

The Book of
Church Order
Of
Vanguard
Presbyterian
Church

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A BRIEF HISTORICAL STATEMENT ON THE POLITY OF PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED CHURCHES SINCE THE REFORMATION

The following historical statement was written by Rev. Walter L. Lingle, chairman of the Committee on Revision which revised the *BCO* of the Presbyterian Church in the United States that was adopted by the General Assembly of that denomination in 1925:

Our *Book of Church Order* has a long and notable line of ancestors. John Calvin wrote the first modern Presbyterian Book of Order for the church at Geneva in 1542.

John Knox sat at the feet of John Calvin for several years, and then returned to Scotland and wrote the “First Book of Discipline” for the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in 1560. The whole history of Presbyterian church government in Scotland goes back to this First Book of Discipline.

The Westminster Assembly, which met in London in 1643, wrote not only our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, but also “The Form of Presbyterian Church Government.” The Presbyterian Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland adopted this Westminster Form of Government.

When our Presbyterian forefathers came to America they brought with them the Westminster “Form of Presbyterian Church Government,” and it became the basis of Church law in the American Presbyterian Church.

The first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America was organized in 1789. The General

Synod in preparing for the organization of the General Assembly practically re-wrote The Form of Presbyterian Church Government in 1788, to adjust it to the conditions in America. The new book was called “The Form of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.” It was revised a number of times prior to 1861, when the Southern Presbyterians withdrew and formed The Presbyterian Church in the United States.

When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States was organized on December 4, 1861, it adopted the Form of Government and Discipline with the result that a thoroughgoing revision was adopted in 1879. A great many amendments were added during the next forty years.

In 1921, our General Assembly took steps to revise our *Book of Church Order* again. Another thoroughgoing revision was proposed by the Committee on Revision, adopted by the General Assembly, approved by a large majority of the Presbyteries, and enacted into law by the General Assembly of the PCUS in 1925.

While our present *Book of Church Order* is the result of numerous revisions, it still contains many phrases, sentences, and paragraphs which are found in the *Form of Government and Discipline* of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, which was adopted in 1788.

This brief sketch shows that our book goes back through a long noble line of ancestors to the days of John Calvin. We also believe that in the basic principles it goes back to the Holy Scriptures.¹

From 1925 to 1973 when the PCA was formed, there were numerous changes to the PCUS *BCO* that moved it progressively in the direction of a hierarchical denomination. Most of those changes were accomplished through the overture process rather than through committees of revision. The PCUS/PCUSA *BCO*

¹*The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, Revised Edition, 1925 (Richmond, Virginia: Presbyterian Committee of Publications, 1927), iii.

represents what has been rightly called canon law where almost everything is minutely spelled out in their *BCO*. The 1925 PCUS *BCO* was only 148 pages on 4-inch by 6-inch paper.

The original PCA *BCO* of 1973 was a revision of the 1934 PCUS *BCO* and attempted to implement true grassroots Presbyterianism according to the model of the Scriptures. There have been numerous changes to the PCA *BCO* over the last 46 years through the overture process. The present *BCO* of the PCA has two parts, the *Rules of Assembly Operation* and the *Standing Judicial Manual*, each which are nearly 50 pages long. Moreover, there have been so many changes to the PCA *BCO* that the General Assembly is now almost completely hierarchical.

There are two lessons learned from the various changes to the PCUS and PCA *BCO*'s over the last 100 years. First, permitting the *BCO* to be changed by overture (regardless of the majority required by the process) has resulted in a swollen book of polity which is difficult to understand and, often times, contradictory. Second, these various changes to the PCA *BCO* have moved the denomination incrementally into a hierarchy at the General Assembly level which is a betrayal of the grassroots nature of its formation.

PART I

THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER ONE—*The King and Head of the Church*

1-1. Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders the government is, whose name is called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even forever, 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 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 fills all in all; he being ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, received gifts for his church and gave offices necessary for the building of his church, for making disciples of all nations and perfecting his saints.

1-2. There is therefore but one King and Head of the church, the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who rules in his church by his Word and Spirit. His mediatorial office includes all the offices in his church. It belongs to his majesty from his throne of glory not only to rule his church directly but also to use the ministry of men in ruling and teaching his church through his Word and Spirit, thus exercising through men his own authority and enforcing his own laws. The authority of all such ministerial office rests upon his appointment, who has ordained government in his church, revealed its nature to us in his Word, and promised

his presence in the midst of his church as this government is exercised in his name.

1-3. Christ orders his church by the rule of his Word. The pattern of officers, ordinances, government, and discipline set forth in Scripture is therefore to be observed as the instruction of the Lord. Church government must conform to the scriptural pattern and follow the specific provisions revealed in the New Testament. In those circumstances not specifically ordered by Scripture the church must observe the general rules of the Word. Among the biblical admonitions applicable to all circumstances are those requiring that all things must be done decently, in order, and for edification (Romans 14:18; 1 Corinthians 14:40). A particular form of church government is bound to set forth what Christ requires for the order of his church and to arrange particular circumstances only in the manner, to the degree, and for the purposes that the Lord of the church has appointed in Scripture. The Presbyterian form of government seeks to fulfill these scriptural requirements for the glory of Christ, the edification of the church, and the enlargement of that spiritual liberty in which Christ has set us free. Nevertheless, while such scriptural government is necessary for the perfection of church order, it is not essential to the existence of the church visible.

1-4. Jesus Christ, having ascended into heaven, abides in His church by the Holy Spirit whom He has sent. Through His Spirit He has given His Word revealing His ordinances; through the Spirit also He exerts his saving and governing power in the teaching of his Word and the administration of his ordinances. Only by the gifts and calling of the Spirit are men endued and qualified for office in Christ's church.

CHAPTER TWO—*The Primary Principles of Church Government*

2-1 God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matter of faith or worship. Therefore we consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable. We do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, be equal and common to all others.

2-2 In perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, 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 hath appointed: that, in its 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.

2-3 Our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible church, which is his body, hath 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; and that 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.

2-4 Truth is in order to godliness; and the great touchstone of truth is its tendency to promote holiness; according to our Savior's rule, "by their fruits you shall know them." No opinion can be either

more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that 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.

2-5 While, under the conviction of the above principle, we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance towards each other.

2-6 Though the character, qualifications and authority of church officers are laid down in the Holy Scriptures, as well as the proper method of their investiture and institution, yet the election of the persons to the exercise of this authority, in any particular society, is in that society.

2-7 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.

2-8 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 universal.

If the preceding scriptural and rational principles be steadfastly adhered to, the vigor and strictness of its discipline will contribute to the glory and happiness of any church.

CHAPTER THREE—*The Constitution Defined*

3-1 The Constitution of Vanguard Presbyterian Church is subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The inerrant and infallible Word of God is the touchstone of all truth and by which all controversies are resolved. The regulative principle requires that every church be subject to and subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in doctrine, polity, and worship. With the Scripture, therefore, as its foundation of all truth, the Constitution of this Church consists of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*; the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*; and, the *Book of Church Order* which includes three parts: the *Form of Government*, the *Rules of Discipline*, and the *Directory of Worship*; all of which are adopted by this denomination.

3-2 The Scripture is unchanged and unchanging and cannot be amended. The *Westminster Standards* have stood the test of time and cannot be amended by this denomination. The *Book of Church Order* in its basic principles is remarkably consistent with the various manuals of polity of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches for the last 150 years or more. Therefore, neither can it nor should it be amended. Many errors in doctrine and polity have arisen in the Presbyterian and Reformed denominations through the overture process of amending the *Book of Church Order* and/or the *Westminster Standards*.

3-3 The parliamentary rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the standard in parliamentary procedure in all cases in which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the Standing Rules of any of the courts of Vanguard Presbyterian Church. Regarding the use of *Robert's Rules of Order*, these procedural rules shall be deemed as guidelines and not law as they are subservient to the Word of God, the Bible, which is our only rule of faith and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR—*The Doctrine of Church Government*

4-1 It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some definite form. The scriptural form, which is Presbyterian, is comprehended under these five heads of doctrine, viz: 1. Of the church; 2. Of its members; 3. Of its officers; 4. Of its courts; and 5. Of its orders.

4-2 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.

4-3 The members of this visible Church universal are all those persons in every nation, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws.

4-4 The officers which Christ has appointed for the foundation and edification of His church, and the perfecting of the saints, are both extraordinary and ordinary.

a. The extraordinary officers, apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), were given extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and were agents in the completion of the revelation of Scripture. Apostles and Prophets have no such successors since the Apostolic Age and their offices have now ceased.

b. The ordinary and perpetual officers are elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and deacon (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Elders may be teaching elders (Ephesians 4:11); evangelists (Acts 7:1-60; Acts 8:4-8; Acts 8:25-40; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5); ruling elders (1 Timothy 5:17); and Deacon. All these offices, and none other, are ordained and defined by Christ, the Lawgiver. The elders are the ecclesiastical rulers of the church, who are all of the same

rank, dignity, and authority; but they are divided into two classes, teaching elders and ruling elders.

4-5 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.

4-6 The ordination of officers is ordinarily by a court, except in the case of ordination by a presbytery's evangelist.

4-7 This scriptural doctrine of Presbytery is necessary to the perfection of the order of the visible Church, but is not essential to its existence.

4-8 Scriptural church government is non-hierarchical at every court level because elders are not to "lord it over" those allotted to their charge, but are to prove to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). Yet, hierarchy is necessarily the lording it over others by those in the highest positions whether they are called Bishops, Coordinators, or some other name. Thus, Biblical polity is always non-hierarchical and grassroots.

