

The Form of Church Government
of the
Covenant Presbyterian Church

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**CHAPTER 1:
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE KING AND COVENANT HEAD OF HIS CHURCH**

SECTION 1

Jesus Christ, whose name is called wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, is the Head of the Church

SECTION 2

Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, rules His Church by His Word and Spirit. The pattern of officers, ordinances, government, and discipline set forth in his Word is, therefore, to be observed as the instruction of our Lord.

SECTION 3

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.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: Of the increase of Jesus Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. He sits upon the throne of David to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice forever. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, far above all principalities and powers, might, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Unto Him the Father has given all authority in heaven and in earth and has put all things under His feet, making Him Head over the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Is. 9:6-7; Jn. 5:26-30; Acts 4:12, Col. 1:18

Section 2: Jesus Christ, having ascended into heaven, abides in His Church by the Holy Spirit whom He has sent and through whom 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.

Section 3: The Presbyterian form of government seeks to fulfill these scriptural requirements for the glory of God, the edification of the Church, and the enlargement of that spiritual liberty in which Christ has set us free.

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CHAPTER 2: THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

SECTION 1

Jesus Christ, who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, has established, in this world a visible Body which is His Church.

SECTION 2

The visible catholic Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess faith in Jesus Christ, together with their children, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

SECTION 3

The invisible Church consists of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning of time to the end of the ages.

SECTION 4

In accordance with the teaching of Scripture, the many members of the visible Church are to be organized in local and regional churches, confessing a common faith and submitting to a common form of government.

SECTION 5

The local church is the fundamental unit of authority in the Presbyterian system of government. It holds primary responsibility for the execution of these duties.

SECTION 6

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

SECTION 7

The work of the Church, in fellowship with and obedience to Christ, includes:

- A) faithfully preaching the whole counsel of Scripture with a thorough expounding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and the Law of God as the foundation for ethics, counsel, rule and hermeneutical principles;
- B) reading and teaching God's Word;
- C) rightfully administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Table;
- D) fellowshipping and encouraging one another through prayer, praise, and fasting;
- E) collecting and distributing of the tithes and offerings;
- F) showing mercy;

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- G) exercising discipline;
- H) offering a public testimony of righteousness; and
- I) blessing the people.

COMMENTARY:

Section 4: Such bodies whether local, national, or international, which in their belief and practice hold fast to the historic Christian faith, which require for admission into their membership what Christ requires for salvation, and which subordinate their authority to that of the Word of God, are true Churches of Christ, despite matters not essential to the faith which may have caused their separation from others.

**CHAPTER 3:
THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH**

SECTION 1

The Church has such authority as is given to her by her Head, Jesus Christ. This authority is vested in the Elders of the Church who have been duly ordained by the laying on of hands of Presbytery.

SECTION 2

The Presbytery shall consider candidates for ordination who have been nominated by a Session or higher body. With regard to mission works, Presbytery may also consider candidates who have been nominated by the Session of a Sponsoring Church.

SECTION 3

All Church power is ministerial and declarative and is to be exercised solely and exclusively within the bounds and limitations set forth in Holy Scripture. Church power is neither independent nor sovereign in its exercise.

SECTION 4

The Elders of the Particular Church are the only governors of the Particular Church and, corporately, are called the Congregational Presbytery, or Session of the Church.

SECTION 5

The members of the Session alone are to represent the Particular Church at Presbytery and General Assembly.

SECTION 6

No Church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction. No civil penalties derived from the culture at large may be inflicted in a Church court or by Church officers. No aid from a civil authority may be sought by any officer or authority in the Presbyterian system in the exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security.

SECTION 7

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

SECTION 8

Church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction, derived from God's Word, and every member is commanded by God to submit to its authority as an obedience offered to Christ.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: Each believer-priest is endued with the Spirit of the Living God and is called by Christ to join in the worship, edification and testimony of the Church. Each local church functions and grows as part of the Body of Christ, fitly-framed and fashioned together, according to the working of Him who works in every member to supply a due measure of each part.

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Sections 3-4: The government of the Church by Elders is a New Testament ordinance. The jurisdiction of Elders in Presbyterian assemblies and wider courts is set forth in the New Testament. The organization of courts, both courts of original jurisdiction and wider courts of appellate jurisdiction, is set forth in the Word of God. Such courts are empowered to adjudicate according to the derived authority they have received from the Covenant Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

Section 5: God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, if anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, in matters of faith, or worship. Scripture alone is the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice. No Church authority may adjudicate matters on the basis of its own man-made rules and authority.

Section 8: God has ordained that persons are tested by God by the manner in which they respond to their neighbor, in general, and to derived authority in particular. This includes the Church's authority and government, as well as civil government and parental authority. Therefore, if the decisions of the Church officers are rendered according to the precepts of Scripture then they "are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word." (WCF 31, 2)

**CHAPTER 4:
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

SECTION 1

The Church is the Body of Christ. As such, true believers are one with their Head and are one with each other. This unity has been brought about through the work of Christ, Who has reconciled us to God through the cross; and, the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, Who has baptized us into Christ, making us to be one new man.

SECTION 2

Christians must, as faithful stewards, utilize the gifts given to them for the edification of the Church.

SECTION 3

Although the visible Church has, in God's providence, become divided into bodies commonly termed denominations or churches; and, although this division has obscured the visible unity of the Body of Christ; there is, nevertheless, one body, one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Church to both desire and work diligently towards the visible manifestation of this unity before the eyes of the watching world.

SECTION 4

Such bodies, whether local, national, or international, are to be recognized as true churches of Christ which:

- A) in their belief and practice hold fast to the historic Christian faith as expressed in such creeds as the Nicene Creed of 381AD
- B) require for admission into their membership what Christ requires for salvation
- C) subordinate their authority to the Word of God, and
- D) maintain through sufficient discipline the Word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity.

SECTION 5

Communion and fellowship with those who teach or promote false doctrine is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ's Church.

SECTION 6

It is the right and duty of those who rule in the Church of God to maintain order and exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and unity.

SECTION 7

Church officers, together with the congregation, must censure or cast out the erroneous, scandalous, and apostate, while always observing the requirements of the Word of God and the due process of the Book of Church Discipline, and seeking the honor of Christ's name, the good of His Church, and the reclamation of the offender.

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COMMENTARY:

Section 4: It is our desire and willingness to hold Christian fellowship with all other such branches of the Church. It is our further desire and willingness to be united in government with all who can subscribe to the Westminster Standards as articulated in our Constitution.

Section 5: Since apostasy in faith and life is destructive of the union the Church enjoys with Christ, fellowship can be maintained only by turning away from such errors and separating from the many antichrists, false apostles and teachers who promote and practice them. Communion with such is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ and his saints.

**CHAPTER 5:
OFFICES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

SECTION 1

The New Testament Church of Christ is established upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles. When their testimony was completed, the apostolic and prophetic offices ceased together with their revelatory powers and signs.

SECTION 2

Our Lord continues to build his Church through the ministry of men whom he calls and endues with special gifts for teaching, ruling, and serving. Some of these special gifts can be most profitably exercised only when those who possess them have been publicly recognized as called of Christ to minister with them.

SECTION 3

It is proper to speak of such a publicly recognized function as an office.

SECTION 4

The ordinary and perpetual offices in the local Church are the Elder and the Deacon. Within the economy of the office of Elder, there are two distinctive functions. They are the ministry of the Word and prayer and sacrament (preaching, teaching, and the administration of the sacraments) and governing.

SECTION 5

The office of Deacon is that office established by Christ which administers works of mercy and service on behalf of the Church.

COMMENTARY:

Section 4: The office of Elder embodies many other titles and administration in Scripture. These include evangelist, pastor, teacher, and bishop. There is a diversity of ministry within any office, for every man is called to be a steward of his own gifts.

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CHAPTER 6: ELDERS – PASTORS, PREACHERS, TEACHERS, & BISHOPS

SECTION 1

The Elder, also called Pastor, Bishop, Preacher, and Teacher in the New Testament, is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the Church.

