelected, to serve one additional successive term, after which a one-year period must elapse before he is eligible for re-election.

   Each Trustee shall be an ordained teaching or ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in America and elected by the General Assembly, except that up to two members of each class may be elders of denominations with which the PCA is in ecclesiastical fellowship. There is no required formula for dividing the members of a class between teaching and ruling elders. In addition, the Board may make requests to the Presbyteries to nominate specific men to the Board and may submit to the Assembly Nominating Committee letters of recommendation concerning particular nominees from the presbyteries. Furthermore, the Board may recommend one nominee per class from another NAPARC member denomination for consideration by the Assembly Nominating Committee, with a maximum of two such members permitted on the Board at one time.

4. The Directors of Ridge Haven, Inc. shall consist of ten (10) members, divided into five (5) classes of two (2) men each serving five (5) year terms. The General Assembly shall elect at each Assembly a Class of Directors to begin service immediately following the conclusion of the Assembly. In addition, the Ridge Haven Board may make request to presbyteries to nominate specific men to the Board and may submit to the Assembly Nominating Committee letters of recommendation concerning particular nominees from presbyteries.

   Each member of the Board of Directors must be either a Teaching or Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America. The members of the Board of Directors of Ridge Haven are not subject to the *BCO* Chapter 14 relating to proportionate representation of all Presbyteries or for equal representation of Teaching and Ruling Elders. Directors shall be eligible for re-election to a second five-year term after which there must be a one year interval before further re-election.

5. The Board of Directors of Presbyterian Church in America Foundation, Inc., shall consist of ten (10) members in classes elected through the standard nomination and election procedures.

The Directors shall serve for four (4) year terms, and shall be divided into four (4) classes, each class being as nearly equal in number as possible, so that the terms of approximately one-fourth of the Directors shall expire each year. Directors shall be eligible for re-election to a second four-year term after which there must be a one-year interval before further election.

As stated above, the Directors shall be elected through the standard nomination and election procedures, except that the Board of Directors may make requests to the Presbyteries to nominate specific men for election as Directors, and may submit to the Assembly Nominating Committee letters of recommendation concerning particular nominees for election as Directors from the Presbyteries.

All of the members of the Board of Directors shall be either Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders or Deacons, and at least one-half of such members shall be Ruling Elders and Deacons.

ARTICLE VII. FISCAL MATTERS

Section 1. The fiscal year of the Corporation shall be from January 1 through December 31 of each year, commencing January 1, 1991. The General Assembly shall annually designate the auditors of the Corporation on recommendation from the Administrative Committee, which auditing firm(s) shall make an audit of the financial affairs of the Corporation and of each permanent committee promptly following the close of each fiscal year. The expenses of such audit shall be prorated among the Corporation and each permanent committee.

Section 2. All funds of the Corporation shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of the Corporation in such banks, savings and loan institutions, trust, or other depositories as the permanent committees by resolution may select. Committees, boards and agencies of the General Assembly may maintain their own separate bank accounts.

Section 3. All checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of debtedness issued in the name of the Corporation shall be signed by such officer or officers of the Corporation as the Administrative Committee shall designate. All checks, drafts, or other orders for the payment of money, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of any of the permanent committees shall be signed by such representative of the committee as the committee by resolution shall designate.

ARTICLE VIII. ECCLESIASTICAL MATTERS

Section 1. The ecclesiastical Constitution of the Church is defined in the Book of Church Order, Preface III. The provisions of the Constitution shall control over any provisions of these Bylaws that may be in conflict therewith.

ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

These Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote at any annual or special meeting of the General Assembly.

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NAPARC* AGREEMENTS
ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(*North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)

NOTE: "Amendments to the *BCO* are unnecessary to enable Sessions and Presbyteries to be guided by the NAPARC AGREEMENT, and the Assembly [will] communicate the NAPARC AGREEMENT to Sessions and Presbyteries for guidance" (*M17GA*, 17-82, III, 10, p.152).

NAPARC Golden Rule Comity Agreement

(For the Information of Sessions and Presbytery MNA Committees)

1. We will be sensitive to the presence of existing churches and missions ministries of other NAPARC churches and will refrain from enlisting members and will take care in receiving members of these existing ministries.
2. We will communicate with the equivalent or appropriate agency (denominational missions committee or board, Presbytery missions or church extension committee, or session) before initiating church planting activities in a community where NAPARC churches or missions exist.
3. We will provide information on at least an annual basis describing progress in our ministries and future plans.
4. We will encourage our regional home missions leadership to develop good working relationships.

M15GA, 15-80, III, 6, p. 165

NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members

Recognizing that the churches of NAPARC have on occasion unintentionally received members or ordained officers who were under various states of discipline in another NAPARC church, thus creating tension between the churches, and at the same time recognizing the need for mutual freedom and openness on the part of the churches, we agree to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of other denominations as follows:

1. Regular Transfer of Membership
   That in the regular transfer of membership between NAPARC churches, the session/consistory or presbytery/classis not receive a member until the appropriate document of transfer is in the hands of the receiving church.

2. Transfer with Irregularities
   a. That upon request for transfer of membership by a person under

discipline, the sending session/consistory or presbytery/classis inform the receiving body of the nature and extent of the disciplinary procedure before implementing the requested transfer, thus enabling informal consultation between the pastors and elders of both churches.

b. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church has taken into serious account the discipline of and the information supplied by the sending church.
c. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church is satisfied that proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been seriously attempted.
d. That a "fugitive from discipline" who no longer is a member of a church or who is no longer on the roll of a presbytery shall not be received until the former judicatory/assembly has been contacted to determine if proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been seriously attempted.

3. Recourse and Appeal
   Where communication or action regarding the sending/receiving of a member or ordained officer/office bearer does not satisfy either the dismissing or receiving judicatory/assembly, communication may be submitted to the interchurch relations committees of the denominations involved with a view to mediation of the problem. If this proves unsatisfactory, the session/consistory or presbytery/classis may register its concern to the appropriate judicatory/assembly of the other denomination.

4. Congregational Transfer
   That a congregation seeking to leave a NAPARC church to become affiliated with another NAPARC denomination be received only after it has complied with the requirements of the form of government of the church from which it is separating, and the receiving church shall be responsible to see that it is done.

M16GA, 16-25, III, 5a, p. 116.