4-9 True Scriptural and Presbyterian church government is government of the Church through assembled church courts.

CHAPTER FIVE—*The Visible Church Defined*

5-1 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; and under the gospel, it is catholic and universal; not, as before under the law, confined to one nation.

5-2 This visible unity of the body of Christ, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians; but any organization for worship in which the Gospel is faithfully preached; and, which maintains the Word, the Sacraments, and Scriptural discipline in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the Church of Jesus Christ.

5-3 It is according to Scriptural example that the church should be divided into many organized congregations.

CHAPTER SIX—*The Nature and Extent of Church Power*

6-1 The power which Christ has committed to His Church vests in the whole body, the rulers and the ruled, constituting it a spiritual commonwealth. This power, as exercised by the people, extends to the choice of those officers whom He hath appointed in His Church.

6-2 Ecclesiastical power, which is wholly spiritual, is twofold. The officers exercise it sometimes severally, as in preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, reproofing 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.

6-3 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.

6-4 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 unto God the things that are God's."

6-5 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.

6-6 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.

6-7 The exercise of the power of jurisdiction, which is through church courts, is in the whole court. Therefore, every church court has the power to amend, overrule, revise, annul, or reverse any actions, decisions, or judgments of any committee, commission, board, or agency that is subject to its jurisdiction and/or was appointed by that court. The effect of this paragraph is that the power of the jurisdiction of the court cannot be given to any smaller group for final action, whether that is an executive Session, an executive committee of Presbytery or the General Assembly, or any standing or permanent committee/commission/agency/board of any court of the Church.

CHAPTER SEVEN—*The Particular Church*

7-1 A particular congregation or church consists of a number of professing Christians with their offspring, voluntarily associated together in one place for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Scriptures, and submitting to the lawful government of Christ's kingdom.

7-2 The officers of each congregation are the pastor(s), who is a teaching elder; the ruling elders; and the deacons.

7-3 Its jurisdiction being a joint power, is lodged in the hands of the church Session, consisting of the Pastor(s) and Ruling Elders.

7-4 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; exercising discipline; the taking of solemn vows; the ordination to sacred office; and the blessing of the people.

7-5 Churches destitute of the official ministration of the Word 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 reading 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 for the worship of God.

CHAPTER EIGHT—*Organizing a Particular Church*

8-1 A mission church may be properly described in the same manner as the particular church is described in paragraph 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.

8-2 The mission church does not have a session and therefore requires a temporary government which may be provided by Presbytery in one of the following ways:

- a. Appoint an evangelist.
- b. Coordinate with a local church which can oversee the mission church in a mother-daughter relationship and thereby provide a temporary governing body for the mission church.
- c. Appoint a commission to act as the temporary session for the mission church which session will include the pastor of the mission as a member of the commission and the Moderator of it.

8-3 This temporary government of the mission church shall receive members into the mission church according to the procedures in *BCO 57-5* and *BCO 58-5*. The mission church shall be composed of both communing and non-communing members as the Lord blesses. Each new member of the mission church shall be assumed to give assent to the call of the pastor if there is one. All congregational meetings shall be conducted according to *BCO 28*.

8-4 Mission churches and their members shall have the right of judicial process to the court having oversight of their temporary governing body.

8-5 Mission churches shall maintain a roll of communing and non-communing members in the same manner as particular churches do.

8-6 Mission churches enjoy the same status as particular churches in relation to the civil government.

8-7 A mission church can become a particular church only by the authority of Presbytery. When the mission church desires to become a particular church, the members of the mission church shall sign a petition to Presbytery requesting the same. If Presbytery concurs that the mission church is ready to become a particular church and has sufficient candidates for the office of ruling elder to form a session, it shall appoint a commission and set the date and time for the organizational service. At the organizing service, the commission shall do the following:

a. Ordain and/or install ruling elders and/or deacons according to the provisions of *BCO* 27-5 so far as that is applicable.

b. If a pastor is being ordained and/or installed at the service, the commission shall act according to the provisions of *BCO* 24 so far as they may be applicable.

c. A member of the commission shall require the 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the purity and peace of the whole body?”

d. A member of the 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

CHAPTER NINE—The Members of the Church

9-1 The children of believers are, through the covenant (Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39), federally holy (1 Corinthians 7:14) and by right of birth, members of the Church. Hence, they are entitled to baptism, which is the seal of the covenant, and the outward badge of membership in the visible Church. It is the duty of Christian parents to present their children for baptism within a reasonable time; nor should they neglect this duty. Notwithstanding, their children are entitled to the pastoral oversight, instruction, and government of the Church, with a view to their embracing Christ, and thus possessing personally all the benefits of the covenant.

9-2 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.

9-3 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 faith in Christ.

9-4 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.

CHAPTER TEN—*Church Officers, The Elder or Presbyter*

10-1 This office is the first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills it hath in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed Bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed Pastor. As he serves Christ in His Church, he is termed Minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed Presbyter or Elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed Angel of the Church. 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 the glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing, he is termed Evangelist. As he is commissioned and sent forth by the Church on his errand of love and mercy, he is termed Apostle or Missionary. As he stands in the great Congregation to proclaim the gospel, he is termed Preacher. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed Doctor or Teacher. And as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed Steward of the mysteries of God. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same officer.

10-2 Besides possessing that competency of human learning which is needful, he that fills this office should be blameless in life, sound in the faith, and apt to teach. He should exhibit a sobriety of behavior and holiness of conversation becoming the gospel. He should rule his own house well; and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

10-3 It belongs to the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to their 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. 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 set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.

10-4 As the Lord has given different gifts to His Church, and has committed to the officers various works to execute, the Church is authorized to call and appoint them to labor as Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists, and in such other works as may be needful to the Church, according to the gifts in which they excel. When a teaching elder is called to such a needful work, he shall make full proof of his ministry by disseminating the Gospel for the edification of the Church and make annual reports of his labors.

10-5 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 the Ministers of the Word with gifts and commission to govern when called thereunto, which officers are entitled Ruling Elders.

10-6 These ruling elders are of the same rank, and possess the same authority with the teaching elder. And while the titles of bishop, pastor, and minister, belong to the teaching elder by way of eminency, because he excels by reason of his entire consecration to the work, as well as by the superiority of his functions, they also belong to the office of the ruling elder, seeing that, in order to rule with diligence, he must take the *oversight* of the flock; in order to its protection he must *guard* and *guide* it; and in order to discharge the chief duty of his office, he must *serve* Christ diligently in the

exercise of government. They should, moreover, cultivate zealously their aptness to teach the Bible and should improve every opportunity of doing so, to the end that destitute places, mission points, and churches without Pastors may be supplied with religious services.

CHAPTER ELEVEN—*The Office of Deacon*

11-1 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.

11-2 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 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.

11-3 To the office of Deacon, which is spiritual in nature, should be chosen men of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly spirit, warm sympathies, and sound judgment. Their conversation should become the gospel since those duties to which all Christians are called by the law of charity are, by divine vocation, especially incumbent on the Deacon, as an officer in Christ's house.

11-4 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, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, to whom shall be entrusted the funds for the current expense of the

church. It shall meet 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.

11-5 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 counsels.

11-6 The Deacons may, with much advantage, hold conferences from time to time for the discussion of 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.

11-7 It is often expedient that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly women of the congregation to assist the Deacons in ministering to the sick, to widows, to orphans, to prisoners, and to others who may be in any distress or need. These duties are often undertaken by godly women in an informal way as they minister to the needs of the saints. These women so selected by the Session of a church are not elected by the congregation and are not ordained officers or Deaconesses.

CHAPTER TWELVE—*Evangelists*

12-1 Jesus Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth, has commanded His church to make disciples of all the nations. From the throne of his glory He sent forth the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, to empower the witness of the church to the gospel. While it is the calling of every believer to confess Christ before men, and while God gives particular gifts and calling to some to minister the Word, and while every minister of the Word must evangelize in the fulfillment of his calling, there are some who are particularly called by Christ and His church as evangelists. Since the gifts and functions of evangelists are necessary until the end of the age, this ministry is permanent and not confined to the apostolic period.

12-2 Evangelists are set forth in Scripture as ordinary and perpetual (Ephesians 4:11, 12) inasmuch as their gift is a non-revelatory function of the office of elder for the greater spread of the gospel in fulfillment of the Great Commission. Evangelists sound forth the message of redemption in the destitute parts of the Church and superintend the work of systematic evangelization.

12-3 Just as Apostles were elders (1 Peter 5:1), so also evangelists are elders who hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience and are especially gifted in communicating the gospel to sinners. Evangelists are to meet the spiritual requirements of elders set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; and 2 Timothy 4:5.

12-4 “When a minister is appointed to the work of the evangelist, he is commissioned to preach the Word and administer the sacraments in foreign countries, frontier settlements, or the destitute parts of the Church” (PCUS *BCO* 1789). “The evangelist is he whom the Church doth appoint to labor in its aggressive work. The command, ‘Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,’ is of perpetual obligation, and makes his office permanent” (PCUS

BCO, 1867). The evangelist is ordained to perform all the functions that belong to the sacred office of elder. Yet teaching elder evangelists may labor in the gospel as: (a) an organizing pastor of a new church; (b) a foreign missionary; (c) an evangelistic preacher; (d) a military chaplain; (e) a civilian chaplain; (f) or, to perform the same duties as an administrative commission of presbytery in the destitute areas of the Church—ordaining and/or installing ministers and other officers, administering the sacraments, receiving members, etc.,--but only when such powers are expressly conferred prior to those actions being taken.