SECTION 2

Every member of Presbytery shall be an Elder in a local congregation of that Presbytery.

SECTION 3

It belongs to the office of the Elder:

- A) to read the Scriptures publicly;
- B) to lead the congregation in public worship;
- C) to preach and teach the Word;
- D) to exhort and convince by sound doctrine those who contradict;
- E) to bring Scripture to bear upon the conscience by reproving, exhorting, and comforting;
- F) to pray regularly with and for the congregation, especially the sick;
- G) to administer the sacraments on a regular basis;
- H) to bless the people from God;
- I) to help the needy;
- J) to represent the Church before Presbyterian assemblies; and
- K) to counsel civil magistrates when requested to do so.

SECTION 4

Seeing that God has given gifts in different proportions to different men, it is not expected that every Elder will possess all these gifts to the same degree.

SECTION 5

Elders shall meet the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. An Elder should be sound in the faith, possess competency in human learning, and be able to teach and rule others; he should be known as a sober minded man, having wisdom and discretion; he should exhibit the dignity of a holy life and exemplary rule in his house; and he should have a good report of those who are without.

SECTION 6

While all Elders are authorized to and must be capable of preaching and administering the sacraments, in recognition of the skill that can be attained through weekly preaching (and its resulting

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benefit to the congregation) and of the dedicated labor required to attain this skill, each Session may select one Elder to regularly fill the pulpit and administer the sacraments. It is wise and fitting that a Particular Church should, to whatever extent is deemed necessary, financially and otherwise support an Elder who serves in this capacity.

SECTION 7

Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by the constitution and be prepared to abide by the provisions of the Form of Church Government regarding exceptions to the Confession.

COMMENTARY:

Section 5: Churches are strongly urged to use the *Checklist for Church Officers* found in Appendix A as part of the process for examining and determining the qualifications for Elders who are seeking ordination or transfer into a Presbytery.

Section 6: All Elders must be apt to teach and able to refute those who contradict, and therefore must be thoroughly familiar with the whole counsel of God, the doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards, and should be able to deal with all the questions and issues in the *Questionnaire for Elder Candidates and Transferring Elders* found in Appendix B to the satisfaction of the Presbytery.

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**CHAPTER 7:
EVANGELISTS**

SECTION 1

Evangelists are Elders who, though belonging to the Session of a Particular Church, often preach the Word, administer the sacraments and undertake all the functions that belong to the office of Elder away from his Particular Church.

SECTION 2

In the case where the Evangelist is working to develop a new congregation, the Evangelist shall continue in a place until a regular congregation has been established.

SECTION 3

As an Elder, the Evangelist is authorized to perform the following functions:

- A) labor in home or foreign mission fields;
- B) serve as chaplain in the armed forces or other institutions;
- C) serve as stated pulpit supply or special preacher to the Churches; or
- D) serve as an editor or similar ministry involving media communications.

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CHAPTER 8: DEACONS

SECTION 1

The office of the Deacon is called to the ministry of mercy and special service of the local Church. Works of mercy include the care of members of the Church who stand destitute of help, especially qualified widows, as well as individuals who are unable to function on their own behalf due to mental or physical debilitation, and have not the care needed, especially by their families. Special service would include ministry intended to relieve the Elders from responsibilities which distract them from giving themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the Word. Such ministry would include administrative and financial service, and ministry to the saints.

SECTION 2

The Session is responsible for oversight of the Deacons and shall direct their work, both outside the Church with respect to the poor, and within the Church with respect to the local congregation and ministry.

SECTION 3

The Deacon is nominated and appointed by a process approved by the Session. Churches are urged to use the checklist in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for Deacons.

SECTION 4

Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by Constitution and shall be prepared to abide by the provisions of the Form of Church Government regarding them.

SECTION 5

The Session shall determine the work and priorities of the Deacons as well as the frequency and manner of diaconal meetings and record-keeping.

**CHAPTER 9:
THE GOVERNING ASSEMBLIES**

SECTION 1

All Elders are under the oversight of the local Session, rather than primarily under the oversight of regional or national Presbyteries. All matters pertaining to an Elder's calling and person are the concern of the local Session which has original jurisdiction, except in matters of doctrine or teaching where the Presbytery shall have original jurisdiction.

SECTION 2

The primary purpose of governing assemblies within the Presbyterian system is to strengthen the peace, purity and unity of the Church by opposing heresy and sinful practices.

SECTION 3

The Presbytery only exercises such authority as is delegated to it by this Form of Church Government or by the General Assembly from time to time.

SECTION 4

Disputed matters of doctrine and discipline may be referred to a broader assembly for adjudication. No sentence shall be executed until all appeals have been exhausted.

SECTION 5

Presbyteries have the right to appoint committees or special commissions and delegate to them specific interim powers when necessary.

SECTION 6

The time limit of specific interim powers is not to exceed 2 years for any assembly broader than the Session.

SECTION 7

Membership on Presbytery committees need not be limited to the membership of the appointing assembly but must be limited to membership of the CPC at large. Only men holding the office of Elder have the authority to adjudicate.

SECTION 8

Regional Presbyteries shall convene no less than twice per year.

SECTION 9

Robert's Rules of Order, 1915 edition, will be followed by all governing bodies, except where they are contradicted by the Scriptures, the Westminster Standards, the Constitution of the CPC, or this document.

SECTION 10

Any claim or dispute arising from or related to membership in the CPC shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian

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Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation. Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of such membership and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision.

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**CHAPTER 10:
THE PARTICULAR CHURCH & ITS SESSION**

SECTION 1

A Particular Church consists of a definite company of Christians organized as a distinct congregation with its officers.

SECTION 2

A Particular Church must not be less than three (3) covenant heads at least two of whom are ordained Elders.

SECTION 3

Two or more local congregations may be associated together under the government of a single Session, with the provision that there must be at least one Elder in number for every separate congregation.

SECTION 4

The membership of a local congregation consists of those who have made a credible profession of faith; have been baptized; and, have been enrolled and admitted to all the rights of Church membership by the Session. Church membership shall also include the baptized children of members.

SECTION 5

The Session, which is the governing body of the Particular Church, shall consist of all Elders who have been duly ordained by Presbytery. It shall choose its own Moderator annually from among its members. The number of Elders is to be determined by taking into account the needs of the congregation and the number of those to whom Christ has given the gifts required for such offices.

SECTION 6

The Session shall convene at the call of the Moderator, the Presbytery, or any two members of the Session. In no case may the Session hold a meeting without attempting to notify all members.

SECTION 7

The Session is charged with maintaining the government of the congregation. It shall oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship including:

- A) the preaching of the Church;
- B) the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation;
- C) the discipline of members of the Particular Church;
- D) the activities of the Diaconate, and
- E) all other functions of the congregation.

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SECTION 8

The Session shall have final authority over the use of Particular Church property.

SECTION 9

The Session shall appoint Elders to higher assemblies.

SECTION 10

The Session shall ensure that only Elders ordained and installed in the CPC, Elders from churches of like faith and practice, or men who are under care and oversight of a Session of a CPC church are allowed to preach, and that such preaching would not contradict the teaching or practice of the CPC.

SECTION 11

The Session shall keep the following records:

- A) minutes of its meetings;
- B) minutes of the meetings of the congregation; and
- C) rolls of the members of the congregation, both of professing members and of their baptized children, with the dates of their reception. Such rolls shall designate those members worshipping with a mission work. Births, baptisms, censures, restorations, deaths, transfers, and removals shall be noted on these rolls.

SECTION 12

The Session shall submit its minutes and the minutes of the congregation to the Presbytery for review at least once every year.

SECTION 13

The names of members shall be placed upon or removed from the rolls of the Particular Church only by order of the Session, and according to the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 14

If, upon request, the Session dismisses a member to another congregation, the clerk shall send a letter commending him to its care, and the clerk of the receiving church shall notify the dismissing church of the date of his reception. When notification is received the clerk shall remove the member's name from the roll and record the fact in the minutes.