12-5 When a ministerial candidate is ordained as an evangelist the same questions are to be propounded as in the ordination of pastors, with the exception of the eighth, for which shall be substituted the following:

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?

12-6 The Session of a church may ordain a ruling elder as an evangelist for the congregation and may appoint godly men who are especially gifted in personal evangelism to assist the ruling elder evangelists of the congregation in the spread of the Gospel in their community. Such unordained men are evangelistic workers and should be full of the Spirit, zealous for the salvation of sinners, holding to sound doctrine with a sincere heart, and examples to others in both speech and conduct. Every church should pray for the Lord to raise up such ruling elder evangelists and other unordained evangelistic workers to assist the congregation in evangelizing the community through door to door visitation or through other means and opportunities (cf. Acts 8:4)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN—*Church Courts in General*

13-1 It is agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that the Church be governed by various courts, in regular subordination; which are all, nevertheless, Presbyteries, inasmuch as they are lawful bodies of Presbyters.

13-2 These courts are, church Sessions, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly.

13-3 The two most important priorities of all church courts are to pray earnestly for the advancement of the kingdom of God and to consider ways in which they can fulfill the Great Commission. In order to accomplish these priorities, church courts should spend an extended time in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the conversion of the lost. It will often be expedient for some person to preach a sermon or deliver a message which exhorts the body to greater faithfulness in both these areas. The business of church courts is not more important than these priorities. In this way, church courts can promote a revival culture. Every lower court shall report to the next higher court the ways in which they are fulfilling these priorities.

13-4 The Pastor is, for prudential reasons, Moderator of the Session. The Moderator of the Presbytery, and the General Assembly, shall be elected for one year terms; and the retiring Moderator, or, in case of his absence, the last Moderator present, or the oldest Minister in attendance, shall open the next meeting of those courts with a sermon and shall hold the chair until a new Moderator be chosen. Provided, however, that when the Moderator of one of the higher courts is a Ruling Elder, the preaching of the opening sermon may be committed by him to a Teaching Elder, at his discretion. 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 extraordinary emergency, he may, by circular letter, change the time or place, or both, of meetings to which the court stands adjourned, giving reasonable notice thereof.

13-5 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.

13-6 Every meeting of the 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.

13-7 The expenses of Ministers and Ruling Elders in their attendance on the courts shall be defrayed by the bodies which they respectively represent.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN—*The Jurisdiction of Church Courts*

14-1 These assemblies do not possess any civil jurisdiction, nor can they inflict any civil penalties. Their power is wholly moral or spiritual, and is only ministerial and declarative. They do possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ; and of excluding the disobedient and disorderly, from the privileges of the church. To give efficiency, however, to this necessary and Scriptural authority, they possess the powers requisite for obtaining evidence and inflicting censure. They can call before them any offender against the order and government of the church; they can require members of their own society, to appear and give testimony in the cause; but the highest punishment to which their authority extends, is to exclude the contumacious and impenitent from the congregation of believers.

14-2 The jurisdiction of Church courts, which is only ministerial and declarative, is three-fold, relating, respectively, to the doctrines and precepts of Christ; to the order of the Church; and to the exercise of discipline.

First, they can make no new laws binding the conscience; but, declaratively, they may frame symbols of faith to be received by all who enter into Church-communion; they may bear testimony against errors in doctrine and immoralities in practice, within or without the pale of the Church; and, ministerially, may decide cases of conscience.

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

Thirdly, having the power of the keys, they possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ. Hence, ministerially, they admit those qualified to sealing ordinances and to their

respective offices; and they exclude the disobedient and disorderly from their offices, or from sacramental privileges; but 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.

14-3 All Church-courts are one in nature, constituted of the same elements, and possessed inherently of the same kind of rights and powers; the highest court being a mere expansion of the lowest. Yet it is according to Scriptural example, and needful to the purity and harmony of the whole Church, that disputed matters of doctrine and order, arising in the lower courts, should be referred to the higher for decision.

14-4 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, and 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 ; and although each court exercises exclusive original jurisdiction over all matters specially belonging to it, the lower courts are subject to the review and control of the higher courts in regular gradation. Hence, 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 FIFTEEN—*The Church Session*

15-1 The church Session consists of the Pastor or Pastors, if there be any, and the Ruling Elders of a church. If there are three or more Ruling Elders, the Pastor and two Ruling Elders shall constitute a quorum. If there are less than three Ruling Elders, the Pastor and one Ruling Elder shall constitute a quorum. 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.

However, 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 this paragraph.

15-2 The Pastor is, by virtue of his office, the Moderator of the Session. In his absence, if any emergency should arise requiring immediate action, the Session may elect one of its members to preside. 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.

15-3 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, the Moderator shall be a Minister of the Presbytery to which the church belongs.

15-4 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; and, to grant letters of dismission to other churches, which when given to parents, shall always include the names of their 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 the 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 of the Church, women of the Church and special Bible study groups; to promote obedience to the Great Commission in its totality both at home and abroad; to order collections for pious uses;
- e. To ensure that the worship of the Church is in accordance with the Directory of Worship; to exercise 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 service, and over the uses to which the church building 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 (1 Timothy 2:11, 12); to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to ensure the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation.

f. To observe and carry out the lawful injunctions of the higher courts; and to appoint commissioners to the higher courts, who shall make a report of their diligence when they return.

15-5 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; and 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.

15-6 Every Session shall keep an accurate record of its proceedings; which record shall be at least once in every year submitted to the inspection of the Presbytery.

15-7 Every Session shall keep a fair record of baptisms, of those admitted to the Lord's table, of non-communing members, and of the deaths and dismissions of church members.

15-8 Meetings of the Session shall ordinarily be opened and closed with prayer.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN—*The Presbytery*

16-1 The Presbytery consists of all the Ministers and Churches in its bounds. When the Presbytery meets as a court it shall consist of all Teaching Elders in good standing with the court. Each congregation shall be entitled, without regard to membership, to select two (2) ruling elders to represent them.

16-2 A Minister shall be required to hold his membership in the Presbytery within whose 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 bounds of his Presbytery, at home or abroad, it shall be only with the full concurrence of and under circumstances agreeable to the Church court in which his membership is held, and any corresponding Church court with which an affiliate relationship may be established satisfactory to both courts.

16-3 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.

16-4 Any three Ministers belonging to the Presbytery, together with three Ruling Elders, being met at the time and place appointed, 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.

16-5 Ministers seeking admission to a Presbytery shall be examined on experimental religion, and also touching their views in theology and church government. If applicants come from other denominations, the Presbytery shall also require them 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* 24-4.

16-6 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, namely: "I, A.B., do sincerely receive and fully 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."

16-7 The Presbytery has power to receive and issue appeals, complaints, and references brought before it in an orderly manner. 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 due to immorality or heresy on the part of the Pastor;
- 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 in doctrine or morals which injure the purity or peace of the Church;
- g. To visit churches for the purpose of redressing the evils that may have arisen in them, but *only* when requested to do so by either the Pastor or by an action of the Session;
- h. 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, but only at their request if the remaining members;
- 1. 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;
- j. And, finally, to propose to the Assembly such measures as may be of common advantage to the Church at large.

16-8 When Presbytery has 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 churches or mission churches. In addition, Presbytery shall:

- a. Transfer membership to existing churches with the consent of the individuals and the Sessions of the receiving churches; or
- b. Grant a letter of dismissal to an individual so requesting it, testifying that he (she) was a member in good standing of the local church at the date of the dissolution. Until such time as the person is received into membership of another church the Presbytery shall continue to provide pastoral oversight; or
- c. Place the individuals under the oversight of a commission of Presbytery acting as a session, for up to one year, renewable, until

such time as either a new congregation can be formed or such person are dismissed to membership in another church.

16-9 The Presbytery shall keep a full and fair 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 the important changes which may have taken place, such as the licensures, the 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.

16-10 The Presbytery shall meet at least twice a year on its own adjournment. When any emergency shall require a meeting earlier than the time to which the Presbytery stands adjourned, the Moderator shall, at the request, or with the concurrence, of two Ministers and two Ruling Elders of different churches, call a special meeting. 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 two Ministers and two Ruling Elders of different churches shall have power to call a meeting. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than ten days in advance to each Minister and to the Session of every church without a Pastor. 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.

16-11 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 SEVENTEEN—*The General Assembly*

17-1 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church, and constitutes the bond of union, peace and correspondence among all its congregations and courts. To prevent misunderstandings and wrong reflections which proceed from an imperfect view of any subject, it is herein set forth what the principles of the General Assembly are.

- a. The first responsibility of the General Assembly is *practical* in encouraging and promoting the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The initiative for carrying out the Great Commission belongs to the local and presbytery levels, inasmuch as the General Assembly is incapable of doing so without effectively permitting its permanent committees to function as independent boards that can take final action apart from the deliberative assembly. In order to encourage the carrying out of the Great Commission, the General Assembly shall require each lower court to make annual reports of the ways in which they are fulfilling its mandates. Presbyteries shall require sessions to include such reports in their annual minutes for review. The General Assembly shall require reports from every Presbytery and shall encourage the lower court to be actively engaged in evangelism, starting new churches, world missions, etc.
- b. The second responsibility of the General Assembly is *doctrinal* in promoting the truth of the Scripture and the Westminster Standards and suppressing heresy and all opinions which are injurious to the faith.
- c. The third responsibility of the General Assembly is *legislative* in passing overtures and making rules for the common good of the whole church and to ensure that all things are done decently and in good order just as the Jerusalem Council decided the issue of

whether the Gentiles converts had to be circumcised when they believed in Christ (Acts 15:1-35).

d. The fourth responsibility of the General Assembly is *judicial* as the highest judicatory of the denomination to which both complaints and appeals are sent from the lower court according to the rules of due process outlined in the *Rules of Discipline*.

e. It is the responsibility of every member and every member congregation to support the whole work of the denomination as they are led in their conscience held captive to the Word of God.

f. It is the responsibility of the General Assembly to encourage the whole Church in the most effective ways to fulfill the Great Commission.

g. The Church recognizes the right of individuals and congregations to labor through other agencies in fulfilling the Great Commission.

h. The General Assembly shall have no permanent committees or commissions, but may erect ad-interim committees or ad-interim commissions when necessary to report to the court no later than the following General Assembly and shall be dismissed after their report.

i. The General Assembly's ad-interim committees and ad-interim commissions are to include proportionate representation of all the presbyteries, wherever possible, and are to be established on the basis of parity between teaching and ruling elders.

j. The only permanent salaried officer of the General Assembly shall be the stated clerk who shall be elected to the office annually and whose salary shall be set by the deliberative assembly.

k. The General Assembly shall erect ad-interim committees or commissions at their discretion which shall operate according to the rules of polity for all church courts in this denomination.

17-2 The General Assembly, which is a permanent court, shall meet at least annually upon its own adjournment, and shall consist of all Teaching Elders in good standing with their Presbyteries. Each congregation shall be entitled, without regard to membership, to select two (2) Ruling Elders as commissioners to the General Assembly.

17-3 When any 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 twelve Commissioners who had seats in the Assembly at its preceding meeting, of whom six shall be Ministers and six Ruling Elders, representing at least three 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 Presbytery, 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 Presbytery of his inability to serve. Notice of the special meeting shall be sent not less than twenty 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.

17-4 Every commissioner to the General Assembly shall produce appropriate credentials from his court as evidence of his right to sit in the Assembly.

17-5 The General Assembly shall set the minimum requirements of a quorum for transacting the business of the court.

17-6 The General Assembly shall have power:

- a. To receive and issue all appeals, references, and complaints regularly brought before it from the lower courts;
- b. To bear testimony against error in doctrine and immorality in practice, injuriously affecting the Church;
- c. To decide in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline;
- d. To give its advice and instruction, in conformity with the Constitution, in all cases submitted to it;
- e. To review the records of the Presbytery, to take care that the lower courts observe the Constitution; and, to redress whatever they may have been done contrary to order;
- f. To consider the best measures for promoting the prosperity and enlargement of the Church;
- g. To erect new Presbyteries, and unite and divide those which were erected with their consent;
- h. To suppress schismatic contentions and disputations, according to the rules provided therefore;
- i. To receive under its jurisdiction, with the consent of three-fourths of the Presbyteries, other ecclesiastical bodies whose organization is conformed to the doctrine and order of this Church;
- j. To authorize Presbyteries to exercise similar power in receiving bodies suited to become constituents of those courts, and lying within their geographical bounds respectively; to superintend the affairs of the whole Church;

k. 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 consistent with the principles of the *BCO*, and in general to recommend measures for the promotion of charity, truth, and holiness through all the churches under its care.

17-7 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church 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 EIGHTEEN—*Ecclesiastical Committees and Commissions*

18-1 Both Committees and Commissions are established by their respective courts to handle the business assigned to them by the court. Committees examine, consider, and recommend to the court, but cannot take final action on any matter before it. Commissions are of two types: Judicial and Administrative. Judicial Commissions are authorized to deliberate concerning the business referred to it, but the court as a whole must also debate and deliberate on the matter before it becomes the action of the court. Administrative Commissions execute the actions of the court that have already been taken. For instance, an Administrative Commission can ordain and install a pastor following his examination and approval by the presbytery. In that respect, an Administrative Commission is merely a bare quorum of a court to execute its decisions (except when the court commits those matters to an evangelist to be executed).

18-2 Both Committees and Commissions shall keep a full record of their proceedings, which shall be submitted to the court appointing them. If their minutes are approved, they shall then be entered on the courts minutes. In the case of an Administrative Commission, the reception of their minutes means that their actions become the action of the court. In the case of a Judicial Commission, their minutes become a part of the record of the case for that complaint, appeal, investigation, or trial. In the event of complaint or appeal against an action of a Commission, such complaint or appeal shall be made first to the court appointing said Commission.

18-3 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 a church affected with disorder when requested to do so by the pastor or the session; and the organization of new churches.

18-4 Every Commission appointed by Presbytery shall consist of at least two Teaching Elders and two Ruling Elders, and the Presbytery at the time of the appointment of the Commission shall determine what the quorum shall be. When the ordination of a Minister is committed to a Commission, the Presbytery itself shall conduct the previous examination.

18-5 Every court may, of its own motion, commit any judicial case coming before it by appeal or complaint to a Commission, and should ordinarily follow this procedure, especially when requested by one or both parties to the case. Such a Commission shall be appointed by the court from its own members rather than the members of the lower court from which the case comes up. The actions of said Commission are not final, but are subject to the deliberations and decisions of the court that appointed it.

CHAPTER NINETEEN—*Church Orders, The Doctrine of Vocation*

19-1 Vocation to office in the Church is of two sorts, extraordinary and ordinary. It is extraordinary, when it is by God Himself, as was the calling of the Prophets and Apostles, which kind of vocation has ceased. It is ordinary, when besides the calling of God by the Spirit, and the inward testimony of a good conscience, there is the manifest approbation of God's people, and the concurring judgment of the lawful court of the Church, according to His Word.

19-2 The government of the Church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect their officers 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.

19-3 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, everyone 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.

CHAPTER TWENTY—*The Doctrine of Ordination*

20-1 Those who have been called to office in the Church are to be inducted by the ordination of a court.

20-2 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.

20-3 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.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE—*Candidates for the Gospel Ministry*

21-1 A Candidate for the ministry is a member of the Church in full communion who, believing himself to be called to preach the Gospel, should enter into a course of study and of practical training to prepare himself for this office.

21-2 It is recommended that every candidate for the ministry should 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. He should be encouraged by the Session to do this; and upon his request, the Session should furnish him with a certificate of his membership, and with testimonials of its judgment regarding his Christian character and promise of usefulness in the ministry, to be laid before the Presbytery.

21-3 In making application to be taken under the care of the Presbytery, the candidate for the ministry, in addition to presenting testimonials from his church Session, shall be examined by the Presbytery on experimental 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 candidate 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 proceedings shall close with prayer. The name of the candidate is then to be recorded on the Presbytery's Roll of Candidates for the Ministry.

21-4 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 licensure and ordination without obtaining the consent of Presbytery; and where such consent is given the Presbytery shall record the fact and the reasons therefore.

21-5 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 statedly a church which is without a pastor unless he has the approval of the Presbytery having jurisdiction of the church.

21-6 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.

21-7 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, be allowed to withdraw from the care of 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.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO—*Licentiates, Candidates for the Gospel Ministry, and Interns*

22-1 To preserve the purity of the preaching of the Gospel in our Churches, no man is permitted to preach in the pulpits of our churches on a regular basis without proper licensure from the Presbytery of the Vanguard Presbyterian Church. Ruling Elders who have demonstrated their gifts are eligible for licensure by their Presbytery. A candidate for the ministry is licensed by the Presbytery to preach the Gospel in order that, after he has made sufficient trial of his gifts and the Presbytery has received assurance of his approval by the Church, he may be ordained to the sacred office of the gospel ministry. However, if a candidate has been called to a definite work which he desires to accept, and the Presbytery is satisfied by his examination for licensure that he meets the requirements for ordination, the licensure may be omitted and the Presbytery may proceed at once to ordain him to the full ministry of the Gospel.

22-2 Examination for Licensure.

The Presbytery shall examine the candidate with a comprehensive written statement of his understanding of the Christian Faith, including such doctrines as:

Scripture, God, Creation, Decrees, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, Christ, Man, Sin, and an oral examination of his views before the Presbytery.

It shall also examine him on his knowledge of Theology, the Sacraments and Church Government, the English Bible, and Church History. Moreover the Presbytery shall require:

a. An exegesis or critical exercise, in which the candidate shall give a specimen of his taste and judgment in sacred criticism, presenting an explication of the Biblical text, stating its connection,

illustrating its force and beauties, removing its difficulties, and solving any important question which it may present.

b. A sermon, lecture or exposition of several verses of Scripture.

22-3 Questions for Licensure.

If the Presbytery be satisfied with the trials of the candidate, 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 to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 2. Do you sincerely receive and fully adopt the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter* Catechisms of this Church, as the doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?**
- 3. Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity 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?**

22-4 The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the Moderator shall offer a prayer suitable for the occasion, and shall address the candidate to the following purpose:

“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 as a probationer 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.”

And record shall be made of the licensure in the following or like form, namely:

At _____, the _____ day of _____, the Presbytery of _____, having received testimonials commanding _____, and evidence of his being a communicant of the church, of his good moral character, and of his having pursued suitable courses of study, proceeded to submit him to the prescribed tests for licensure, which were met to the approval of the Presbytery. On his satisfactorily answering the questions appointed to be put to applicants for licensure, Mr. _____ was licensed by the Presbytery to preach the Gospel as a probationer for the ministry within the bounds of this Presbytery, or wherever he shall in an orderly way be invited to preach.