SECTION 15

Should a member desire dismissal to a church of which the Session cannot approve, and the member cannot be dissuaded, the Session shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the Session institutes disciplinary action against him. Upon being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll.

SECTION 16

Visitors and non-members who are scandalous in conduct or are perceived as a danger to the flock may, upon credible testimony of evidence or witnesses, be confronted by the Session and exhorted

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not to further attend so as not to disturb the peace of the Church until they repent of their scandalous conduct.

SECTION 17

If a Session shall cease to exist or become so small as to prevent it from working effectively, the Presbytery shall provide for an election and ordination of Elders from within the congregation; or the Presbytery, with the consent of the congregation, may appoint Elders normally from within the same Presbytery, to be an acting Session or to augment the existing Session temporarily.

**CHAPTER 11:
THE REGIONAL CHURCH AND ITS PRESBYTERY**

SECTION 1

A regional Church consists of all the members of the Particular and Mission congregations and the Elders within a certain district. The General Assembly may organize a regional Church when there are at least three congregations and/or six Elders within a region.

SECTION 2

The Presbytery is the governing body of a regional Church. It consists of all the Elders of the congregations of the regional Church.

SECTION 3

Meetings of the Presbytery shall be composed, insofar as possible, of two Elders from each congregation commissioned by the respective Sessions. Any four presbyters, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a quorum.

SECTION 4

Ordinarily, Presbytery meetings will be convened by one of the member congregations on a rotating basis, with all Particular Churches having an opportunity to convene Presbytery before any Particular Church has a subsequent opportunity to do the same.

SECTION 5

The last action of each Presbytery meeting shall be to appoint a new Moderator and Stated Clerk from amongst the Session of the next convening Particular Church.

SECTION 6

If the standing Moderator and/or Stated Clerk is unable to attend the Presbytery meeting, a Stated Clerk and/or a Moderator may be appointed from among the other members in attendance.

SECTION 7

The Moderator has no power when Presbytery is not in Session except to call meetings and bring them to order.

SECTION 8

The standing Moderator, or, in the case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the Stated Clerk, shall, at the request of any four (4) Elders, the Elders being of at least two different congregations, call a special meeting. The Moderator or the Stated Clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter, email, or fax, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, shall be sent to the Moderator and Stated Clerk of every Session under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery, at least ten days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at special meetings besides the particular business for which the judicatory has been convened.

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SECTION 9

The Presbytery has the power to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the Particular and Mission Churches under its care, always respecting the liberties guaranteed to the individual congregations under the Constitution, the Form of Church Government, and the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 10

In the exercise of its jurisdiction the Presbytery has responsibility for evangelism within the bounds of its region, especially in areas which are not within the sphere of service in any one congregation. Similarly the Presbytery shall seek to foster fellowship in worship and nurture in the Church as a whole within its region.

SECTION 11

The Presbytery has the power to organize and receive congregations, and, at the request of the people and with the advice of the Sessions involved, to visit Particular and Mission Churches for the purpose of inquiring into their state and of taking proper measures to ensure that evils which may have arisen in them shall be redressed.

SECTION 12

Presbytery shall examine and approve or censure the records of Particular and Mission Church Sessions.

SECTION 13

The Presbytery has power to:

- A) receive and issue all appeals, and other matters, that are brought before it from church Sessions in a regular manner, subject to the provisions of the Book of Church Discipline;
- B) resolve questions of doctrine or discipline seriously and reasonably proposed;
- C) condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church;
- D) examine candidates for the office of Elder;
- E) ordain, install, and remove Elders in accordance with the Form of Church Government and Book of Church Discipline; and
- F) bring charges to any church Session regarding an individual, or to itself if it involves an entire Session.

SECTION 14

It shall be the duty of the Presbytery to keep an accurate record of its proceedings and to submit this record to the General Assembly for examination at least once each year. The Presbytery shall also report to the General Assembly each year the ordinations, the receiving or dismissing of members, the removal of members by death, the organization, reception, union, or dissolution of congregations, or the formation of new ones, and in general, all the important changes which have taken place within its bounds in the course of the year.

SECTION 15

Each day's meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer.

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SECTION 16

Uncommissioned Elders of the regional Church may be seated as voting members, provided the majority of commissioned members do not object. Presbyters in good standing in other Presbyteries or in churches of like faith and practice, who may be present, may be invited to sit with the Presbytery as corresponding members. Such members shall be entitled to deliberate and advise, but not to vote in any decisions of the Presbytery.

SECTION 17

Any Elder who is not actively serving on the Session of a Particular or Mission Church in the Presbytery may not be seated as a voting member.

SECTION 18

Presbytery meetings may incorporate or be conducted by conference call and/or video conferencing provided a majority of those present do not object. Such a motion may be made at any point during the meeting and will be considered before any other motions currently on the table. If carried, this motion tables all questions currently being debated and requires immediate adjournment. Any motion other than adjournment is out of order. All voting will be by roll call. Any motions so carried, including those carried prior to an objection motion, must be read at the next regularly scheduled meeting and are subject to reconsideration.

SECTION 19

Presbytery will meet at least twice per year. At least one of these meetings must be in person. Presbyters not present at in-person meetings may not vote. However, if Presbytery establishes such capability, they may attend by conference call and participate in discussion. Presbytery is under no obligation to establish such capability.

SECTION 20

Each regional Presbytery meeting will be opened by the standing Moderator. The standing Stated Clerk has responsibility to create the docket for the meeting and write the short report. The docket order will ordinarily be as follows:

- A) Call to Order
- B) Opening in Prayer
- C) Devotion
- D) Singing of a Psalm or song
- E) Roll Call of members, guests and observers
- F) Declaration of Quorum
- G) Communications from non-attendees
- H) Review and approval of former meeting's minutes
- I) Reports from the churches including matter of prayer
- J) Prayer for all the churches

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- K) Docket presentation, orders of the day and adoption
- L) Deliberation of the adopted docket
- M) Additional Business
- N) Website changes approved in light of business at this meeting
- O) Reading and approval of the short report
- P) Determining next date and convening Particular Church responsible for the next meeting
- Q) Election of new Moderator and Stated Clerk
- R) Adjournment & Prayer

The Moderator will conduct his duties until the meeting is adjourned and then his duties shall pass to the newly elected Moderator.

**CHAPTER 12:
THE NATIONAL CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

SECTION 1

The national Church consists of all the members of its regional Churches.

SECTION 2

The General Assembly shall consist of not more than one hundred and fifty voting commissioners, including the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the previous Assembly and such Elders as are commissioned by the respective Presbyteries in accordance with proportions determined by a previous General Assembly.

SECTION 3

The General Assembly shall meet at least once in every year. This meeting will be in person.

SECTION 4

On the day appointed for the purpose the Moderator of the preceding Assembly shall open the meeting and preside until a new Moderator is chosen. In the event of his absence the member present who was last elected Moderator of the General Assembly shall preside in his place.

SECTION 5

Each commissioner shall present his credentials to the clerk of the Assembly. Any twenty of these commissioners shall be a quorum for the transaction of business. If there are less than 150 commissioners, a quorum shall consist of the greatest of 5% of the commissioners of at least three (3) Elders. No commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Assembly until he has been enrolled.

SECTION 6

The Moderator of the preceding Assembly, or an Elder appointed by him in his place, shall preach a sermon at the opening of the General Assembly. Each Session of the Assembly shall be opened with prayer.

SECTION 7

When the whole business of the Assembly is finished, and the vote taken for dissolving the present Assembly, the Moderator shall say from the chair, "By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, let this General Assembly be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another General Assembly, chosen in the same manner, to meet at _____ on the _____ day of _____ A.D. _____," after which he shall pray and return thanks, and the apostolic benediction shall be pronounced.