22-5 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 his Christian experience and call to preach the Gospel and his views in theology, English Bible, and church government. This Presbytery then may license him to preach within its bounds.

22-6 The license to preach the Gospel shall expire at the end of four years, but the Presbytery may, if it thinks proper, renew it. If the licentiate, without necessity, shall devote himself to such pursuits as interfere with a full trial of his gifts, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery to revoke his license.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE—*The Election of Pastors*

23-1 No Minister or Probationer shall receive a call from a church but by the permission of his Presbytery. When a call has been presented to the Presbytery, if it is found in order and the Presbytery deems it for the good of the Church, the court shall place it in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed.

23-2 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.

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.

23-3 When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it is important that they should elect a minister of the Presbytery 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.

23-4 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 voters present shall be required to elect.

23-5 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.

23-6 Form of Call: The call shall be in the following or like form, namely:

The church of _____, 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. And 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.

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

23-7 But if any Congregation shall choose to designate its call by the Ruling Elders and Deacons, or by a committee, 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 Congregation; and that the call has been, in all other respects, prepared as above directed.

23-8 Prosecution of Call: One or more commissioners shall be appointed by the church to present and prosecute the call before the Presbytery.

23-9 If the call be to a Minister, licentiate, or candidate of another Presbytery, the commissioners appointed to prosecute the call shall produce an attested certificate from their own Presbytery that it has been laid before that body and found in order, and that permission has been granted them to prosecute it before the Presbytery to which he belongs.

23-10 A congregation desiring to call a Pastor from his charge, shall, by its commissioners, represent to the Presbytery the ground on which it pleads his removal. 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 for the peace and edification of the Church at large ; or it may refer the whole matter to the Synod for advice and direction ; and no Pastor shall be transferred without his own consent. If the parties are not ready to have the matter issued 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 on the Sabbath after the sermon, at least two Sabbaths before the intended meeting.

23-11 If the congregation, or other field of labor, to which the Minister, or 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 that Presbytery, in order that he may be regularly inducted into his office.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR—*The Ordination and Installation of Ministers and Evangelists*

24-1 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.

A candidate or licentiate may be granted permission by the Presbytery to move on to the field prior to his ordination examination. Ordinarily, an ordained minister from another Presbytery or denomination shall not move on to the field until received by the Presbytery.

24-2 When a call for the pastoral services of a licentiate has been accepted by him, the Presbytery or denomination shall take immediate steps for his ordination.

24-3 No Presbytery shall ordain any licentiate or candidate to the office of the gospel ministry, 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.

24-4 Trials for ordination at a different time from that in which the candidate was licensed shall consist of:

- a. A careful examination as to his acquaintance with experimental religion, especially his personal character and family management (based on 1 Timothy 3:1-3 and Titus 1:6-9);
- b. His knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures;

- c. His knowledge of theology and the Westminster Standards;
- d. Church history, particularly of the reformed churches in America;
- e. The English Bible;
- f. The Sacraments;
- g. The polity of this denomination;
- h. and, such other branches of learning as to the Presbytery shall appear requisite.

The candidate shall prepare a thesis on some theological topic assigned by Presbytery. The candidate shall prepare an exegesis on an assigned portion of Scripture, requiring the use of the original language or languages. He shall further be required to preach a sermon before the Presbytery. No Presbytery shall omit any of these parts of trial or ordination except in extraordinary cases, and then only with three-fourths approval of Presbytery; 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. Trials for ordination in the same Presbytery in which the candidate was licensed may be omitted when the examination for licensure has satisfied the Presbytery of his fitness for ordination. 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.

24-5 The day appointed for the ordination having come, and the Presbytery being convened, a member of the Presbytery, previously appointed to that duty, shall preach a sermon adapted to the occasion. The same, or another 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:

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

- 1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?**
- 2. Do you sincerely receive and fully adopt the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of this Church, as the 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 doctrines of Scripture or the *Westminster Standards*, 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church, as being that which conforms to 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 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 relative, 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, agreeably 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?

24-6 Questions to the Congregation:

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. And 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?

24-7 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, and afterwards all the members of the Presbytery in their order, 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 Moderator shall then say:

“I now pronounce and declare that _____ has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed Pastor of this congregation, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of Vanguard Presbyterian Church; 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.”

After which the Minister presiding, or some other Minister 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. And the Presbytery shall duly record the transaction.

24-8 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.

24-9 Questions for Installation:

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, agreeably 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, agreeably to your ordination engagements?**

24-10 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. And 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?

24-11 In the ordination of candidates or licentiates 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?”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE—The Pastoral Relations

25-1 The various pastoral relations are pastor, associate pastor, and assistant pastor.

25-2 The pastor and associate pastor are elected by the congregation and become members of the Session.

25-3 An assistant pastor is called by the Session and is not a member of the Session.

25-4 The relationship of the associate and assistant pastors is determined by the congregation and Session respectively.

25-5 A Stated Supply is a temporary relationship established between a church and a minister. When a regular minister or stated supply are not available, presbytery may at the request of the session establish a temporary relationship between the church and a licentiate called student supply or a ruling elder.

25-6 Such temporary relationships of supply are for no longer than one year, renewable at the request of the session and at the review of presbytery.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX—The Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation

26-1 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, or the church may so appear upon its own motion, to show cause, if it has any, why the Presbytery should not accept the resignation. If the church fail 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 initiate proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted precisely in the same manner as when the call of a Pastor is to be made out.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN—Election, Ordination, and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons

27-1 Every church shall elect persons to the offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon in the following manner : Public notice shall be given of the time, place, and purpose of this meeting at least one month prior to the appointed time, during which time the congregation is asked to 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 I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The Session shall examine those nominated and then report to the congregation on election day those eligible for election. If one-fourth 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.

27-2 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 of Vanguard Presbyterian Church or any ruling elder of that church.

27-3 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. When a majority of all the voters present cast their votes for a person for either of these offices, he shall be considered elected.

27-4 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 voters present shall be required to elect.

27-5 The day having arrived, and the Session being convened in the presence of the congregation, a sermon shall be preached, if convenient; 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 to be the Word of God, the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice?**
- 2. Do you sincerely receive and fully adopt the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter* Catechisms, as the 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 doctrines of Scripture or the *Westminster Standards*, 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church, as being that which conforms to 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 study the peace, unity, edification, and purity 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, namely:

Do you, 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 Minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate with prayer and the laying on of 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, agreeably to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of Vanguard Presbyterian Church; 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 he shall give to the Ruling Elder (or Deacon) and to the church an exhortation suited to the occasion.

27-6 The offices of Ruling Elder and Deacon are perpetual; nor can they 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.

Or 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.

27-7 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.

27-8 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.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT—Congregational Meetings

28-1 The congregation consists of all the communing members of a particular church, and they only are entitled to vote.

28-2 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, and 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 by one-fourth of the communing members of the church.

28-3 A quorum of the congregational meeting shall consist of one-fourth of the resident communing members, if the church has not more than one hundred such members, and of one-sixth of the resident communing members if a church has more than one hundred such members.

28-4 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 office, who may be a Minister of Vanguard Presbyterian Church, or one of the ruling elders of that particular church.

28-5 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 to buy, sell, or mortgage property for the church, to accept and execute deeds as such trustees, to hold and defend titles to the same, 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 and 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.

28-6 When a particular church is incorporated, its meetings for the transaction of the business of the corporation will be provided for in its charter and by-laws, which must always be in accord with the Constitution of Vanguard Presbyterian Church, and must not infringe upon the powers or duties of the Session or of the Board of Deacons.

28-7 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 it may have in any real estate. No superior court of the church, as such, shall have any claim whatsoever upon any real property or 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.

28-8 All particular churches shall be entitled to hold, own, and enjoy their own local properties, without any right of reversion whatsoever to any presbytery, synod, or any other courts hereafter created, its trustees or other officers.

28-9 The provisions of Chapter 28 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.

28-10 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* 28, 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 congregations 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.

PART II

THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE—Discipline—Its Nature, Subjects, and Ends

29-1 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.

29-2 In the one sense, all baptized persons, being members of the Church are subject to its discipline and entitled to the benefits thereof ; but in the other sense it refers only to those who have made a profession of their faith in Christ.

29-3 The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offences, 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.

29-4 The power which Christ has given the Church is for building up, and not for destruction, and 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.

29-5 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 THIRTY—The Discipline of Non-communing Members

30-1 The spiritual nurture, instruction, and training of the children of the Church are committed by God primarily to their parents who are responsible to the Church for the faithful discharge of their obligations, and it is a principle duty of the Church to promote true religion in the home.

Every person who is the child of a professing Christian is federally a member of the church, is under its care, and subject to its government, inspection and training; but he is not subject to those forms of discipline which involve judicial process, until he make a profession of faith in Christ.

30-2 It is the duty of the church to cherish its non-communicating members as a nursing parent. They are entitled to pastoral visitation and guardianship, and are to be had in special remembrance in the instructions and intercessions of the sanctuary, and in social and family worship. Moreover, the church is bound to make special provision for the instruction of its youth in the doctrines of the Bible and in the Catechisms. Hence, church-sessions ought to establish, under their own authority, Bible classes and Sunday schools for this object, or, where this is impracticable, to adopt such methods as shall secure the same end.

30-3 The Church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children, and should encourage them on coming to years of discretion to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all the privileges of full church membership. Even if they are wayward they should be cherished by the Church and every means used to reclaim them.

30-4 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.

30-5 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.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE—Offenses

31-1 An offense, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the principles or practice of a Church member professing faith in Christ, which is contrary to the Word of God. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, together with the formularies of government, discipline, and worship are accepted by Vanguard Presbyterian Church 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.

31-2 Offenses are either personal or general, private or public; but all of them being sins against God, are therefore grounds of discipline.

31-3 Personal offences are violations of the divine law, considered in the special relation of wrongs or injuries to particular individuals. General offences are heresies or immoralities having no such relation, or considered apart from it.

31-4 Private offences are those which are known only to a few persons. Public offences are those which are notorious.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO—Church Censures

32-1 The censures which may be inflicted by church courts are admonition, suspension, excommunication, and deposition. When a lower censure fails to reclaim the delinquent, it may become the duty of the court to proceed to the infliction of a higher censure.

32-2 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.

32-3 Suspension, with respect to church members, is their temporary exclusion from sealing ordinances; with respect to church officers, it is their temporary exclusion from the exercise of their office. It may be either definite or indefinite as to its duration. Definite suspension is administered when the credit of religion, the honor of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it, even though he may have given satisfaction to the court. Indefinite suspension is the exclusion of an offender from sealing ordinances, or from his office, until he exhibits signs of repentance, or until, by his conduct, the necessity of the highest censure be made manifest.

32-4 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, 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.

32-5 Deposition is the degradation of an officer from his office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure.

THIRTY-THREE—The Parties in the Case of Process

33-1 Original jurisdiction in relation to Ministers of the Gospel pertains exclusively to the Presbytery, and in relation to other church members to the Session, unless the Session shall be unable to try the person or persons accused, in which case the Presbytery shall have the right of jurisdiction.

33-2 It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those who are subject to their authority; and 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.

33-3 The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always Vanguard Presbyterian Church, 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.

33-4 Every indictment shall begin: "In the name of Vanguard Presbyterian Church," 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.

33-5 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 interests 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.

33-6 When the offence is general, the cause may be conducted either by any person appearing as prosecutor, or by a prosecutor appointed by the court.

33-7 When the prosecution is instituted by the court, the previous steps required by our Lord in the case of personal offences 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.

33-8 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.

33-9 Every voluntary prosecutor shall be previously warned, that if he fail to show probable cause of the charges, he must himself be censured as a slanderer of the brethren, in proportion to the malignity or rashness that shall appear in the prosecution.

33-10 When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions may be suspended, at its discretion; but this shall never be done in the way of censure.

33-11 In the discussion of all questions arising in his own case, the accused shall only exercise the rights of defendant, not of judge.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR—

General Provisions Applicable to All Cases of Process

34-1 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).

34-2 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* 33-2.

34-3 It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (*BCO* 29 through 47) 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 the 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,
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.

34-4 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.

34-5 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.

34-6 When an accused person shall refuse to obey a citation, he shall be cited a second time; and this second citation shall be accompanied with a notice that if he do not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court), or that if he appear and refuse to plead, he shall be dealt with for his contumacy, as hereinafter provided.

34-7 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 days. But the time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent citation shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it be not less than is quite sufficient for a seasonable and convenient compliance with the citation.

34-8 When the offence 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 appoint a commission of its body, or request the co-ordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred, to take the testimony for it. The accused shall always have reasonable notice of the time and place of the meeting of this commission or co-ordinate court.

34-9 When an offence, 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 of accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once to proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be remitted for trial to the co-ordinate court within whose bounds the offence is alleged to have been committed.

34-10 Before proceeding to trial, courts ought to ascertain that their citations have been duly served.

34-11 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.

34-12 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 cause, 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.

34-13 In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused, or at least after

he shall have received due citation to attend. Witnesses may be cross-examined by both parties, and any questions asked which are pertinent to the issue.

34-14 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.

34-15 When a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a cause, the following order shall be observed:

- a. The Moderator shall charge the court.
- b. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard.
- c. The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.
- d. The parties shall be heard; first, the prosecutor, and then the accused, and the prosecutor shall close.
- e. The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinion in the cause.
- f. The vote shall be taken, the verdict announced and judgment entered on the records.

34-16 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 members of the court other than the one challenged.

34-17 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

34-18 The parties shall be allowed copies of the whole proceedings at their own expense, if they demand them. Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the Clerk, which shall exhibit the charges, the answer, all the testimony, 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, attach together the charges, the answer, the citations and returns thereto, and the minutes herein required to be kept. These papers, when so attached, shall constitute "the record of the case." 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 thereof, if any shall have been filed. Nothing which is not contained in this "record" shall be taken into consideration in the higher court. On the final decision of a cause in a higher court, its judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the case originated.

34-19 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 by any communing member of the same particular church; or before any other court, by any member of the court. A member of the court so employed shall not be allowed to sit in judgment in the case.

34-20 Process, in case of scandal, shall commence within the space of one year after the offense was committed, unless it has recently become flagrant. When, however, a church member shall commit an offense, after removing to a place far distant from his former residence, and where his connection with the church is unknown, in consequence of which process cannot be instituted within the time above specified, the recent discovery of the church membership of the individual shall be considered as equivalent to

the offense itself having recently become flagrant. The same principle, in like circumstances, shall also apply to Ministers.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE—Special Rules Pertaining to Process before Sessions

35-1 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 in which the Session is rendered incapable of exercising jurisdiction, in which case process shall be entered before the Presbytery.

35-2 When an accused person, having been twice duly cited, shall refuse to appear before the Session, or appearing, shall refuse to plead, the court shall enter upon its records the fact, together with the nature of the offence charged, and he shall be suspended from sealing ordinances for his contumacy. The censure may be made public should this be deemed expedient by the Session, and shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

35-3 If the charge be one of gross crime or heresy, and the accused persist in his contumacy, the court may proceed to inflict the highest censure. The accused has the right to complain this decision to the next higher court.

35-4 When it is impracticable immediately to commence process against an accused church member, the Session may, if it think the edification of the Church requires it, prevent the accused from approaching the Lord's table until the charges against him can be examined.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX—Special Rules Pertaining to Process Against a Minister (Teaching Elder)

36-1 Process against a Minister shall be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member.

36-2 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.

36-3 If anyone knows a Minister to be guilty of a private offence, he should warn him in private. But if the offence be persisted in, or become public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other Minister of the Presbytery for his advice.

36-4 If a Minister accused of an offence, having been twice duly cited, shall refuse to appear before the Presbytery, he shall be immediately suspended. And if, after another citation, he shall still refuse to attend; he shall be deposed as contumacious, and suspended or excommunicated from the Church. Record shall be made of the judgment and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the sentence shall be made public.

36-5 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.

36-6 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.

36-7 When a Minister, pending a trial, shall make confession, if the matter be base and flagitious, such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a higher nature, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court shall, without delay, suspend him from the exercise of his office, or depose him from the ministry.

36-8 A Minister suspended 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 walk and conversation as shall heal the wound made by his scandal. And 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 its consent.

36-9 When a Minister is deposed his church shall be declared vacant; but when he is suspended, it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the censure shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relation.

36-10 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 want of acceptance to the church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it withdraws license from a licentiate for want of evidence of the divine call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds being necessary for this purpose.

In such a case, the Clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery, forthwith deliver to the individual concerned a written notice 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 THIRTY-SEVEN—Evidence

37-1 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. The accused party may be allowed, but shall not be compelled, to testify; but the accuser shall be required to testify, on the demand of the accused. 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. It belongs to the court to judge of the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence.

37-2 A husband or wife shall not be compelled to bear testimony the one against the other in any court.

37-3 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 offence may be considered to be proved.

37-4 No witness afterwards to be examined, except a member of the court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case, if either party object.

37-5 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. But no question shall be put or answered, except by permission of the Moderator, subject to an appeal to the court; and the court shall not permit questions frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

37-6 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 quick 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.

37-7 Every question put to a witness shall, if required, be reduced to writing. When answered, it shall, together with the answer, be recorded, if deemed by the court, or by either party, of sufficient importance, and the testimony of the witness shall be read to him for his approbation and subscription.

37-8 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.

37-9 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.

37-10 When it is not convenient for a court to have the whole, or perhaps any part of the testimony in any particular cause, taken in its presence, a commission shall be appointed to take the testimony in question, which shall be considered as if taken in the presence of the court; of which commission, and of the time and place of its meeting, due notice shall be given to the opposite party, that he may have an opportunity of attending. And 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 is proposed to take it, that a commission, as in the

former case, may be appointed for the purpose. Or, the testimony may be taken on written interrogatories, by filing the same with the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the cause, and giving two weeks' notice thereof to the adverse party, during which time he may file cross-interrogatories if he desire it; and the testimony shall then be taken by the commission 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.

37-11 A member of the court who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified if either party make objection. A member of the court who is the prosecutor in the case is disqualified from sitting as a judge.

37-12 An officer or private member of the church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.

37-13 If after a trial before any court new testimony is 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.

37-14 If in the prosecution of an appeal, new testimony is 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 take the testimony and proceed with the case.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT—The Infliction of Censures

38-1 When any member or officer of the church shall be found guilty of an offence 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.

38-2 Church censures and the modes of administering them should be suited to the nature of the offences; for private offences censure should be administered in the presence of the court alone, or in private by one or more members of the court, but in the case of public offences, 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.

38-3 The censure of admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offence is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offence 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.

38-4 Definite suspension 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.

38-5 Indefinite suspension should be administered after the manner proscribed for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that it may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger, and under the blessings 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 Minister, 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 offence), we, the Presbytery [or church Session] of _____, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the sacraments of the Church [and 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.

38-6 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 I 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 the church of _____, 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.