SECTION 8

When any emergency shall require the calling of a General Assembly sooner than the time specified by the previous assembly, the Moderator of the previous Assembly, or in the case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the Stated Clerk, at the request of at least three (3) Sessions from at least two (2) Presbyteries shall call a special General Assembly. The Moderator or the Stated Clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter, email, or fax, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting,

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shall be sent to the Moderator and the Clerk of every Session at least twenty days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meeting except the particular business for which the Assembly has been convened.

SECTION 9

The General Assembly shall seek to advance the worship, edification, and witness of the whole Church. It shall seek to resolve all doctrinal and disciplinary questions regularly brought before it from the regional assemblies. It shall seek to promote the unity of the Church of Christ through correspondence with other churches.

SECTION 10

The duties peculiar to the General Assembly include:

- A) organizing regional Churches;
- B) reviewing the records of the Presbyteries;
- C) hearing any cases appealed to it; and
- D) seeking to promote the unity of the visible Church by pursuing union with other like-minded churches

SECTION 11

Any commitments and agreements made to other churches or assemblies outside the CPC must be approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the General Assembly.

SECTION 12

The General Assembly is not invested with power, by virtue of its own authority, to make pronouncements that bind the conscience of the members of the Church. Yet the deliverances of the General Assembly, if declarative of the Word of God, are to be received with deference and submission not only because of their fidelity to the Word of God but also because of the nature of the General Assembly as the widest judicatory of the Church. Deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and other actions which have the effect of amending or adding to the subordinate standards shall not be binding unless they have been approved by the General Assembly and Presbyteries in the manner provided in this Form of Church Government for the amendment of the Constitution.

**CHAPTER 13:
THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

SECTION 1

Every Particular Church shall nominate its Elders and Deacons, except in extraordinary circumstances.

SECTION 2

Recommendations of particular men for office may be submitted, in written form, by any voting member of the Church, or by a broader Presbytery, to the Session for consideration at any time. The Session is required to note in its minutes the disposition of all nominations.

SECTION 3

The Session alone has power to present men as nominees for office in that local congregation. Such men must be approved by a majority of the congregation before ordination and installation in their respective offices. No man can be placed over a church in any office without the consent of that particular congregation. The Session will determine the means of congregational consent.

SECTION 4

In order that these sacred offices not be committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the congregations shall have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be governed and served, no one shall normally be eligible for election to office until he has:

- A) been a member in good standing for at least one year;
- B) received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the Session; and
- C) served the Church in ways that evidence his gifts for the office.

SECTION 5

Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be encouraged by the Session to prepare themselves for the offices of Elder or Deacon.

SECTION 6

For Elders, exceptions to the service and time requirements of Section 4 should be noted in the Session's recommendation to Presbytery along with supporting evidence to show how the Session has assured itself of the necessity for the exception.

SECTION 7

Examinations for Elders and Deacons should be theological and pastoral, reflective of the Biblical qualifications required of them.

SECTION 8

Upon receiving the consent of the congregation, the Session shall recommend the Elder candidate to the Presbytery and request that he be examined. The recommendation should note his formal and

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informal training, degree of proficiency in the original languages, gifts, and graces that have led the Session to recommend him.

SECTION 9

If the examination of candidates is referred to a committee, an examination shall also be held on the floor of Presbytery. If one-fourth or more of the Presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination, the candidate shall be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the Presbytery.

SECTION 10

The calling to office for an Elder or Deacon will be for the length of time that the officer remains a member in good standing of the Particular Church that recommended him, or until he petitions the Session for relief of his office and that with good cause.

COMMENTARY

Section 6: Exceptions to service and time would include situations such as a Particular Church calling an outside Vocational Elder or possibly a new church forming without an ordained Teaching Elder.

**CHAPTER 14:
ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS**

SECTION 1

It being manifest by the Word of God that no man ought to take upon himself the office of Elder or Deacon, the Church shall set men apart by solemn act for its service.

SECTION 2

Ordination is that act by which men are set apart to the offices of Elder and Deacon. It is the Church's solemn approval of and public attestation to a man's inward call, his gifts, and his calling by the Church.

SECTION 3

The Church shall vest a man in an office only when satisfied as to his gifts and character and only in response to a call by a Particular Church to that specific office.

SECTION 4

The ordaining body, before vesting a man with office, shall provide, or assure itself that he has received, such training and testing of gifts as may be necessary for the proper performance of the duties required by the office.

SECTION 5

Ordination shall be performed by the body which examines the candidate. In the case of Deacons it shall be by the Session, except that when a congregation is without a Session the Presbytery shall ordain such officers as have been nominated by the Particular Church and approved by the Presbytery. In the case of Elders ordination shall be by the Presbytery.

SECTION 6

Installation is the act by which a person who has been chosen to perform official work in the Church, having been ordained, is placed in position to do that work.

SECTION 7

When an Elder candidate of this Church is to be ordained and installed, or an Elder who has been previously ordained is to be installed, the service may be performed either by the Presbytery or by a committee appointed for that purpose, as may appear most expedient; and the following order shall be observed therein:

- A) at the time for ordination and installation the Moderator of the Presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside over the meeting of the Presbytery, with the congregation present;
- B) an Elder previously appointed shall preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion;
- C) the Moderator shall briefly inform the congregation of the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to this occasion;
- D) addressing the candidate, the Moderator shall propose to him the following questions:

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- a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
 - c. Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the CPC?
 - d. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
 - e. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Elder from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?
 - f. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
 - g. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?
 - h. Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of an Elder to this congregation, and that you will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ?
- E) The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the Moderator shall propose to the people the following question, to which they shall answer in the affirmative by holding up their right hands: Do you, the members of this Church, acknowledge and receive this brother as an Elder, 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?
- F) If these questions have been satisfactorily answered, the candidate shall then kneel, and by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, he shall be solemnly ordained to the holy office of Elder. (If an Elder has been previously ordained, this step is omitted).
- G) Prayer being ended, he shall rise and the Moderator shall declare him to be ordained an Elder. (If an Elder has been previously ordained, this step is omitted).
- H) The Presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship.
- I) When there is an existing Session, it is proper that the members of that body, in the face of the congregation, take the newly ordained (and/or installed) Elder by the hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us."
- J) The Moderator, or others appointed for the purpose, shall give solemn charges in the name of God to the newly ordained (or installed) Elder and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties, and shall, by prayer, commend them both to the grace of God and his holy keeping. At the conclusion of the service the new Elder shall dismiss the congregation with a benediction.

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SECTION 8

When an officer, by reason of advanced age or disability, retires or is retired from the Session, the Session, in recognition of his long and/or meritorious service, designate him "emeritus" with the title of his previous service.

**CHAPTER 15:
CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

SECTION 1

Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the Session. A stated meeting shall be held at least once annually to consider the affairs of the congregation. Other meetings shall be called when the Session deems it to be for the best interests of the congregation or when requested in writing to do so by a majority of the voting members of the congregation in good and regular standing.

SECTION 2

The provisions of Section 1 of this Chapter shall apply to a mission work which may hold a congregational meeting in its area when duly called by its Session or Presbytery. Such a congregational meeting may be held when at least one member of the Session is present and when a quorum of voting members of the mission work as designated by the Session is present.

SECTION 3

Public notice of a meeting of the congregation shall be made at the worship services on the two Lord's Days prior to the meeting or by circular letter at least ten days prior to the meeting. When the meeting is called for the transaction of specific matters of business, no business shall be conducted except that which is stated in the notice. Exceptions to this Section shall be noted in the Constitutions of any Particular Church.

SECTION 4

The Moderator and the Clerk of the Session shall serve as Moderator and Clerk respectively in congregational meetings. In the event that it is impracticable or inexpedient for either or both of these to serve, the Session shall appoint others from among its number, or request an Elder of the Presbytery to serve.

SECTION 5

The Clerk shall keep a correct record of all the business transacted at the meeting and preserve it with the records of the Session. The minutes of the congregational meeting shall be approved by the congregation before the close of the meeting.