38-7 The censure of deposition shall be administered by the Moderator in the words following:

“Whereas, _____, a Minister of this Presbytery (or a 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), of _____ 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 Christian Minister (or Ruling Elder, or Deacon), the said _____, and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof.”

If the censure include 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 “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.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE—The Removal of Censures

39-1 After any person has been 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.

39-2 When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of a suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance, either in the presence of the court alone or publicly, and be restored to the sacraments of the Church, and to his office, if such be the judgment of the court, which 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 from the office of the gospel Ministry, or Ruling Eldership, or Deaconship), but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the Session (or Presbytery) of _____, do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ absolve you from the said sentence of suspension, and do restore you to the full communion of the Church (and the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).”

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

39-3 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:

- a. **“Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sin 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.”**
- b. **“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.”**
- c. **“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 Savior? 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 satisfied 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.

39-4 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 Minister 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 of _____, (or the Session of this church), 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 which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving, and the members of the court shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

39-5 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.

39-6 When a person under censure shall remove to a part of the country remote from the court by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, it shall be lawful for the court, if it deems it expedient, to transmit a certified copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the delinquent resides, which shall take up the case and proceed with it as though it had originated with itself.

39-7 In the restoration of a Minister who has been suspended or 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, and afterwards should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time, so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and the prospect of his usefulness, and 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 sentence of restoration has been pronounced.

CHAPTER FORTY—Cases Without Process

40-1 When any person shall come forward and make his offence 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 full statement of the facts should be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment. The accused has the right of complaint against the judgment.

40-2 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.

40-3 When a member or officer shall renounce the communion of this Church by joining some other evangelical Church, if in good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, and his name erased. But if charges are pending against him, they shall be communicated to the church which he has joined. If the denomination be heretical, an officer shall have his name stricken from the roll, and all authority to exercise his office derived from

this Church shall be withdrawn from him; but a private member shall not be otherwise noticed than as above prescribed.

40-4 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 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* 38-5.4-6), 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, then the Session shall erase his name from the roll. This erasure is an act of pastoral discipline 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, 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.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE—Modes in Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under Supervision of Higher Courts

41-1 Every decision which is made by any church court, except the highest, is subject to the review of a superior court, and may be brought before it by general review and control, reference, appeal, or complaint.

41-2 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.

41-3 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church is “subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments” (*BCO* 3-1), and while affirming also that this Constitution is fallible (*WCF* 31.3), Vanguard Presbyterian Church affirms that this subordinate and fallible Constitution has been “adopted by the church” (*BCO* 3-1) “as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice” (*BCO* 31-1) and as setting forth a form of government and discipline “in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity” (*BCO* 24-5.3). 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:

a. 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.

- b. 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 a Scriptural and/or Constitutional error on the part of the lower court.
- c. 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 a Scriptural and/or Constitutional error in the decision of the lower court.
- d. The higher court does have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by simply deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should consider itself obligated to uphold the Scripture and/or Constitution when the issues being reviewed involve the proper interpretation or application of the Scripture and/or Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Scripture and/or Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court.

CHAPTER Forty-Two—General Review and Control

42-1 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.

42-2 In reviewing records of a lower court the higher court is to examine:

- a. Whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded;
- b. Whether they have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;
- c. Whether they have been wise, equitable, and suited to promote the welfare of the Church;
- d. Whether the lawful injunctions of the higher court have been obeyed.

42-3 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.

42-4 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 which 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 the review of the records.

42-5 When any court having appellate jurisdiction shall be advised, either by the records of the court next below or by memorial, either with or without protest, or by any other satisfactory method, 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 by representative or in writing, at a specified time and place, and to show what it 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.

42-6 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 FORTY-THREE—References

43-1 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.

43-2 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 procedure respecting which the lower court feels the need for guidance.

43-3 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 for its trial and decision by the higher court.

43-4 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.

43-5 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.

43-6 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 issue the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR—Appeals

44-1 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.

44-2 Only those who have submitted to a regular trial are entitled to an appeal. Those who have not submitted to a regular trial are not entitled to an appeal.

44-3 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.

44-4 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 following the meeting of the court. No attempt should be made to circularize the courts to which appeal is being made by either party before the case is heard.

44-5 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.

44-6 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. If, however, the censure is suspension or excommunication from the sealing ordinances, or deposition from office, the court may, for sufficient reasons duly recorded, put the censure into effect until the case is finally decided.

44-7 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.

44-8 After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be entertained by the court, the following procedure is to be adopted: (1) The reading of the complete record of the case, except any part of it that may be omitted by consent of the parties and the court itself; (2) the parties shall be heard, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument; (3) opportunity shall be given the member of the appellate court to express their opinions; (4) the vote shall then be taken, without further debate, on each specification in this form: "Shall this specification of error be sustained?" If the court deems it wise, it may adopt a minute explanatory of its action, which shall become a part of its record in the case.

44-9 The decision of the higher court may be to confirm or to reverse in whole or in part, the judgment of the lower court; or to remit the case to the lower court for the purpose of amending the record, should it appear incorrect or defective; or to send the case

back for a new trial. In every case a full record shall be made, and a copy of it shall be sent to the lower court.

44-10 An appellant may represent himself or be represented by any member of any court of this denomination.

44-11 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.

44-12 If an appellant manifests a litigious or otherwise unchristian spirit in the prosecution of his appeal, he shall receive a suitable rebuke by the appellate court.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE—Complaints

45-1 A complaint is a written representation made to a higher court against some act or decision of a lower court. It is the right of any communing member of the church in good standing to make complaint against any action of a lower court to whose jurisdiction he is subject, except that no complaint is allowable in a judicial case in which an appeal is taken. A complaint shall not be made to any other court than the next higher, except with its consent.

45-2 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 thirty (30) 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. No attempt should be made to circularize the court to which complaint is being made by either party.

45-3 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, the complainant may take that complaint to the next higher court. 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 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.

45-4 Notice of complaint shall not have the effect of suspending the action against which the complaint is made except in the following instances:

- a. If 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;
- b. If a complainant/complainants personally affected by the decision is/are present at the meeting of the court when the action was taken shall within 30 days request its suspension until the final decision by the higher court.

45-5 The court against which complaint is made shall appoint one or more representatives to defend its action, and the parties in the case shall be known as complainant and respondent.

45-6 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.

45-7 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.

45-8 After the higher court has first determined that the complaint was timely filed with its clerk and is otherwise in order to be heard, the court shall hear the complaint, or in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 18-2 and 18-3, appoint a commission to hear it. If the date of the hearing shall, for good cause, be other than the same day it is presented, the court shall notify the complainant and respondent in writing of the date set for the hearing.

45-9 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 be taken as to what disposition should be made of the complaint, and the complainant and respondent notified of the court's decision.

45-10 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.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX—Dissents, Protests and Objections

46-1 Any member of a judicatory who is entitled to vote on a question and who votes against the action or judgment of the judicatory thereon may request that his vote be recorded in the minutes of the judicatory.

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* 41-2), 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.

46-2 A dissent is a declaration on the part of one or more members of a minority in a court, expressing a different opinion from that of the majority in a particular case. A dissent unaccompanied with reasons is always entered on the records of the court.

46-3 A protest is a more solemn and formal declaration by members of a minority, bearing their testimony against what they deem a mischievous or erroneous judgment, and is generally accompanied with a detail of the reasons on which it is founded.

46-4 If a protest or dissent 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 protest on the records along with it. But here the matter shall end, unless the parties

protesting obtain permission to withdraw their protest absolutely, or for the sake of amendment.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN—Jurisdiction

47-1 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.

47-2 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* 21-7 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* 40-4, 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

47-3 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.

47-4 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.

47-5 No certificate of dismission from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid testimony of good standing for a period longer than one 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.

47-6 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

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT—The Principles and Elements of Public Worship

48-1 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 require the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in His Word (WSC #'s 50 and 51).

48-2 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).

48-3 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).

48-4 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.

48-5 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.

48-6 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.

48-7 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.

48-8 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.

48-9 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.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE—The Sanctification of the Lord’s Day

49-1 The fourth commandment requires 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).

49-2 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.

49-3 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.

49-4 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.

49-5 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.

49-6 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.

49-7 Let the time not used for public worship be spent in prayer, in devotional reading, and especially in the study of the Scriptures, meditation, catechizing, 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.

CHAPTER FIFTY—The Ordering of Public Worship

50-1 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 pretense of private meetings.

50-2 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.

50-3 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.

50-4 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.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE—The Public Reading of the Scriptures

51-1 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.

51-2 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 Church officer of godly man.

51-3 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.

51-4 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.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO—The Singing of Psalms and Hymns

52-1 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.

52-2 In singing the praises of God, we are to sing in the spirit of worship, with understanding in our hearts.

52-3 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.

52-4 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.

52-5 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.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE—Public Prayer

53-1 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.

53-2 Then, after singing a psalm, or hymn, it is proper that, before the sermon, there should be a full and comprehensive prayer:

First, 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 word;

Second, 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;

Third, 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.;

Fourth, 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, 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;

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

Sixth, 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.

53-3 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.

53-4 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.

53-5 All prayer is to be offered in the language of the people. The posture of the people in public prayer should always be reverent and as far as possible uniform.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR—The Preaching of the Word

54-1 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, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

54-2 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.

54-3 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.

54-4 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.

54-5 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.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE—The Worship of God by Tithes and Offerings

55-1 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 acknowledgment 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 becometh Christians.

55-2 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.