SECTION 6

Voting and floor privileges shall be restricted to male members of the congregation who are at least 20 years of age, who are in good and regular standing and who have, before the Session and other witnesses, answered the following questions in the affirmative:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to be the perfect and only true way for a man to be saved? Do you?
2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness, you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation, not in yourself, but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone? Do you?
3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to lead a godly life? Do you?

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4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts as you are able, offer your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Will you?
5. Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers? Will you?
6. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of the Covenant Presbyterian Church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or practice, to heed its discipline? Do you?

Male heads of households should weigh, according to maturity, the opinions of members of their households when voting or speaking on the floor.

SECTION 7

Voting by proxy shall not be permitted, nor shall anyone be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken.

SECTION 8

Widows and other female heads of household should be encouraged to make known their wishes to the Session, which shall then designate one or more Elders to weigh their input in making their own congregational vote or speaking on the floor.

SECTION 9

A congregation may withdraw from the Covenant Presbyterian Church according to the following procedure:

- A) Before calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of taking any action contemplating withdrawal from the Covenant Presbyterian Church, the Session shall inform the Presbytery, ordinarily at a stated meeting, of its intention to call such a meeting, and shall provide grounds for its intention.
- B) The Presbytery, through representatives appointed for the purpose, shall seek, within a period not to exceed three weeks after the Presbytery meeting, in writing and in person, to attempt to dissuade the Session from its intention.
- C) If the Session is not dissuaded, it may issue a written call for the first meeting of the congregation. The call shall contain the Session's recommendation, with its written grounds, together with the Presbytery's written argument.
- D) If the congregation votes to withdraw, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery to prepare a roll of members who desire to continue as members of the Covenant Presbyterian Church and to provide for the oversight of these continuing members.

COMMENTARY:

Section 6: The Bible marks twenty years old as the age by which children are expected to complete their maturation. Males, for example, were accounted men in the census at age 20 (cf. Ex. 30:14) and expected to give a "ransom offering." The redemption value of both males and females changed at 20 years of age (cf. Lev. 27:1-7) and males were expected to fight as members of Israel's army at age 20 (cf. Num. 1:3).

**CHAPTER 16:
ADMISSION OF CHURCH MEMBERS**

SECTION 1

A member may be received by a profession of faith. Those who are members of another congregation may be received by a letter of transfer or its equivalent. Those wishing to transfer from another church of like faith and practice which has been approved by the Session or regional Presbytery should still be examined by the Session. However, such members should still be examined by the Session. In all cases, the transfer will be affected when the members are publicly received in front of the congregation.

SECTION 2

Non-professing children of adult members are received into the membership of the Church upon receiving holy baptism. Non-professing, baptized children are to be received as members along with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Non-professing, unbaptized children must be brought forward to receive holy baptism in order to be accounted members of the Church along with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

SECTION 3

Before permitting any one to make profession of his faith or take membership vows in the presence of the congregation, the Session shall examine him in order to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.

SECTION 4

As a way of assisting those who contemplate becoming members of the Church by making public profession of faith in Christ, the Session may conduct classes in Christian doctrine to help them understand the implication of this significant act and perform it intelligently and sincerely.

SECTION 5

The Session shall examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he:

- A) possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- B) relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone;
- C) confesses a hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins;
- D) places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace; and
- E) is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God.

SECTION 6

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

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SECTION 7

When the Session is satisfied that an individual is qualified to make public profession of faith in Christ, his name shall be publicly announced to the congregation at least one week before the day chosen for this solemn event, in order that the members may have opportunity to acquaint the Session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a sincere profession. The Session shall weigh such evidence and determine its validity.

SECTION 8

The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive the new member.

SECTION 9

A member involved in a trial or under discipline may transfer to another Particular Church within the CPC. The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and the congregation has been apprised by public announcement. The member's status must transfer without any changes in the censure or abrogation of rights and privileges if not under censure. No rights or privileges shall be abrogated until 1) any pending appellate process has been exhausted by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made, or 2) new proceedings have been initiated and completed.

SECTION 10

All the rights and privileges of membership belong to covenant members. Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made.

**CHAPTER 17:
DIVESTING FROM OFFICE**

SECTION 1

An officer may be divested of his office, or deposed, by judicial discipline for an offense in doctrine or life. Such divestiture, or deposition, shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 2

An officer may also be divested of his office without censure, for reasons other than delinquency in faith or life. A Presbytery shall consider divesting an Elder of his office without censure if:

- A) He no longer desires to actively serve for health issues or other reasons of a temporary nature; or
- B) Whether through lack of gifts or failure to cultivate them, he is no longer edifying to the congregation and the Session makes such recommendation or
- C) Permanent physical or mental disability prevents him from exercising the office.

SECTION 3

If a Presbytery contemplates divesting a minister without censure, the Elder in question shall be duly informed and given the opportunity at a meeting of the Presbytery to defend his continuance in office or to demit the ministry.

SECTION 4

A motion to divest shall require a two-thirds majority of those voting unless it is acting upon recommendation of the Session in which case a simple majority is sufficient. When an Elder is divested of his office or demits the ministry, the Presbytery shall remove his name from its roll and dismiss him to a local church.

SECTION 5

An Elder or Deacon may be divested of his office if his services do not appear to be edifying to the congregation. In such a case the following procedure shall be followed:

- A) The process of divestiture may be originated by the Session or by a petition to the Session signed by one-fourth of the professing members in good and regular standing.
- B) The officer in question shall be given the opportunity at a meeting of the Session to defend his continuance in office or to demit the office.
- C) If the question is to be presented to the congregation it shall be at a regularly called meeting.
- D) The call for the meeting shall stipulate that this matter is to be considered at the meeting, and the officer shall be notified at the same time.
- E) The congregation, by a two-thirds majority of those voting, may require the Session to petition Presbytery for permission to remove him from office.

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SECTION 6

A Deacon who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the Session concerning his decision. Similarly, An Elder who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the Presbytery concerning his decision. If, after such counseling, he persists in his decision, he shall be allowed to demit his office, and the Session shall record the fact in its minutes.

SECTION 7

A man who has been divested of office and who is subsequently elected to that office shall be viewed as receiving initial election to that office and shall be reexamined and reordained.

SECTION 8

Nothing in this Chapter shall be held to imply that when an officer retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing the functions of that office from time to time. While such an officer shall not have a vote in any Presbytery meeting, he may attend as a corresponding member.

**CHAPTER 18:
EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION**

SECTION 1

Presbyteries should develop standard examination procedures for ordination exams. The following areas shall be included:

- A) Sermon Examination (on specific text)
- B) Doctrine and Creeds
- C) Church History
- D) Church Polity
- E) Ethics
- F) Pastoral Theology & Practice
- G) View & Knowledge of Scripture
- H) Personal Faith & Life

SECTION 2

Sermon examination shall normally consist of a written sermon delivered to the examiner and the sermon delivered orally to the Presbytery.

SECTION 3

After the floor examination, Presbytery shall go into closed Session for discussion and confirmation of the examination.

SECTION 4

Presbytery may recess at any time(s) during an examination, but at the conclusion shall go into closed Session to discuss the examination and determine if the candidate has sustained the examination.

SECTION 5

There shall be a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote in favor of the candidate for his total examination to be sustained.

SECTION 6

Upon sustaining the examination, the candidate shall be informed and prayer of thanks given. If the candidate has not sustained the examination, he shall be notified how he may rectify the areas of concern and shall also be notified that he, through his Session, may request a further exam.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: It is understood that the examination is to be both theological and pastoral. The exam is not meant to be exhaustive in any area. It is meant to give the Candidate an opportunity to show his wisdom and ability in applying the Scriptures pastorally in the various areas (as compared to merely knowing academic details). As such the Examination may also expose

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areas of “weakness,” where a candidate may need to improve or further develop his understanding, proficiency, or orthodoxy. It is also understood that the examination is to be especially geared toward discerning the Biblical orthodoxy of a Candidate. (i.e. that what he knows is in keeping with Biblical and confessional truth).