55-3 It is appropriate that the offerings be dedicated by prayer and some passage of Scripture be read or quoted which encourages liberality in giving.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX—Confessing the Faith

56-1 It is proper for the congregation of God's people publicly to confess their faith during a worship service, using creeds or confessions that are true to the Word, such as, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, or some other Reformed creed.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN—The Administration of Baptism

57-1 Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament that is to be administered both to those who actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ and to the infants of one or more believing parents.

57-2 The baptism of infants is not to be unnecessarily delayed; nor 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.

57-3 Baptism is not to be privately administered, but in the presence of the congregation under the supervision of the Session.

57-4 Before baptism, let the minister use some words of instruction, touching the institution, nature, use, and ends of this ordinance for both adult believers and infant children of believers; showing:

That it is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ: That it is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, of our ingrafting into Christ, and of our union with Him, or remission of sins, regeneration, adoption, and life eternal; That the water, in baptism, represents and signifies both the blood of Christ, which takes 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: 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;

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; That the Son of God admitted little children into His presence, embracing and blessing them, saying, “For of such is the kingdom of God”; 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; That they are federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized; 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; By virtue of being born of believing parents children 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 must 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 souls. 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: That they teach the child to read the Word of God; that they instruct it 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; that they pray with and for it; that they set an example of piety and godliness before it; and endeavor, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

57-5 The minister shall then read the covenant promises:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. . . and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.” “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. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31, 33; Acts 2:39; Gen.17:7; Acts 16:31).

The minister shall then propose the following questions to adults who were not baptized as infants after they have made a profession of faith according to *BCO 58-5*:

1. Do you acknowledge your need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?

2. Do you claim God's covenant promises and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation?

3. Do you now unreservedly dedicate yourself to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to be obedient to Christ and set a godly example for others, that you will pray and read the Scripture daily, that you will strive to learn the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to live as a follower of Christ?

To the parents of infants who are being presented for baptism, 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?

57-6 Then the minister is to pray for a blessing to attend this ordinance, after which, calling the adult or 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 adult or child with water, by pouring or sprinkling it on the head of the adult child, without adding any other ceremony; and the whole shall be concluded with prayer.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT— The Admission of Persons to Sealing Ordinances

58-1 Children born within the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church as non-communing members, and are to be taught to read and repeat the *Children's Catechism* or the *Shorter Catechism*, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to read Scripture, to hate sin, to fear God, and to love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. When they come to years of discretion, they ought to be urgently reminded that they are members of the church by birthright, and that it is their duty and privilege personally to accept Christ, confess him before men, and seek admission to the Lord's Supper.

58-2 The time when young people come to years of discretion cannot be precisely fixed and differs from person to person. This must be left to the prudence of the Session of the church, whose office it is to judge, after careful examination, the qualifications of those who apply for admission to sealing ordinances.

58-3 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 according to *BCO 57-5*.

58-4 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.

58-5 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:

a. Of the number of those who were baptized in infancy as members of the Church of God by birthright, and heirs of the covenant promises, and who were then dedicated to God by their parents, or some other responsible person, in solemn vows, the Session has examined and approved (_____ and _____), who come now to assume for themselves the full privileges and responsibilities of their inheritance in the household of faith.

b. 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 (_____ and _____), who are cordially welcomed into the goodly fellowship of the household of faith.

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

(All of) you who are 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 believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you acknowledge yourself/yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?

3. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

4. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

5. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

6. Do you submit yourself/yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to promote 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.

58-6 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 FIFTY-NINE— The Administration of the Lord’s Supper

59-1 The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is to be celebrated frequently; the stated times to be determined by the Session of each congregation, as it may judge most for edification.

59-2 The ignorant and scandalous are not to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper.

59-3 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.

59-4 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.

59-5 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:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the same night in which he was betrayed, having taken bread, and blessed and broken it, gave it to his disciples, as I, ministering in his name, give this bread unto you, saying

Here the bread is to be distributed.

“Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me”

After having given the bread, he shall take the cup, and say:

After the same manner our Savior also took the cup, and having given thanks, as hath been done in his name, he gave it to the disciples saying:

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

“This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins, drink ye all of it.”

59-6 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.

59-7 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 is proper for the minister to next 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.”

CHAPTER SIXTY— The Solemnization of Marriage

60-1 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).

60-2 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.

60-3 Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, in accordance with the Word of God.

60-4 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.

60-5 Parents should neither compel their children to marry contrary to their inclinations, nor deny their consent without just and important reasons.

60-6 Marriage is of a public nature. The welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the credit of religion, are deeply interested in it. Therefore, the purpose of marriage should be sufficiently published a proper time previously to the solemnization of it. It is enjoined on all ministers to be careful that, in this matter, they transgress neither the laws of God, nor the laws of the community; and that they may not destroy the peace and comfort of families, ministers should be assured that, with respect

of the parties applying to them, no just objections lie against their marriage.

60-7 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.

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE— The Visitation of the Sick

61-1 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 SIXTY-TWO— The Burial of the Dead

62-1 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 out on their behalf, that they may be sustained and comforted in their sorrow, and that their affliction may be blessed to their spiritual good.

62-2 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.

CHAPTER SIXTY-THREE— The Observance of Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving

63-1 There is no day under the gospel commanded to be kept holy, except the Lord's day, which is the Christian Sabbath.

63-2 Nevertheless, to observe days of fasting and thanks-giving, as the dispensations of Divine Providence may direct, is both scriptural and rational.

63-3 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.

63-4 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, as we live under a Christian government, it is the duty of the ministers and people of our communion to pay all due respect to it.

63-5 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.

63-6 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.

63-7 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.

63-8 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.

CHAPTER SIXTY-FOUR— Christian Life in the Home

64-1 Besides the public worship in congregations, it is the indispensable duty of each person alone, in secret; and of every family, by itself in private, to pray to, and worship God.

64-2 Secret worship is most plainly enjoined by our Lord. In this duty every one, apart by himself, is to 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.

64-3 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.

64-4 Parents should instruct their children and servants 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.

64-5 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.

64-6 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.

OPTIONAL FORMS FOR PARTICULAR SERVICES

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, _____ (the groom), take _____ (the bride), 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, _____ (the bride), take _____ (the groom), 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 Spirit, 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.

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 innocence 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 to the groom:

_____, 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 to the bride:

I, _____, 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 groom shall then say:

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

The bride shall then say:

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

The groom shall then put a ring on the third finger of the bride'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 ask the bride:

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

The bride shall answer:

I do.

The bride shall then put a ring on the third finger of the groom'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 ask the groom

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

The groom shall answer:

I do.

The minister shall then say to the groom:

You may now kiss the bride.

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, _____, and _____, husband and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I now present to you Mr. & Mrs. _____

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 first fruits 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 first fruits, 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.

Here, 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, forever. 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 a service at the graveside, see Appendix E.

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.

The 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.

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” (John5:29).

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 the 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 Savior. 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church,

(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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

(In the case of a second citation, add the appropriate warning prescribed by *BCO* 34-6.)

By order of _____

(insert the title of the trial judicatory) of Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

(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* 34-6.)

By order of _____

(here insert the title of the trial judicatory)

of Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

_____ (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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church 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 Vanguard Presbyterian Church.

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:

1. _____

2. _____

(Here set forth concisely in numbered paragraphs the reasons for the complaint).

_____, Complainant

Date: _____

APPENDIX J

SAMPLE FORM FOR TERMS OF CALL

Subject to the approval of the _____

Presbytery, the Congregation of _____

in _____

earnestly calls you, _____,

to undertake the office of _____

in our 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 care and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to provide you with the following:

Annual Cash Salary & Housing Allowance, paid

_____ (*semi-monthly, etc.*)

The amount/portion dedicated to housing allowance will be determined by the Minister and approved by the Session before employment with the church in this new position and shall be reviewed prior to each fiscal year.

Primary Benefits:

Social Security/Medicare Allowance: _____ % of salary +

housing: \$ _____

Medical Insurance &/or Medicare Supplement Insurance

(specific \$ amount): \$ _____

Retirement Savings: ___ % of salary + housing

\$ _____

Long Term Disability Insurance: enough to replace ___ %

of salary + housing: \$ _____

Life Insurance: amount equal to ___ x (salary + housing)

\$ _____

Equity Allowance if Minister living in a manse

\$ _____

Other _____

\$ _____

Secondary Benefits:

\$ _____

Dental Insurance

\$ _____

Vision Insurance

\$ _____

Long Term Care Insurance

\$ _____

Temporary Benefits

Relocation expenses reimbursed up to a maximum of:

\$ _____

Other _____

\$ _____

Miscellaneous Paid Leaves per year.

(Any specific church policies are described in a separate document.)

Vacation ____ days

Sick Leave ____ days

Educational Leave ____ days

Paternity Leave ____ days

Sabbatical Leave ____ days

Funeral Leave ____ days

Any reimbursement of reasonable and necessary business expenses shall be in accord with a Session-adopted Accountable Reimbursement Plan, with a maximum amount specified in the annual church budget.

I, having moderated the _____

(Session or Congregational) meeting which extended a call

to _____ for his ministerial services, do certify the call has been made in all respects according to the rules in Vanguard Presbyterian Church's *Book of Church Order* and the persons who signed the call were authorized to do so by vote of the

(Session or Congregation).

(Check if applicable) Authority to approve these Terms
was delegated by the Congregation to the Session at a
congregational meeting on _____ (date).

Meeting Moderator (sign) _____

Print name _____

Position _____

Phone or e-mail _____

Date of Meeting _____

Vote: # Yes = _____ # No = _____

Minister-Elect (sign) _____

Print name _____