**CHAPTER 19:
ORGANIZING AND RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS**

SECTION 1

A group of believers may be organized through the efforts of one or more congregations. If organized through the efforts of a Particular Church or Churches in the regional Presbytery, upon attaining status as a Particular Church, it shall be its own authority and no longer under the jurisdiction of any other Particular Church or Churches.

SECTION 2

Unorganized congregations can be received as mission works by a sponsoring Particular Church or by a commission established by Presbytery which shall function as the Session.

SECTION 3

The sponsoring Particular Church Session or the commission shall function as the acting Session until such time as the mission work is able to call and ordain qualified men to form a Session.

SECTION 4

A membership roll will be maintained by the sponsoring Session separate from the rolls of any other congregation.

SECTION 5

In organizing a congregation from a mission work the acting Session shall do the following:

- A) Supervise the creation of a new constitution which accepts and reflects all the standards of the CPC.
- B) Supervise the training, examination, and ordination of officers in accordance with the Form of Church Government.
- C) Draw up a list of members which shall become the charter roll of the new congregation.
- D) Present a petition to the regional Presbytery to organize them.
- E) Call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing officers; such a meeting shall be held apart from the attendance of the members of the sponsoring Particular Church. Charter roll members may vote in all matters placed before them by their acting Session.
- F) Handle the installation of new officers and the transfer of the Mission Church to their care.

SECTION 6

A congregation, meeting the minimum requirements of a church (Chapter 10, Section 2) but not belonging to the CPC, may be received under the authority of the regional Presbytery with the sponsorship of at least one Particular Church of the CPC. The sponsoring Session shall examine the petitioning Session with respect to their subscription to the standards of the CPC. The sponsoring Session may bring a motion to the broader Presbytery to receive the sponsored congregation into the Presbytery. The sponsored church shall be known as a Candidate Church.

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SECTION 7

Regional Presbytery shall guarantee that all the requirements normally needed for the calling to office of any other officer in the CPC, shall be met in all the officers of any congregation received.

SECTION 8

Normally, the sponsoring session will be the closest Church geographically to the Candidate Church. If there is any question of which Session shall preside, then the broader assembly in existence shall determine the issue.

SECTION 9

A Candidate Church shall not be considered an independent body, but shall be under the care of a sponsoring Particular Church until such time as the elders of the Candidate Church are received into the Presbytery and the Candidate Church is received as a Particular Church. A Candidate Church can maintain such status for a maximum of twelve months

**CHAPTER 20:
FRATERNAL RELATIONS**

SECTION 1

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

- A) Occasional pulpit exchange.
- B) Intercommunion.
- C) Consultation on matters of mutual interest.
- D) Respect for each other's church discipline.
- E) A comity arrangement by which each denomination pledges to consult with the other denomination before engaging in new mission works in an area where the other denomination has an existing congregation or mission work.
- F) A frank exchange of each other's distinctive views, with the recognition of the reality of the unity of the visible Church.
- G) A goal of being able to present a united witness to a watching world.
- H) Letters of greetings.
- I) Apprising each other of the various actions undertaken, by means of sharing of minutes of meetings.
- J) The exchange of fraternal delegates as opportunity presents itself.

SECTION 2

Only the General Assembly may establish fraternal relations with another National Church Body.

**CHAPTER 21
THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS AND THEIR AMENDMENT**

SECTION 1

The Constitution, including the incorporated Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the forms of subscription required of Elders, and Deacons, as these forms are found in the Form of Church Government, may be amended only in the following manner:

- A) The General Assembly shall determine whether a suggested change is worthy of consideration;
- B) If so determined, it shall appoint a committee to consider any suggested change and to report to the next regular Assembly with recommendations;
- C) that assembly may then propose the amendment to the Presbyteries by a two-thirds majority of the members voting;
- D) approval by a Presbytery shall be by a majority of the members voting;
- E) following the decision the Clerk of Presbytery shall notify the Clerk of the Assembly, in writing, of the decision of the Presbytery;
- F) if two-thirds of the Presbyteries approve the amendment it shall be adopted finally only after approval of the next ensuing Assembly by a two-thirds vote of the members voting.

SECTION 2

The Form of Church Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God are subordinate to the Constitution. These three documents shall be published together, and the combined document shall be entitled the Book of Church Order of the Covenant Presbyterian Church.

SECTION 3

With the exception noted in Section 1, above, the Form of Church Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God may be amended only in the following manner:

- A) The General Assembly after due discussion shall propose the amendment to the Presbyteries;
- B) each Presbytery shall vote on the question before the next regular Assembly;
- C) the Clerk of each Presbytery shall notify the Clerk of the Assembly, in writing, of the action of the Presbytery;
- D) if a majority of the Presbyteries has thus signified approval of the amendment, the amendment shall become effective on January 1 of the following year in which the Clerk announces to the Assembly that a majority of the Presbyteries has approved the amendment;
- E) If the Assembly proposing the amendment desires it to become effective earlier than the date herein provided, it may set an earlier date, but not sooner than the next regular Assembly, by a two-thirds vote;
- F) No amendments shall be proposed to the Presbyteries without written grounds for the proposed amendments.

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SECTION 4

Appendices are not considered part of the Book of Church Order and may be modified by a majority vote of the General Assembly.

SECTION 5

Organic union of the Covenant Presbyterian Church with another Church shall follow the same procedure as in Section 1, above, for amending the Constitution.

**CHAPTER 22
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

SECTION 1

Standardization of Minutes for broader Presbyteries.

- A) All references to persons in the minutes must be standardized, as far as possible, to include their office, first name or initial, and last name. Any non-delegates of the CPC referred to in the minutes will be designated as such with appropriate titles. Church officers are to be listed as Elder and Deacon.
- B) Minutes should include motions and decisions that are made on them, but not the details of the discussion unless called for.
- C) Movers and seconders of motions made during the process of a meeting shall not be listed in the minutes unless they come as part of advanced submitted overture.
- D) Devotionals shall include the Scripture used.
- E) Songs and Psalms sung shall be listed by titles.
- F) Documents may be attached.

SECTION 2

All official records of the broader Presbytery meetings are to be held in the care of a member designated for that purpose. When that person ceases to be a member or no longer desires to perform the service, another Elder shall be designated. Draft copies and other collateral materials may be kept and used by individual attendees but are not the official record of the Presbyteries.

SECTION 3

The records of a closed Session are to be made available to Presbyters of that Presbytery only and shall be kept confidential. Closed Session records of a Session are under the authority of that Session. Only the Presbytery and their fellow Elders shall be privy to such records (not Deacons) with the following restrictions:

- A) They are not to be published (refers to making any items known to any non-CPC Presbyter) in whole or in part in any form without prior approval of the Presbytery that holds the closed records.
- B) During the closed Session, a determination as to what shall be recorded shall be made.
- C) Re-opening closed Session issues shall require a closed Session to be heard.
- D) The Session alone through its Clerk may make requests to closed records of broader Presbyteries.

SECTION 4

All position papers approved by the broader Presbytery will be filed in Appendix A in a section titled "Position Papers" alphabetized and indexed appropriately.

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SECTION 5

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

**APPENDIX A
CHECKLIST FOR CHURCH OFFICERS**

The following Checklist for Church Officers shall be set forth as a highly useful tool for all CPC churches at the discretion of the Session in evaluating and examining candidates for office. For more complete guidelines and specific requirements, see the Elder Nomination Guidelines and Elder Nomination Form documents available from either the Credentials Committee or Stated Clerk.

- A) Testimony of Candidate's life history and conversion to Christianity.
- B) History of Candidate's church and denominational affiliations noting the approximate length of tenure, ministry participation, offices held, circumstances and reasons for leaving, and any pending or past disciplinary action by an ecclesiastical body.
- C) Listing of Candidate's formal education, including knowledge of the original languages.
- D) An interview with Candidate's wife, if applicable, concerning her conversion to Christianity, her testimony of support to her husband's ministry, and her assessment of her husband's qualifications.
- E) Disclosure of any significant past sin of a public nature (or one that has the potential to become public) and/or sinful habits.
- F) Disclosure of any pending, anticipated or actual civil or criminal actions involving the Candidate or any organizations within which he has a responsible part.
- G) Assessment of Candidate's strengths and weaknesses for ministry leadership as measured by 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and general observation.
- H) In the case of a Candidate who has been divorced, a full explanation of the causes of the divorce should be submitted in writing along with proof.
- I) Disclosure of any debt (not secured by tangible collateral) beyond the equivalent of three month's income so that Presbytery may determine its possible effect upon Candidate's ministry.
- J) Disclosure of the nature of Candidate's baptism.
- K) Disclosure and renunciation by the Candidate of any membership in a secret society such as Freemasonry.
- L) A written statement regarding Candidate's areas of concern, disagreement, or questions regarding the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Constitution and Book of Church Government of the CPC. Every Candidate for office should take special note regarding the limitations that are placed upon him regarding any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by the Constitution and be prepared to abide by the provisions of Form of Church Government.
- M) Does the Candidate agree that all questions or disputes with the Constitution and Standards of the CPC are to be resolved at Presbytery and the broader assemblies and that he will not preach or teach any questionable or disputed doctrines and practices?
- N) Does the Candidate agree not to turn to the world to resolve differences between the Church and its members?

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- O) Is the Candidate willing to take the vows applicable to his office according to the CPC Book of Church Order?

**APPENDIX B
THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELDER**

Upon nomination, Candidates are to submit as soon as possible written answers to the following questions. The Credentials Committee, may, with prior notice, add to or change these questions at any time. Answers need not be voluminous, but must be sufficient to provide a basis for thoughtful examination.

Doctrine and Creeds:

- 1) Do you have any exception(s) or scruple(s) with the Westminster Standards other than those listed in the CPC Constitution? If so, please give a written statement (2-3 sentences) of the exception(s) or scruple(s) and the Biblical and historical foundation you believe for such.
- 2) How do you plan to use the Westminster Confession in your ministry?
- 3) Do you heartily embrace the theological system known as the Reformed faith? Are there any parts of it or emphases in it with which you disagree? If so, please elaborate.
- 4) If you are coming to the Presbytery from outside the CPC, what are the significant differences of your denomination's views from the CPC? Why have you decided to labor in the CPC instead of your current denomination?
- 5) What is your view of the length of the days of creation?
- 6) Is there any "myth" in Scripture? (Explain your answer).
- 7) What is your view on the gifts of the Spirit? Would you consider yourself a "cessationist?"
- 8) Is there any continuing revelation today?
- 9) What is your view on tongues? (Explain and briefly defend).
- 10) Briefly explain your understanding of the Trinity.
- 11) Briefly explain your view of the person and work of Christ.
- 12) What are your views regarding the current terminology of "Covenant of Redemption," "Covenant of Works" and "Covenant of Grace?" Do you have any scruples regarding that terminology?
- 13) What is your opinion of the views of E.P. Sanders, James Dunn and N.T. Wright (the "New Perspective on Paul") regarding the Pauline doctrine of justification?
- 14) What is your opinion on the views of Auburn Avenue regarding the objectivity of the Covenant?
- 15) Explain your view of the relationship between faith and works.
- 16) Is Dispensationalism Biblical? Why or why not?
- 17) Do you consider yourself a Calvinist? Do you adhere to all "5 points?" Why or why not?
- 18) Do you believe that Christians are obligated to obey the moral law, and that the moral law is the abiding standard of righteousness even under the new covenant?

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- 19) What is your view of the “carnal Christian” doctrine and the Lordship controversy? What about “Higher life” or “Victorious Christian life” teaching?
- 20) Do you embrace the view of God’s law known as “theonomy”? If so, define your view briefly. Are you a Christian Reconstructionist?
- 21) What is your view of the use of alcohol and tobacco?
- 22) What is your view on the propriety or impropriety of civil disobedience?
- 23) What is your view on worship? Specifically, do you embrace the historic view of the regulative principle of worship? What about more recent thoughts on “covenant renewal worship?” (Include what you do and allow).
- 24) What role does the Law play in the New Testament era?
- 25) Should Christians still observe a Sabbath day? And if so, what is your view of the Lord’s Day? How would you teach this principle to others?
- 26) What are your views on divorce and remarriage? (Include your grounds for divorce & grounds for remarriage).
- 27) What is your view of preaching?
- 28) What is your view on evangelism? (Briefly explain what you view as proper and improper evangelism).
- 29) What is your eschatological position?
- 30) What are your views on Heaven and Hell?
- 31) Define ‘sacrament’ and ‘means of grace’.
- 32) What happens at a Sacrament?
- 33) How do Old Testament and New Testament sacraments differ and how are they connected?
- 34) Why is foot washing or marriage or tithing not a sacrament?
- 35) How are sacraments made efficacious?
- 36) How are sacraments to be rightly administered?
- 37) Why should the children of believers be baptized?
- 38) How will you respond to those who wish to join the church but do not want to have their children baptized?
- 39) Explain this statement from the WCF. “The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time.”
- 40) Does the mode of baptism matter? What will be your practice as to the mode?

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- 41) What is a valid baptism and would you re-baptize if requested?
- 42) When may a child take communion? What if anything is necessary?
- 43) What of a 20 year old covenant child that has not been admitted to the table, what should be done?
- 44) How is grace received by the communicant?
- 45) What are Biblical elements of worship?
- 46) How do you "fence the table" in communion?
- 47) What are the different Reformed views regarding Christ's presence in the elements.
- 48) What is the relationship between:
 - a. regeneration and baptism?
 - b. faith and baptism?
 - c. sanctification and baptism?
 - d. sanctification and communion?
 - e. justification and baptism?
- 49) When and by whom may the sacraments be administered?
- 50) What is your view on the Covenant Community? What are the roles of men, women, and children both in the home and church?

Church History:

- 1) Give a brief overview of the major epochs (divisions) of church history.
- 2) Trace the development & continuity of reformed theology in church history.
- 3) Explain the formation of the canon.
- 4) Who were some of the early church fathers – tell about their significance?
- 5) Who was Constantine and what was his significance?
- 6) What was the significance of the Council of Nicea?
- 7) What was the significance of the Council of Chalcedon?
- 8) What was the Arian controversy?
- 9) What was Gnosticism? -does it have any significance today?
- 10) Who was Augustine -what was his relationship to Pelagius?

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- 11) Briefly tell who Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory the Great, Francis of Assisi, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas were.
- 12) Explain the split between the eastern and western churches in 11th cent.
- 13) Discuss the medieval Roman Catholic sacramental system.
- 14) Who were some of the key people and events leading up to the Reformation?
- 15) What was the significance of John Hus?
- 16) What are the “solos”
- 17) Who were John Knox, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and Ulrich Zwingli?
- 18) Who were the Covenanters and what is their significance to Presbyterianism today?
- 19) What was the Scottish reformation?
- 20) What was the Synod of Dort?
- 21) What was the historical context of the writing of the WCF (name some of the key people and dates involved)?
- 22) Who were the Puritans – what is their significance?
- 23) What was the Marrow Controversy?
- 24) What was the 1st Great Awakening (key dates, people, and significance for today)?
- 25) Who was Jonathan Edwards – what was his contribution to reformed theology?
- 26) How was the 2nd Great Awakening different from the 1st (key dates, people, and issues)?
- 27) Who was Charles Finney – what was/is his significance?
- 28) Trace the development of Presbyterianism in America from 18th century.
- 29) What effect did the Civil War have on American Presbyterianism?
- 30) What was the old school/new school division?
- 31) What is fundamentalism?
- 32) Who were Charles Hodge, James Henly Thornwell, William Carey, J. Gresham Machen, Cornelius Van Til?
- 33) Explain the development of neo-orthodoxy & highlight major people involved.
- 34) What difference does church history make in your preaching/teaching?
- 35) Why was the CPC begun?
- 36) What are the distinctives of the CPC?

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- 37) Briefly outline the history of and the theological distinctives of the following Presbyterian bodies: PCUSA, OPC, PCA, RPCNA, and ARP.

Church Polity:

- 1) Have you read the Constitution and Book of Church Order of the CPC? Do you have any exceptions or reservations?
- 2) What is Presbyterianism?
- 3) What is the role of the Presbytery and General Assembly with regard to the local church?
- 4) What are the marks of a true church and why are they important to maintain?
- 5) What is the difference between the visible and invisible church?
- 6) What is required for church membership?
- 7) What is the role of the Elder and Deacon in the local church?
- 8) What are the qualifications for Elder and Deacon and where are they found in Scripture?
- 9) What is the role of women with regard to leadership in the church?
- 10) How would you, as an Elder, distinguish between different levels of church discipline (i.e. censure, rebuke, excommunication)?
- 11) What is the purpose of church discipline?
- 12) What are the courts of the church - what is their jurisdiction?
- 13) What are the steps of church discipline?
- 14) How do you restore a fallen repentant brother/sister in the Lord?

View & Knowledge of Scripture:

- 1) What do the Scriptures teach about the authorship of the Bible? Support your answer with biblical texts.
- 2) To what extent is the Bible inerrant and infallible?
- 3) What do the Old Testament and New Testament both teach about the purpose and use of the Bible?
- 4) Give a very general outline of Old Testament history, including key dates.
- 5) What is the relationship between Gen. 3:15 and rest of Scripture?
- 6) Who were the three patriarchs and what was their relation to one another?
- 7) Where do we find the various covenants in the Old Testament?
- 8) Identify Lot, Ishmael, Moab and Ammon and describe the relation of each to Israel.

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- 9) Identify 5 judges of Israel during the period of the Judges. What lessons do we learn from their lives?
- 10) Who were some of the good kings of Israel and what were some of things they did?
- 11) Who were some of the evil kings of Israel and what were some of things they did?
- 12) What are the various types of Psalms? Should we use all varieties in our worship today?
- 13) How did the style, nature, and content of prophetic utterance differ between the pre- and post-exilic prophets? How were they similar?
- 14) Pick one of the Major Prophets and describe his book and ministry.
- 15) Who was Josiah and what significant event happened in relation to him?
- 16) Identify Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus.
- 17) What are some key events that took place in the intertestamental period?
- 18) List several examples of Old Testament types.
- 19) List several examples of Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament.
- 20) What are the distinctive features of each of the four gospels? Include in your answer a brief discussion of the "synoptic" gospels.
- 21) How and why were the twelve disciples chosen?
- 22) Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees? How and when did they come into power?
- 23) Why did Jesus speak in parables?
- 24) Identify Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, and Lazarus and describe their part in Jesus' ministry.
- 25) Discuss the relationship between Luke and Acts, providing an outline of the book of Acts.
- 26) Who were Matthias, Stephen, Cornelius, and Barnabas?
- 27) What qualified Paul to be an apostle?
- 28) Describe Paul's missionary journeys.
- 29) Outline the book of Romans.
- 30) What abuses in the Corinthian church did Paul address in his first letter to them?
- 31) Compare the old and new covenants as described in the book of Hebrews.
- 32) What are the "catholic" or "general" epistles? Discuss their teaching in relation to the Pauline epistles.
- 33) How should the book of Revelation be used in pastoral ministry?

**APPENDIX C
RESOURCES FOR THE ELDER NOMINEE**

The following recommendations are advisory only and regard educational resources for training laymen in the Scriptures. These resources will prepare candidates for the theological examination by Presbytery in lieu of or in addition to a specific M.Div. or M.A. program. As the Credentials Committee learns of additional resources they will be added to this list. Updated lists can be requested at any time.

A) Doctrine and Creeds

a. General Systematic Theology and Trinitarianism:

i. Primary Books:

- Berkhof, Louis, *Systematic Theology*
- Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- Reymond, Robert, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Boice, James, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace*
- Frame, John, *The Doctrine of God*
- Frame, John, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*
- Hagopian, David (ed.), *Back to the Basics*
- MacLeod, Donald, *The Spirit of Promise*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Reformed Theological Seminary's (RTS) lecture series *Systematic Theology I*
- Sproul, R.C., *Basic Theology*, package

b. Bibliology and Hermeneutics:

i. Primary Books:

- Geisler, Norman (ed.), *Inerrancy*
- Mathison, Keith, *Sola Scriptura*
- Pratt, Richard, *He Gave Us Stories*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock*

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- Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*
- Clark, Gordon, *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*
- Clark, Gordon, *Language and Theology*
- Pickering, Wilbur *The Identity of the New Testament Text II*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series *Genesis-Joshua, Judges-Poets, Isaiah-Malachi, Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, Hebrews-Revelation*
- Sproul, R.C., *Hath God Said*

c. Ecclesiology and the Sacraments:

i. Primary Books:

- Berkouwer, G.C., *The Sacraments*
- Booth, Robert, *Children of the Promise*
- Gallant, Tim, *Feed My Lambs*
- Mathison, Keith, *Given for You*
- Robertson, O. Palmer, *Christ of the Covenants*
- Strauch, Alexander, *Biblical Eldership*
- Strauch, Alexander, *The New Testament Deacon*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*
- Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series *Systematic Theology II*

d. Eschatology:

i. Primary Books:

- Mathison, Keith, *Dispensationalism*
- Mathison, Keith, *Postmillennialism*
- Riddlebarger, Kim, *Amillennialism*

ii. Secondary Books:

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- Gentry, Kenneth, *Before Jerusalem Fell*
- Gentry, Kenneth, *He Shall Have Dominion*
- Mathison, Keith, *When Shall These Things Be?*
- Sproul, R.C., *The Last Days According to Jesus*
- Gregg, Steve, *Revelation, Four Parallel Views*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Sproul, R.C., *Dust to Glory*
- Sproul, R.C., *The Last Days According to Jesus*

e. Soteriology:

i. Primary Books:

- Beisner, E. Calvin (ed.), *The Auburn Avenue Theology: Pros and Cons*
- Boice, James, *The Doctrines of Grace*
- Boettner, Lorraine, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*
- Hoekema, Anthony, *Saved by Grace*
- Murray, John, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Piper, John, *The Pleasures of God*
- Piper, John, *Desiring God*
- Pratt, Richard, *Designed for Dignity*
- Sproul, R.C., *Chosen by God*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS taped lecture series *Systematic Theology II*
- Sproul, R.C., *Predestination in Six Easy Lessons*

f. Westminster Confession of Faith:

i. Primary Books:

- Hodge, A.A., *The Confession of Faith*
- Vos, Johannes, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*

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ii. Secondary Books:

- Barker, William, *Puritan Profiles*
- Duncan, Ligon (ed.), *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century vol 1&2*
- Hetherington, William, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*

B) Church History

a. Primary Books:

- Berkhof, Louis, *History of Christian Doctrine*
- Kuiper, B.K., *The Church in History*
- Lattourette, Kenneth, *History of the Christian Church vol. 1&2*

b. Secondary Books:

- Lightfoot, J.B., *The Apostolic Fathers*

c. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Reformed Theological Seminary's (RTS) lecture series *History of Christianity I&II, Church and World in the 20th Century*
- Sproul, R.C., *History of Christian Thought*

C) Church Polity and Presbyterianism

a. Primary Books:

- Witherow, Thomas, *The Apostolic Church*
- Longfield, Bradley, *The Presbyterian Controversy*

b. Secondary Books:

- Cannada, Robert, *The Historic Polity of the PCA*
- Hall, David, *The Divine Right of Church Government*
- McCrie, Thomas, *The Story of the Scottish Church*

D) Ethics and Culture

a. Primary Books:

- Clark, Gordon, *Ethics and Politics*

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- Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct*

b. Secondary Books:

- Brown, Harold O.J., *The Sensate Culture*
- Myers, Ken, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes*
- Postman, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

c. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series *Church and World in the 20th Century. Pastoral and Social Ethics*
- Sproul, R.C., *Christian Ethics*